



# tee time

August 2019

NEWSLETTER OF THE WELLINGTON GOLF REFEREES ASSOCIATION INC.

## New Rules Introduction



As you now well know, this year has been dedicated to introducing the new Rules of Golf at all levels of the game. So how has it gone?

Generally, the new rules seem to have been widely welcomed,

although it's fair to say that there have been a few teething issues. Perhaps the most popular change has been to be able to leave the flagstick in while putting, although opinions vary as to whether there is a true advantage in doing so. I also like the more consistent approach to taking relief and the ability for committees to designate any area as a penalty area. The one new practise that seems to have tripped up a few is remembering to drop the ball from knee height.

It was disappointing to say the least that some professionals, notably Rickie Fowler, mocked the new dropping requirement, saying that it looked ridiculous and unathletic and would put folk off the game. Seemingly ignored is the fact that the lower drop results in a greater likelihood of the ball remaining in the relief area, thereby avoiding the need for re-drops. As professionals, in my view, they have an obligation to support the game and be role models for younger players. If they have a problem with the Rules, they ought to take that up with the USGA / R&A privately or through their professional body. Right: that's enough bleating from me!

## Local Introduction

Introducing the new Rules to Wellington region clubs proceeded relatively smoothly from the WGRA perspective. The WGRA Committee members had the opportunity to complete the Level 2 Course run by NZ Golf in Wellington last October. As an interim measure until the introduction of the Level 3 course (the first of which was conducted in Auckland in May), achieving 80% in the Level 2 exam was considered sufficient to confirm attendees' national referee qualifications.

From November to early January, the WGRA delivered an introductory training package to 19 Wellington, Kapiti and Wairarapa clubs. In April and May, two Level 1 courses were conducted, at Boulcott Farm HGC and Paraparaumu BGC respectively, with all those who sat the exam passing. It was pleasing that both courses were over-subscribed.

## Future Rules Courses

The WGRA will look at running a further Level 1 course in the coming summer and will consider the need to run a Level 2 course for those interested in becoming tournament referees.

## Rules Clarifications

Perhaps not surprisingly, the R&A and USGA have already issued several clarifications to the 2019 Rules of Golf. Some of these are minor technical interpretations, but there are three that are likely to be of particular interest to players:

**Rule 10.2b Clarification: Caddies Standing on Line Behind Player.** Early in the year, a couple of players were caught out taking their stance with their caddies still on the line of play behind them in contravention of Rule 10.2b(4). As a result, the authorities sensibly extended the exception that allows the player to avoid a penalty by retaking their stance from only on the putting green to anywhere on the course.

**Rule 16.3b Player Not Always Allowed Embedded Ball Relief.** Rule 16.3 allows free relief for a ball embedded in its own pitch mark anywhere in the General Area. Relief is taken by dropping immediately behind the ball *in the General Area*. If a ball is embedded in the bare or grassy face of a bunker (so not in the bunker), the condition of dropping in the General Area immediately behind the embedded ball cannot be met, and so in this instance, free relief is not available.

**(SIGNIFICANT CHANGE): Interpretation 14.3b(2)/1: On dropping 'Ball May Only Fall a Short Way'.** This interpretation is a significant change from the original advice from the R&A before the new Rules were finalised in 2018. Unfortunately, in our Introduction to the Rules package delivered to Clubs in late 2018/early 2019, we got it wrong. We taught that in the case of dropping a ball on a steep slope the proper method was to keep the dropping hand at knee height above the ground. However, this Interpretation makes it clear that the drop must be made from actual knee height and could result in the ball falling only a short way to the ground.

## Yet More on Drops



his hand is clearly at knee height.

This drop by Brandon Grace attracted some commentary with a few folk questioning whether it was legal. It is: his

## Flagstick Shadow

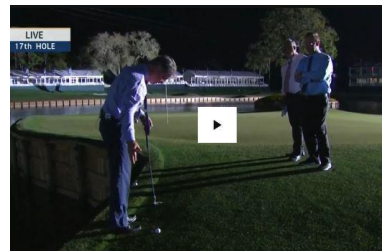
Another question that has arisen is whether it is



legal to putt with the flagstick in if the shadow gives you a line to the hole, which could be considered an alignment aid. In fact, it is perfectly okay to do this.

