

Explanation for Rule Change for 2019

23. Substitution for a Ball Damaged During Play of a Hole

Current Rule: Under Rule 5-3:

- A player is allowed to substitute another ball if during the play of a hole his or her ball in play becomes unfit for play – that is, if it is visibly cut, cracked or out of shape.
- Before lifting a ball to see if it is unfit for play, the player must:
 - Announce his or her intention to the opponent in match play or to the marker or another player in stroke play, and
 - Give that person an opportunity to observe the lifting and replacement and to examine the ball, and if that person wishes to dispute a claim of unfitness, it must be done before the player plays another ball.

2019 Rule: Rule 4.2 will revise two aspects of this procedure:

- The player will be allowed to substitute a ball only if the ball in play has become cut or cracked during the play of the hole – not if it is just “out of shape”.
- The player will no longer be required to announce the intention to lift to another person or to give that person a chance to observe the process or examine the ball.

Reasons for Change:

- There is no longer a good reason to allow substitution for a ball in play that has become “out of shape” (which means not fully round), because:
 - The construction and composition of modern golf balls has made it rare for a ball to cease to be round, and
 - The playing characteristics of modern balls are not materially affected except when cut or cracked.
- The “out of shape” language has led to confusion, as some players incorrectly believe that a ball with any scuff or scrape on its surface has become out of shape and therefore is unfit for play.
- Restricting relief only to when a ball is cut or cracked will eliminate this confusion and reinforce the Rule’s intention that a player not be allowed to substitute another ball when the ball in play is merely scratched or scraped.
- There is no compelling need to require the player to announce his or her intention to lift the ball or to give another person the chance to observe the process:
 - Eliminating these requirements will simplify and speed up the process and be consistent with the Rules’ overall approach of trusting the player to act correctly without needing to have another player watch over the process
 - This is explained further in Explanation for Proposed Rule Change - *Elimination of the Requirement to Announce the Player’s Intent to Lift a Ball*.