



A Hazard is Always a Hazard

By David Finney, Golf Course Superintendent
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Editor's Note: This will be the third time Dave Finney has written for The Grass Roots. Previous articles have dealt with the US Open the last time it was held at Oakmont, and the rules of golf that come into play in golf course maintenance operations.

Dave is writing about rules of golf again. He has an unusual honor — he is the Rules Committee Chairman of the West Virginia Golf Association. The article here is very timely this time of year as many Wisconsin golf course superintendents embark on autumn construction projects; he had the superintendent in mind when he authored this piece, which originally appeared in the West Virginia Golfer Magazine. Thanks to Dave Finney! MSM.

Occasionally rules questions may arise when hazards on the golf course become unplayable for one reason or another. Here is some information that every superintendent may find useful with regard to hazards.

The rules of golf define a hazard as any bunker or water hazard on the

course. Let's consider what would happen if a ball landed in a water hazard that was under construction with the installation of new bulkheads, or a ball landed in a bunker that was completely washed out and in the process of being restored to its original conditional. Surely you would think there is some relief under the rules for situations like these, that temporarily alter the structure and playability of hazards.

Unfortunately for the golfer, a hazard is always a hazard, and there is almost never free relief from a hazard regardless of its condition, with one exception.

In the first scenario your green-keeping staff is installing new bulkheads within the confines of a water hazard, and a ball enters the construction area. Rule 25-1b addresses this situation, saying that the ball may be dropped without penalty in the hazard as near as possible to where it lay, in an area that provides *maximum available relief*. Take note that the ball must be dropped in the hazard, and the player is not afforded total relief from the construction, only *maximum relief available*, which by definition allows the player to drop on ground that is most nearly normal.

In order to gain total relief from the



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construction and/or the hazard, the player must add a one-stroke penalty, and drop the ball outside the hazard. Because it is usual for a ball in a water hazard to be unplayable, areas under repair should not normally be defined as ground under repair. A water hazard does not lose its status as a water hazard just because of the construction.

In the second scenario, your greenkeeping staff is pushing the sand back up in a bunker after heavy rains have washed it out, and a ball lands in the bunker. The bunker does not lose its status as a hazard because of the rain washout, or because the grounds crew is working in the bunker. Once again rule 25-1b allows the player to drop in the bunker without penalty, in an area affording *maximum available relief*, or he may drop outside the bunker taking the one-stroke penalty.

Finally let's look at a scenario where the greenkeeping staff is completely rebuilding a bunker with new drains, new sod, the works, and the entire bunker is undergoing construction. decision 25/13 tells us that even this bunker does not lose its status as a hazard and there is still no free

relief. However, it is recommended that the Committee should define the bunker as *ground under repair* and classify the bunker as *through the green*. Reclassifying the bunker as *through the green* is the one and only "loop hole" that will finally get the player free relief from a hazard. ♣

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Bottensek, Stevens Point Country Club to Host WTA Golf Benefit

The beautiful Stevens Point Country Club will host the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association Annual Golf Benefit on Monday, September 28th. Lunch will be served from 11:00 a.m. to noon, and golf will begin with a 12:30 p.m. simultee. Dinner and prizes are after golf.

This long standing event is a key fund raiser for the WTA. Proceeds from the registration and from the donor board go to the Wisconsin Turfgrass Association for turfgrass research in the state.

For details, call Jeff Bottensek, golf course superintendent at SPCC, at 715-345-8906; or call Audra Anderson, executive secretary of the WTA at 608-845-6536.