

BY MATT PEKAREK



LOVIN' OUR GADGETS

During a round, the rules permit the use of certain devices, but not all high-tech equipment is permitted

One principle guides the United States Golf Association in determining whether the use of any item is in breach of Rule 14-3, and as the Rules of Golf states: Golf is a challenging game in which success should depend on the judgment, skills, and abilities of the player.

Rule 14-3 prohibits the use of any artificial device, unusual equipment, or the use of any equipment in an abnormal manner that might assist the player in making a stroke, help gauge or measure distance or conditions that might affect his play, or might assist in gripping the club.

While that prohibits the use of many items, a number of exceptions are permitted. Plain gloves can be worn. Drying or moisturizing agents, including resin and powder, can be used. A towel or handkerchief can be wrapped around the grip.

A significant exception allows the use of equipment or devices that alleviate a legitimate medical condition as long as such use does not give the player an

undue advantage.

Equipment can be used in a "traditionally accepted manner." *The Decisions on the Rules of Golf* provides examples of what this provision does and does not allow. Some of them are:

Eyeglasses or binoculars are permitted. Detailed yardage books can be used. Plain items, like a pencil or scorecard, can be held up to gauge yardage as long as the item does not contain a scale or markings to facilitate the measuring. Adhesive tape is acceptable on hands or glove if it is not used excessively and generally is not thicker than the typical golf glove. Hand warmers can be used to keep a player warm, but they cannot be used to warm golf balls during play. A club can be used in place of a plumb line, but an actual plumb line cannot be used.

One cannot listen to music or other broadcasts to calm nerves or maintain swing tempo, but one can turn on a radio to get weather reports or check the news.

This is one of many instances in the Rules when intent determines if an action is permitted or not. Additionally, while

a player is able to obtain area weather reports, one cannot use equipment to measure on-course weather conditions, including wind speed, humidity and temperature.

A player cannot steady his hand by holding a ball against the grip while putting. Training aids, swing aids, alignment rods and stretching devices cannot be used during the round.

While the Rules prohibit the use of distance measuring devices, be it a low-tech tape measure or a high-tech range-finder, an optional Local Rule allows the use of such devices. As a result, distance measuring devices are commonly used at many courses.

One of the changes that went into effect in 2016 involves the penalty for violating Rule 14-3.

Previously, a player violating this rule was disqualified immediately. Now, however, the penalty for violating this rule once is a loss of hole in match play or two strokes in stroke play. Any subsequent violation of the rule, even if unrelated to the first violation, results in disqualification.

With all of this known, if a player is uncertain if the Rules allow the use of a specific piece of equipment, the best way to proceed is to check with the course or committee before teeing off. 🏌️

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