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USGA, R & A Agree on All But Four Rules

Changes in the rules of golf proposed last May by a joint American-British committee have been adopted by the USGA and the Royal and Ancient GC of St. Andrews, Scotland, and will become effective Jan. 1, 1964. In addition, the USGA has made amendments in its code which were not adopted by the R & A.

The ÚSGA changes for 1964 not to be found in the R & A Rules are:

1. Flagstick: A ball striking an unattended flagstick when played from the putting green or within 20 yards of the hole will entail a penalty of loss of hole in match play and two strokes in stroke play. (At present there is no penalty for striking an unattended flagstick which is in the hole.)

2. Unplayable Ball: The penalty will be reduced from two strokes to one stroke for dropping a ball from an unplayable lie under an optional procedure; as a new alternative, a ball may be dropped

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within two club-lengths of the point where the unplayable ball lay (as well as behind that point, as at present). The stroke-anddistance alternative has been retained.

3. Provisional ball: May be played only for a ball which may be lost or out of bounds. Thus, a provisional ball may not be played for a ball which may be unplayable or in a water hazard. (The R&A code for 1964 will allow a provisional ball for a ball which may be lost, out of bounds or unplayable.)

4. Local Rules: Authority is given for several local rules differing from those in the R&A appendix to the rules. One deals with a ball out of bounds and will allow local committees to permit dropping a ball, under penalty of one stroke, within two club-lengths of the place where the original ball last crossed the boundary line.

The only other difference between the USGA and the R&A codes for 1964 will be the long-standing variation in minimum diameter of the golf ball.

Most of the USGA changes originated in trial rules developed by the USGA in 1960-61, dealing with unplayable ball, pro-





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visional ball and the optional local rule for ball out of bounds. After gaining knowledge from their experimental use, the USGA suspended their operation until the recent quadrennial conference with the R&A. They were then proposed by the USGA for the international code. However, the R&A did not adopt them, hence new divergences between American and British Rules.

Agree on Two Rules

In two important new particulars, the 1964 rules will be the same everywhere, as follows:

1. Ball overhanging hole: In an effort to prevent long delays to determine whether a ball on the lip of the hole is moving, Rule 35 will provide that when any part of the ball overhanges the edge of the hole, the owner will not be allowed more than a few seconds to determine whether it is at rest. If, by then, the ball has not fallen into the hole, it is automatically deemed to be at rest.

2. Penalty for exceeding the maximum of 14 clubs will be limited to a maximum per round of loss of two holes in match play and four strokes in stroke play for each excess club. Any such club must be declared out of play immediately upon discovery. There is to be no change in the permissible number of clubs.

Clarifying Amendments

A number of other clarifying amendments in form or language have been made. In all, the changes affect two of the 20 Definitions and 21 of the 41 Rules of Golf; the majority are of minor nature, for simplicity and clarity. A booklet bringing the rules up to date will be made available by the USGA in December.

As to the increase in number of differences between the British and the American codes, Wm. Ward Foshay of New York, chairman of the USGA Rules of Golf Committee, said: "We naturally regret that the R&A and the USGA could not agree completely on universal rules, but we recognize that differing conditions in our respective countries have to be taken into account. We shall continue to consult on the rules and their interpretation. It seems likely that another quadrennial conference will be held in 1967."

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