

Getting out of trouble

Just because a player is unable to play his ball doesn't mean there is a shortage of good options

No matter how good a player you are, there will come a time when a shot goes awry and the ball comes to rest in a location from which it is difficult, if not impossible, to play.

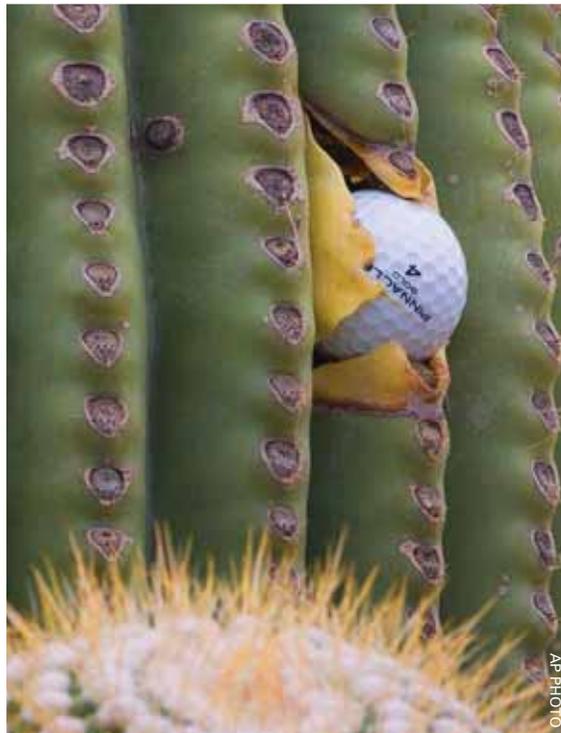
Perhaps the ball has been found among a tangled network of tree roots, or up against a cactus, under an unmovable boulder or in the midst of a dense shrub. When a player decides his ball is such that it is impractical to try to make a stroke, it is helpful to know the options under which he may proceed using Rule 28 (Ball Unplayable).

First, the player is the sole judge as to whether his ball is unplayable, and the player can deem his ball to be unplayable anywhere on the course except when the ball is in a water hazard. When a player is faced with a ball that is unplayable, there are three options he may employ, each of them under a penalty of one stroke:

A) Play a ball as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played;

B) Drop a ball behind the point where the ball lay, keeping that point directly between the hole and the spot on which the ball is dropped, with no limit to how far from that point the ball may be dropped;

C) Drop a ball within two club-lengths of the spot where the ball lay, but not nearer the hole.



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Occasionally, a player will try to play a ball when he might be better off declaring his ball unplayable, and it is in these situations that knowing the particulars of Rule 28 can be advantageous and, at the same time, save a player strokes.

A paragraph in Rule 28 says, "If the unplayable ball is in a bunker, the player may proceed under Clause A, B or C. If he elects to proceed under Clause B or C, a ball must be dropped in the bunker."

However, there is no such stipulation as it pertains to Clause A, and because some players are intimidated by bunkers and fear playing from them, knowing this option under Rule 28 might be helpful.

Let's look at a possible situation where a player is faced with a delicate pitch shot over a steep-faced bunker but mis-hits the ball and now finds himself in a *really* tough lie in the sand. Realizing that it might take several shots to get out of the bunker, the player could exercise Clause A as explained previously. This allows the player, under penalty of one stroke, to play "as nearly as possible at the spot from which the original ball was last played," which, in this scenario, is *outside* the bunker.

As always, it is helpful to examine the surroundings before a player makes a decision on which of the unplayable options is best. Several years ago, at

the WGC-Accenture Match Play Championship near Tucson, Ariz., a player's tee shot was partially imbedded near the base of a cactus. Deciding to exercise Clause C and drop within two club-lengths of the ball's location, he failed to notice that recent heavy rains had created a series of narrow, deep gullies that ran through the area where he was about to drop. Yes, by now the outcome was predictable; a bad situation became worse when the player dropped his original ball and watched it roll into one of the gullies, where he had no choice but to declare it unplayable again.

The game need not be that painful. 🟡