## Tiger: Opportunity Missed

Tiger Woods missed an opportunity to save strokes by using the new Rules to his advantage when playing the famous 17<sup>th</sup> hole at TPC



*The Golf Channel team discussing Tiger's missed opportunity.*

Sawgrass during this year's Players Championship.

Tiger's tee shot ran through the green onto the walkway and trickled off the bulkhead marked as yellow penalty area. Rather than using the drop zone (from where he managed to get another ball wet), Tiger could have dropped the ball on the walkway under the new Rules (taking advantage of the one club-length relief area) and probably saved himself three or even four shots. He later said he wasn't aware he had that option. It's interesting to note that under the old Rules, without the driver length relief area, it might not have been feasible anyway.

## US Women's Amateur

Here's an incident at the US Women's Amateur at Augusta in April that generated discussion amongst some Rules aficionados. Maria Fassi, who finished runner-up, took a practice swing



ahead of her ball in the pine straw on the 13<sup>th</sup> hole. The swing left a mark clearly

visible in the photo. A penalty for a violation of Rule 10.2b(3), 'No setting down object to help in taking stance'? While not good practice, the consensus was 'no penalty' unless the player admitted to intending the mark to aid her stance. Given her abilities, it seems unlikely. But the incident shows the need to be careful not to accidentally have your motives called into question!

## Matt Kuchar at the Memorial



*Matt Kuchar seeking a ruling.*

Matt Kuchar had an interesting exchange with a Rules Official at the Memorial

Tournament in May. His ball was seen to bounce and roll a short distance before coming to rest in a pitch mark made by another player's ball. Matt tried to argue that his ball had made a second pitch mark and that he should be granted relief. The Rules Official, rightly, disagreed. Kuchar asked for a second opinion. The second official confirmed the first's ruling. Kuchar then, light-heartedly, asked if he could get a third opinion. Later he said he found that rule (Rule 16.3) 'confusing'.

## Lee Westwood Open Incident

Lee Westwood's wayward drive on the 10<sup>th</sup> hole in the third round of the Open at Royal Portrush came to rest embedded in turf below a thick



bush. He asked for relief but the Rules Official rightly asked him, if the ball wasn't

embedded, would he play it from there? Lee admitted that he wouldn't. Rule 16.3a uses a ball in a bush as an example of interference from other conditions that prevents relief being granted. It was good to see that Lee accepted the ruling and didn't press his case for relief.

## Temporary Water on Pathway



A question arose at Paraparamu BGC recently when a lady landed in temporary water on a pathway. She wanted relief from the water, but not from the path. Taking relief from the path was unattractive since the

nearest point of complete relief was in lush growth. Interpretation 16.1/3 allows a player the choice of taking relief where two Abnormal Course Conditions interfere simultaneously. In this case she elected to take relief from the water and play from the path, as allowed under the Rules.

## WGRA News

At the 2019 AGM of the WGRA, long-standing President Bill Stratford was presented with Life Membership of the Association in recognition of his contributions to the WGRA and Wellington Golf over many decades. Congratulations Bill!



*Bill Stratford (R) receiving his Life Membership from Brian Richmond*

Also in WGRA News, long-standing servant of the WGRA, Bryan Futter, retired from active refereeing in late 2018. Bryan is a highly experienced referee who, on a personal note, taught me much. We will miss his expertise. And Lachlan Thurston also left the Committee due to work commitments. We thank Lachy for his contributions.

## On a Lighter Note

On a lighter note, check out this birthday cake



(lucky me!) that included a

thumbnail size copy of the Rules! (The cake was delicious, by the way).

## Rules Questions or Incidents

If you have any questions on anything to do with the Rules of Golf, any observations or comments, or rules incidents to share, please do send them to Terry Gardiner at [gardfam77@gmail.com](mailto:gardfam77@gmail.com)

## WGRA Executive 2019

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