

Going green

The putting surface is a location where the actions of players frequently go awry

During the course of 18 holes, golfers spend a lot of time on the putting green. So it comes to reason that a fair number of rules infractions take place here, too. Here's a look at some of the more common problem areas.

- **Tending the flagstick.**

A player *may* elect to have the flagstick attended for *any* stroke, regardless of where the ball is located. There is no stipulation that says a player's ball must be on the green in order to have the flagstick attended. However, at all times, the player's ball must not strike the flagstick when it is being attended, removed or held up (Rule 17-3). The penalty is two strokes in stroke play or a loss of hole in match play.

Typically, a player chooses to have the flagstick attended simply to indicate the position of the hole. One error frequently made by new players is that they putt with an unattended flagstick that hasn't been removed from the hole. Rule 17-3 states, in part, "The player's ball must not strike . . . the flagstick in the hole, unattended, when the stroke has been made *on* the putting green."

The reason behind this is the flagstick could act as a backboard of sorts, assisting a ball that otherwise has been struck too hard. The rules permit this only for a stroke that is made from a place *other* than the putting green.

- **A ball stops on the edge of the hole**

Players will go to virtually any length to try to get the ball to drop, including waving their hand back and forth in an effort to create enough wind to nudge the ball forward, or casting a shadow on the ball, believing this will cause the grass to wilt and thereby allow the



ball to fall into the hole.

Rule 16-2 states that when any part of the ball overhangs the lip of the hole, "the player is allowed enough time to reach the hole without unreasonable delay and an additional 10 seconds to determine if the ball is at rest. If by then the ball has not fallen into the hole, it is deemed to be at rest." At this point, the player should tap the ball into the cup because subsequent waiting may bring a penalty stroke for undue delay.

- **A ball at rest is moved**

This generally happens in one of two ways: when a player is making a practice stroke and he accidentally gets the clubhead too close to the ball, or a player prepares to putt and the ball moves

before the player makes his putting stroke.

In the first scenario, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke (Rule 18-2) and the ball must be replaced.

In the second example, Rule 18-2b says, "If a player's ball in play moves after he has addressed it . . . the player is deemed to have moved the ball and incurs a penalty of one stroke. The ball must be replaced unless the movement of the ball occurs after the player has begun the stroke or the backward movement of the club for the stroke and the stroke is made."

It also is important to note that wind is not an outside agency. So, in a scenario where a player marks and replaces his ball on the green, then goes to look at the line of the putt, only to see that wind has blown the ball to a new location, that's the luck of the draw and the player, at no penalty, should play from where the ball has come to rest. Cross your fingers that new location is closer to the hole. 🍀