

# Good news for Windy City golfers

How do you proceed if a gust of wind blows your ball from its resting place before you can play it?

Last year, the answer to that question would have depended upon whether you had addressed the ball before it moved. If you had not yet done that, you would play it from its new location without penalty. Rule 18-2b—ball moving after address states, “If a player’s ball in play moves after he has addressed it (other than as a result of a stroke), 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.”

In the past few years, several tour players incurred penalties under Rule 18-2b for their ball moving after address. Rory McIlroy incurred a penalty under Rule 18-2b in the British Open and Webb Simpson lost the Zurich Classic in a playoff with Bubba Watson after he was penalized for his ball moving on the 15th green during the final round.

Fortunately for all of us, in 2012 an exception has been added to Rule 18-2b, and it says:

“If it is known or virtually certain that the player did not cause his ball to move, Rule 18-2b does not apply.” So now, if it is virtually certain that the wind caused your ball to move, you play your ball



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from its new position, without penalty, regardless of whether you had already addressed it.

This means if your ball moves to a better location (closer to the hole, or even in the hole) or a worse location (farther from the hole, or even into a water hazard), you must accept the improved or worsened result. The same holds true if some other element of the weather, such as rain or sleet, causes your ball to move.

If, on the other hand, it is known or virtually certain your ball is moved by some agency other than the weather, such as a squirrel, another ball or a person, then your ball must be replaced, but there is still no penalty under Rule

18-2b. There may be a penalty involved under a different section of Rule 18 if the agency that caused your ball to move was a player, a caddie or a player’s equipment.

Finally, if your ball moves after address and it is not known or virtually certain that its movement was caused by weather or some other agency, then 18-2b is still in effect. You incur a penalty stroke and you must replace your ball.

For example, the exception to Rule 18-2b does not apply if gravity or some other undeterminable force suddenly causes your ball to start moving.

Therefore, the word to the wise in the Windy City is, if your ball is at rest on a slope of a quick green, and you suspect it could begin

moving without the wind being the clear cause, then you might want to putt without addressing your ball; that is, by not grounding your club before you putt. Note: The definition of “addressing the ball” has been simplified for 2012 as well. It no longer includes taking your stance. A player has now “addressed the ball” when he has grounded his club immediately in front of or behind his ball. 🌟

*Glenn Stith is a member of the Rules Education Committee of the Chicago District Golf Association and a member of the USGA Women’s Amateur Public Links Committee.*