

USGA Simplifies Rules— Asks R & A Agreement

Rules of Golf are greatly simplified in a new code which the USGA proposes to put into effect Jan. 1, 1947. The USGA is discussing with the R&A of St. Andrews mutually agreeing upon a revision of the rules that can be adopted for uniformity in golf playing regulations throughout the world.

The USGA revision was compiled by Richard S. Francis of Philadelphia, the foremost American authority on the rules of the game. Francis, for many years a member of the USGA Rules of Golf Committee, is author of the standard reference and explanatory work, "Golf—Its Rules and Decisions."

There has been much complaint that rules of golf are frequently violated in competitions not because of any desire to take unfair advantage of a competitor but because of ignorance. Violations in pro tournaments have made it plain that the long and involved rules, if baffling to pros whose business it should be to know all the technicalities, are too complex for the average man, woman or child player.

Wartime laxity in observing the rules was greater than normal because of the number of newcomers to the game, the tendency toward preferred lies and elimination of the rough. The USGA proposal of simplified rules which can be understood and retained by any fairly intelligent youngster who reads them thoughtfully a few times, is in answer to the general alibi that the rules have been set forth in too confusing a manner.

The USGA press release in announcing the rules revision said:

"Principal change from the present form is rearrangement of the Rules so that golfers may find answers more readily than is now possible. Few changes are being made in the substance of the Rules.

"The present Rules contain a preamble, 23 definitions, 35 basic Rules, 16 special rules for stroke play, and sundry regulations for par and bogey competitions; three-ball, best ball and four-ball matches; recommendations for local rules, and etiquette. In all, there are nearly 100 major sub-divisions. In addition, there are 28 pages of index, closely cross-referenced.

"The rearrangement proposed for 1947 comprises a preamble, etiquette, definitions, and only 21 Rules. The principles of etiquette appear on the first page. The index consists of only two pages.

"This is the first general revision of the Rules of Golf since 1934. It was accomplished in cooperation with Richard S. Francis, of Philadelphia, long a member of the USGA Rules of Golf Committee. In a foreword to the new code, John G. Jackson, of New York, former USGA president and Rules Chairman, says:

"'Anyone who has served on a Rules of Golf Committee or as Referee will welcome with enthusiasm the Revision of the Rules of Golf which after most careful consideration is proposed for adoption by the United States Golf Assn. and in the hope that the Royal and Ancient will take like action.'"

"The present rules are an entirely natural development—like Topsy, they 'just grewed' out of exeperience in the play of the game. A general revision of the Rules went into effect in 1934, but no attempt was made then to prescribe in one Rule the conduct of play in different types of matches. One still had to turn from the General Rules to the Stroke Rules and perhaps to the Rules for three-ball, best ball and four-ball matches.

"The proposed revision does away with all of that—for example, if a ball is moved the player will find in one Rule how the situation is to be dealt with in any kind of a match and however the ball was moved. What is proposed should bring about a wider knowledge of the Rules and make it easier to play the game in accordance with the Rules and that, being in the interest of sportsmanship, is much to be desired."

"Following the original re-write, the work of revision was conducted by a special USGA Committee consisting of Richard S. Tufts, of Pinehurst. N. C., Chairman; the late Leslie L. Cooke, of Chicago; Richard S. Francis, of Philadelphia, and Francis D. Ouimet, of Boston. Some further suggestions not included in the present code have been referred, for study and report, to the USGA Rules of Golf Committee, of which the Chairman is E. B. Leisenring, of Philadelphia."

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