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# Experience: not always the best teacher

Regardless of how long you've played the game, there's a chance to learn something new

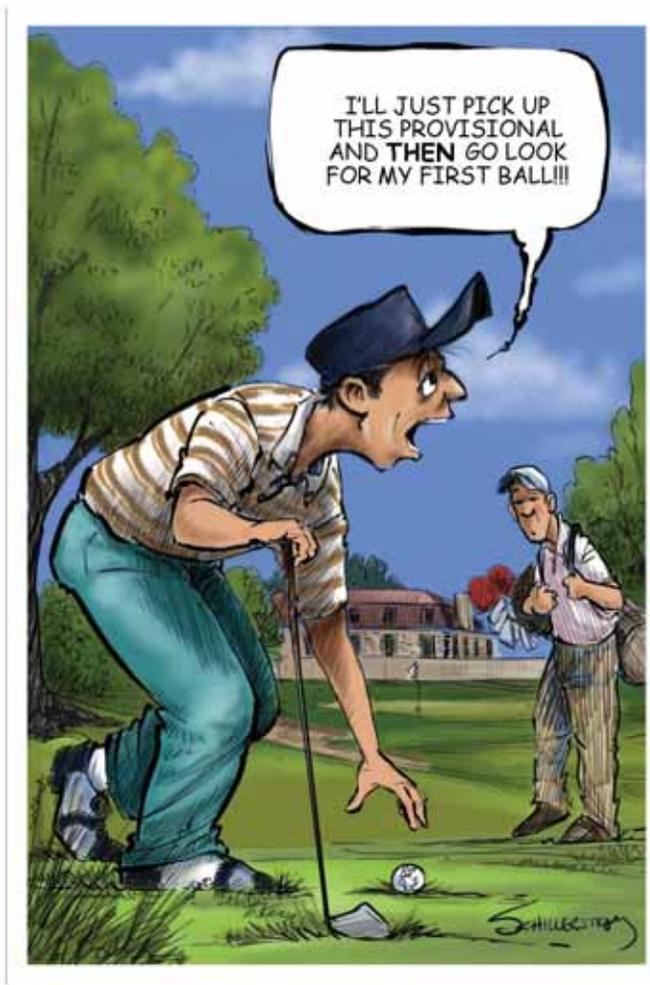
Generally, we believe that a player who has competed at the game's highest level for a long time does not compound mistakes that add penalty strokes to his scorecard.

We would put Mark Calcavecchia in this category without much concern because he's been a full-time member of the PGA Tour for nearly 30 years; there's little he hasn't seen in all those years.

But proof that this presumption not always is the case was demonstrated at this year's British Open, where Calcavecchia, a former champion, showed that anyone who plays the game can make an ill-fated decision that gets him into trouble with the Rules of Golf.

Following a bogey-free second round at The Old Course in St. Andrews, Scotland, Calcavecchia was alone in second place. But unfortunately for him, his spot among the leaders didn't last long. Playing in the last group during the third round on Saturday, Calcavecchia started with three straight bogeys. He temporarily righted the ship with a par at the fourth hole, but it was at the par-5 fifth where Calcavecchia's promising weekend began to unravel.

His tee shot came to rest in a fairway bunker. After playing out sideways, into the fairway, his third shot was believed to have finished somewhere deep in a large gorse



bush. Knowing that the ball might be lost, Calcavecchia properly played a provisional. After playing the provisional, he supposedly was told that his original ball had been found in the gorse, so he picked up the provisional ball and walked to the area where he thought his ball had been found. However, the ball that had been found was not his. The search for his ball continued for the five minutes allotted under the Rules. When that time period had expired without Calcavecchia finding his original ball, it became a lost ball.

At this point, Calcavecchia

realized he had another problem.

He normally would go and continue playing the hole with his provisional, which became his ball in play when the original ball was lost (Rule 27-2b), but the provisional had been picked up and was safely nestled in one of Calcavecchia's back pockets.

This episode required another visit to the rules book, where Rule 18-2a provided guidance. Since the original ball was lost, the provisional ball was in play. When Calcavecchia lifted the ball in play (provisional ball) without authority under the Rules, he incurred a penalty stroke and was required to replace it. Because he did not know the exact spot from where it was lifted, he properly dropped a ball as near as possible to the place where it had been (Rule 20-3b). From

there, Calcavecchia continued play and eventually holed out and made a score of 9.

This incident can teach all golfers a lesson as Calcavecchia could have softened the blow by proceeding on the side of caution in regard to the Rules. The lessons to be learned are, 1) a player should never touch a ball in play unless he is certain he is permitted to do so under the Rules, and 2) know the difference between a ball and *the* ball.

It might have taken Calcavecchia many years to learn these lessons, but you can be certain he now knows both of them quite well. 🏌️