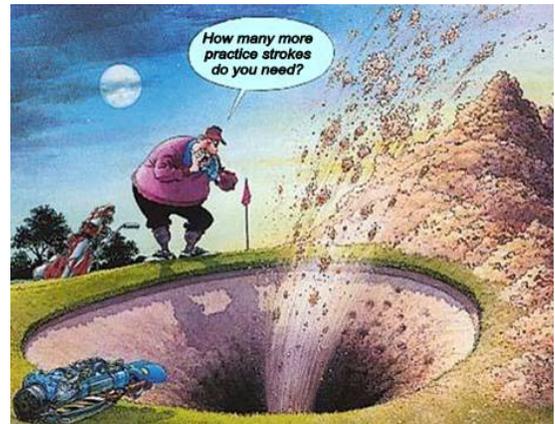


Rule Tip of the Week

User-Friendly Multiple Breaches

The USGA recognizes the fact that you simply can't fix stupid! The USGA also understands that even the best of us has the occasional brain fart on the golf course wherein we breach (a) the same Rule more than once or (b) separate Rules in a single act.

Take, for example, the poor fellow in the adjacent cartoon who either forgets about, or is completely unaware of, the prohibition in Rule 13-4 [Ball in Hazard; Prohibited Actions] against grounding his club before making a stroke at his ball in the bunker. The penalty in stroke play for breaching Rule 13-4 is two strokes. Will he be penalized two strokes for every practice swing he has made in the bunker prior to playing his ball?



To help this poor soul, and many of us like him, the USGA has enacted user-friendly Decision 1-4/12 [Player Breaches Rules More Than Once; Whether Multiple Penalties Should Be Applied]. This Decision sets forth the following four (4) scenarios wherein a single penalty is applied even though multiple breaches of the Rules have occurred:

1. One Act Results in One Rule Being Breached More Than Once

For example, in stroke play, a player putts his ball on the putting green and it strikes a fellow-competitor's ball in breach of Rule 19-5a [Ball in Motion Deflected or Stopped by Another Ball at Rest] and then strikes another fellow-competitor's ball, for a second breach of Rule 19-5a. Despite the two breaches of Rule 19-5a, the player incurs a single two-stroke penalty.

2. One Act Results in Two Rules Being Breached

For example, in stroke play, a player, whose ball is in a bunker, decides to rake a footprint situated on his line of play. In doing so, he simultaneously breaches Rule 13-2 [Improving Lie, Area of Intended Stance or Swing, or Line of Play] by smoothing the footprint and Rule 13-4a [Ball in Hazard; Prohibited Actions] for testing the condition of the bunker by raking the sand. Due to the fact that the single act of raking resulted in two separate Rules being breached, the player incurs a single two-stroke penalty.

3. Related Acts Result in One Rule Being Breached More Than Once

For example, in stroke play and as illustrated in the cartoon, a player takes several practice swings in a hazard, touching the ground each time. All of the practice swings are related acts breaching a single Rule, in this case Rule 13-4. Despite the multiple breaches of Rule 13-4, the player incurs a single two-stroke penalty.

4. Related Acts Result in Two Rules Being Breached

For example, in stroke play, a player is considering putting his ball from a bunker and rakes several footprints in the bunker on his line of play. The player has breached both Rule 13-2 and Rule 13-4 multiple times by related acts. In this case, the player only incurs a two-stroke penalty.