

Hazardous duty

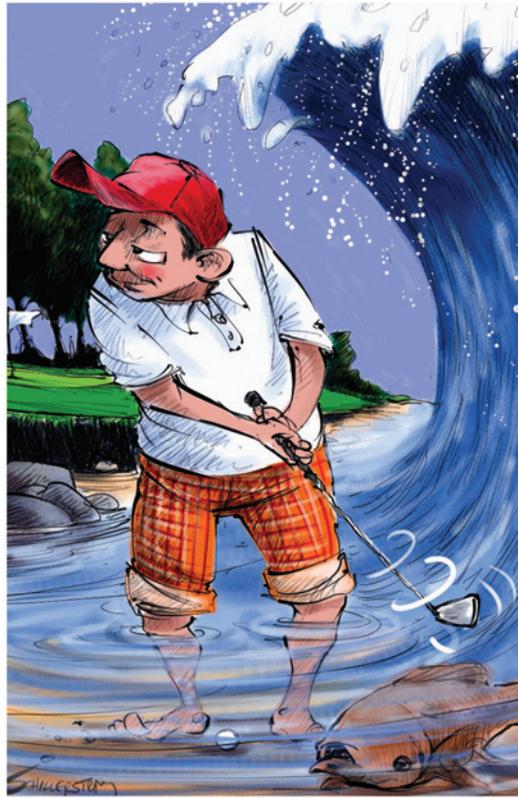
Failing to get a ball out of a water hazard isn't reason for despair

While there isn't a course in the area with as many dramatic waterfront holes as Pebble Beach, a few rulings at the U.S. Open should have reminded players that these kind of things can happen anywhere.

The holes along the ocean/bay/cove were defined by the USGA as lateral water hazards. The USGA implements a Local Rule at all of its championships for lateral water hazards. If a lateral water hazard is marked on only one side, it is deemed to extend to infinity. The lateral water hazards along the ocean at Pebble Beach were marked on only one side, which made the Pacific Ocean, at least for the purposes of this discussion, the largest lateral water hazard in the world.

When a wayward shot came to rest on the beach, the player's ball was in the lateral water and, as every golfer knows, a player is entitled to play from within the hazard. In addition to others, Andrew Putnam and Paul Goydos both found themselves on, and played from, the beach during the second round.

Goydos made a stroke from the beach that came to rest in thick fescue on a steep bank, still within the hazard. Now what could he do? The stroke and distance option of Rule 27-1 (Ball Lost or Out of Bounds) would require him to drop a ball and play again from the beach. He had already shown to himself that this option was risky at best. Even if the ball had been found, he could not deem it unplayable because it was still in the lateral water hazard. Rule 28 permits a player to deem his ball



unplayable any place on the course except when it is in a water hazard or lateral water hazard.

Fortunately for Goydos and all players who faced this situation, they had other options available.

Rule 26-2 (Ball Played Within Water Hazard) articulates those options. This rule permitted Goydos to proceed under any of the lateral water hazard options that were available to him *before* he made the ill-conceived decision to play from the beach. Under penalty of one stroke, he could:

- Play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which his last stroke from outside the lateral water hazard was made.
- Drop a ball behind the lateral water hazard, keeping the spot where the ball last crossed the

hazard margin between the hole and the spot on which a ball is dropped with no limit to how far behind the hazard the ball is dropped. In many of the lateral water hazard rulings at the Open, this option was not available because a straight line from the hole through the spot where the ball last crossed the hazard margin extended into the ocean.

- Drop a ball within two club-lengths of the point, and not nearer the hole, where the original ball last crossed the margin of the hazard before it came to rest on the beach.

- Drop a ball within two club-lengths of a point, and not nearer the hole, on the opposite margin of the hazard, equidistant from the hole. This option was either not available because the

opposite margin was out of bounds or not a practical location.

- For lateral water hazard rulings on several holes at Pebble Beach, players had a drop zone available as an additional option. On the 18th hole, because a bunker was contiguous with the lateral water hazard, in many cases, a player would be required to drop a ball in the bunker when proceeding under the third option described above. To prevent such a harsh outcome, the USGA installed a series of drop zones as an additional option to those listed above. Players were entitled to use the nearest drop zone.

So, players should remember this the next time they attempt to hit a ball out of a hazard but fail to do so. There are options within the rules that help keep you in the game. 🏌️