

# Rule Tip of the Week

## Rulings from the Oglethorpe 2013

The Oglethorpe Invitational is a premier amateur event in the southeast that is held at the Wilmington Island Club in Savannah, Georgia. This year, the 54-hole tournament featured aspiring future Tour players from 13 states and 5 foreign countries, some of whom needed assistance in the following situations:

Heavy rainfall prompted numerous mushrooms to emerge during the early morning hours of the first round. Unfortunately, the ball of one of the competitors came to rest right behind a couple of mushrooms. When he asked if he could remove the mushrooms, he was informed that removing the mushrooms would be an infraction of Rule 13-2 [Improving Lie, Area of Intended Stance or Swing, or Line of Play] by moving, bending or breaking anything growing or fixed.



One of the competitors carelessly dropped his ball-marker as he was marking the position of his ball on the putting green, thereby causing his ball to move. Rule 20-1 [Lifting and Marking] advises, *“If a ball ... is accidentally moved in the process of lifting the ball under a Rule or marking its position, the ball ... must be replaced. There is no penalty, provided the movement of the ball ... is directly attributable to the specific act of marking the position of or lifting the ball. Otherwise, the player incurs a penalty of one stroke under this Rule or Rule 18-2a.”* Clarification of *“directly attributable”* is conveniently provided in Decision 20-1/15 [Meaning of *“Directly Attributable”* in Rules 20-1 and 20-3a]. In this case, the player incurred a one-stroke penalty because dropping a ball-marker from any height is not considered to be directly attributable to the specific act of marking the position of the ball.

Another player saw a maintenance cart accidentally run over and push his ball into the ground as he approached his ball sitting up in the rough. Rule 18-1 [Ball at Rest Moved – By Outside Agency] states, *“If a ball at rest is moved by an outside agency, there is no penalty and the ball must be replaced.”* In this case, the player was not required to replace the ball in the embedded lie because Rule 20-3c [Placing and Replacing – Lie of Ball to be Placed or Replaced Altered] notes, *“If the original lie of the ball to be ... replaced has been altered ... the ball must be placed in the nearest lie most similar to the original lie that is not more than one club-length from the original lie, not nearer the hole and not in a hazard.”* The second of the two photographs to the right shows the placement of the ball adjacent to the depression created by the cart.



One competitor’s drive disappeared in the sand near the lip of a fairway bunker. In order to try to find his ball within the five-minute time limit of Rule 27-1c [Stroke and Distance; Ball Out of Bounds; Ball Not Found Within Five Minutes], the player started digging in the sand with a club at first, and then with his hands. After dislodging the ball from its buried lie within a couple of minutes, the player was allowed to re-create the lie per Rule 12-1a [Searching for or Identifying Ball Covered by Sand] which permits the player to leave a small part of the ball visible, as shown in the second photograph to the right.

However, note that the player was not allowed to smooth the area of the bunker that was disturbed during the search as that would have improved his line of play. See Decision 13-4/11 [Smoothing Footprints Made in Search for Ball in Bunker Before Playing Stroke from Bunker].



Another competitor sought relief under Rule 25-2 [Embedded Ball] upon discovering his ball in a leaf-covered depression in a wooded area. Rule 20-1/0.7 [Lifting Ball to Determine Application of Rule] permits a player to mark and lift his ball to determine if he is entitled to relief from a condition, provided he announces his intention in advance to give his fellow competitors the opportunity to observe the lifting. When the player lifted the ball, there was no pitch-mark, i.e., the surface of the ground under the leaves was not broken. Thus, the player was denied relief and he was required to recreate the lie before playing his next stroke. Decision 25-2/0.5 [When Ball Embedded in Ground] states, *“For a ball to be considered embedded, it must be in its own pitch-mark with part of the ball below the level of the ground. However, the ball does not necessarily have to touch the soil to be considered embedded, e.g., grass or loose impediments may intervene between the ball and the soil.”*



The Notice to Competitors advised that the course boundaries were defined by white PVC pipe stakes. One competitor drove his ball near the course boundary on the 7<sup>th</sup> hole. According to the Definition of “Out of Bounds,” a ball is out of bounds when all of it lies of bounds. The ball was so close to the boundary line that a Rules Official had to stretch a string between the adjacent PVC stakes to verify that the ball was in bounds. Note the white paint sprayed at the base of the stake to ensure the accurate relocation of the boundary stake should it be moved for any reason.



A player's ball came to rest among some grass clippings that had been deposited in a wooded area to the right of a green. The player sought relief from the clippings and was informed, per Decision 25/11 [Grass Cuttings], that grass clippings are ground under repair only if they have been piled for removal. In this case, the grass clippings were strewn on the ground, and were clearly not piled for removal.

