

RULES CHANGES in 1956

Control of Flagstick, Lifting Ball on Green, 14-Club Rule Violation, Are Among Alterations

Two major changes in the Rules of Golf become effective Jan. 1, 1956. A number of minor amendments also have been agreed upon by the USGA and the Royal and Ancient. The changes resulted from conferences last May in Great Britain, were approved by the USGA Executive committee in June, and later approved by the membership of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club.

The two basic alterations deal with controlling the flagstick and lifting the ball on the putting green. In the past both situations have caused confusion, and the changes are designed to simplify them.

After 1955, handling of the flagstick will be under the complete control of the player who is about to play the stroke, and the Rule will be the same for match and stroke play. The player alone will have the right to have the flagstick attended, removed or held up. At present in match play the opponent as well as the player may have the flagstick removed, but in 1956 the opponent (who is not playing the stroke) will have no such right.

Only the player will be penalized if his ball strikes the flagstick when attended or removed, or if it strikes the person attending the flagstick. The penalty will be loss of hole in match play and, as before, two strokes in stroke play. At present in match play if the opponent or his caddie attends the flagstick, the opponent loses the hole if he or his caddie or the flagstick is struck by the player's ball.

In stroke play as well as match play, there will be no penalty if the flagstick is struck when not attended and is in the hole. At present in stroke play there is a two-stroke penalty for striking the flagstick from within 20 yards of the hole or whenever it is attended regardless of the distance.

All those changes deal with Rule 34, which will comprise only five paragraphs compared with eleven paragraphs as at present.

To reduce the present excessive amount of lifting the ball nearer the hole when it lies on the putting green and to speed

play, several changes were made in Rule 35, and the net results are as follows:

(a) Match play: Only the player who is about to play may control temporary lifting of the opponent's ball, and then only if he thinks it might interfere with his play. At present either the player or the opponent may have the opponent's ball lifted if either thinks the ball might interfere with or might assist the player.

(b) Stroke play: If the competitor (who is about to play) considers that the fellow-competitor's ball might interfere with his play, the competitor may require the other player to lift or to play his ball, at the owner's option. If the fellow-competitor thinks his ball might assist the competitor, he may play first. The present Rule gives the competitor and the fellow-competitor equal right to have the ball nearer the hole lifted or played first, at the owner's option, if either thinks it might interfere with or assist the competitor.

The other 1956 amendments in the Rules are of minor importance and do not affect the basic nature of golf. Most of them are not likely to be invoked in every-day play. They are intended merely to clarify and to simplify certain Rules and to incorporate in the code some technical decisions which have arisen in past incidents.

Among the minor alterations are the following:

Rule 3: Penalty for violation of 14-club rule reduced to:

- (a) Match play—loss of each hole in which a violation occurred; penalty may be applied after the round even though a claim has not been made within normal time limit;
- (b) Stroke play—two strokes for each hole in which a violation occurred.

Present penalty in both cases is disqualification.

Rule 8-2: Between play of two holes, practice stroke is prohibited from any hazard or on or to putting green of any hole not yet played.

Rules 23, 27-2a and 27-3: Ball should be lifted by owner, his partner or either of their caddies. In match play, if opponent or his caddie lifts player's ball, penalty is one stroke, under Rule 27-2a, not loss of hole under present Rule 23-1. In stroke play, if fellow-competitor or his caddie lifts player's ball, there is no penalty (Rule 27-3); present penalty is two strokes under Rule 23-1. Present Rule 23-1 ceases to be a Rule and becomes a preamble.

Rule 24-1a: Except on putting green, opponent's ball may be temporarily lifted when within two club-lengths (presently one club-length) of player's ball. Only the player may direct this; the opponent no longer has any say in the matter.

Rule 28: Permission to replace a dam-

aged ball is limited to a ball damaged during play of the hole. This prohibits changing after a ball known to be damaged is driven from the tee.

Rule 30-1a: A provisional ball must be identified as such before it is played. Play of a provisional ball covers all contingencies except that player may exempt its application to a ball in a water hazard.

Rule 35-1, Note: New recommendation for marking ball to be lifted on putting green by placing small coin immediately behind ball's position; if it interferes with another player, it should be moved one or more putterhead-lengths to one side.

Rule 35-2d: On putting green, player may knock away opponent's ball at any time to concede next stroke.

USGA COMPETITIONS FOR 1956

International Matches

Curtis Cup — June 8 and 9 at Prince's Golf Club, Sandwich, England.
Women's amateur teams: British Isles vs. United States.

Americas Cup — in Mexico, dates and place to be fixed.
Men's amateur teams: Canada vs. Mexico vs. United States.

Championships

(Dates entries close mean last dates for applications to reach USGA office. For possible exceptions in dates of Sectional Qualifying Rounds, see entry forms.)

Championship	Entries Close	Sectional Qualifying Rounds	Championship Dates	Venue
Open	May 18	June 4	June 14-15-16	Oak Hill Country Club Rochester, N. Y.
Amateur Public Links	*June 1	xJune 17-23	Team: July 7 Indiv: July 9-14 July 26-27-28	Harding Park Golf Course San Francisco, Cal.
Women's Open	July 13	none	July 26-27-28	Northland Country Club Duluth, Minn.
Junior Amateur	July 6	July 24	Aug. 8-11	Taconic Golf Club Williams College Williamstown, Mass.
Senior Amateur	July 20	Aug. 7	Aug. 20-25	Somerset Country Club St. Paul, Minn.
Girls' Junior	Aug. 10	none	Aug. 27-31	H'ather Downs Country Club Toledo, Ohio
Amateur	Aug. 10	Aug. 28	Sept. 10-15	Knollwood Club Lake Forest, Ill.
Women's Amateur	Aug. 31	none	Sept. 17-22	Meridian Hills Country Club Indianapolis, Ind.

* Entries Close with Sectional Qualifying Chairmen.

x Exact date in each Section to be fixed by Sectional Chairmen.

(NOTE—Girls' Junior Championship, originally scheduled September 10-14, has been changed to August 27-31)