

August Miscellany



Afterthoughts on Spieth's penalty drop at The Open

Most readers will already have polarised opinions on how Jordan Spieth handled his unplayable lie on the 13th hole of his final round of The Open, at Royal Birkdale. I have received several emails asking me for my opinion, so here are some miscellaneous afterthoughts;

- The time taken to obtain an official ruling does not count towards any possible undue delay, unless of course the circumstance is frivolous.
- If Spieth and Kuchar had not been the final pair out on the course I am sure that they would have asked the following group through.
- The point where Jordan elected to take a penalty drop under Rule 28b was on the flagline, which is an imaginary line drawn from the hole past where his ball deemed unplayable was at rest. Jordan, his caddie and the match official all spent time on top of the dune ensuring that this was so, which was the cause of much of the delay.
- Jordan purposely went back sufficiently far along this flagline to ensure that the nearest point of relief from the TIOs (trucks) was on the short cut practice ground to the right and not in the rough to the left.
- Having determined this relief point, which was on wooden flooring between two trucks, the referee correctly told him that there was no need to drop the ball there. The reason for this was that anywhere that was within two club-lengths of this point would have given the same nearest point of relief on the practice area (a ball has to be re-dropped if it rolls further than two club-lengths from the point where it was dropped).
- Having determined the point of relief under penalty of one stroke, Jordan was then entitled to free relief from the temporary immovable obstructions (the trucks) under a Local Rule that is used at most tournaments, but is not relevant for most amateur competitions.
- Matt Kuchar had no reason to complain about the delay, as seeking rulings from officials is

common in the professional game. He was entitled to be frustrated, but his patient demeanour throughout the whole incident, and indeed subsequently, was impeccable.

- Jordan Spieth demonstrated a complete understanding of Rule 28 relating to an unplayable ball and acted throughout the incident calmly, rationally and professionally; an example to us all.
- A positive outcome to this well-publicised Rules incident is that thousands of golfers now have a better understanding of the Rule 28b option, which is often not considered by amateur golfers when they deem a ball unplayable.

If you still are unsure about any part of this ruling I recommend that you view the detailed explanation at [this link](#), by David Rickman, Chief of Rules at R&A.

What Constitutes a Concession? – Elizabeth Moon

Elizabeth Moon lost her semi-final match of the US Girls' Junior title at Boone Valley GC, Missouri, in the cruelest of fashions. She missed a 6-foot putt to win the match on the first hole of sudden death and then without looking up, hooked her ball back from the lip to practice the stroke that she should have made. As she had not given Shepherd any opportunity to concede the putt before touching her ball in play, her action incurred a penalty of one stroke, meaning that she could not then halve the hole and so her opponent Erica Shepherd had won the match. It is almost certain that the putt would have been conceded had Shepherd been given the opportunity to do so, but she had not. The match referee quickly walked onto the putting green to explain to Moon that the penalty under Rule 18-2 had been incurred, because a valid concession cannot be given after the fact.

The important lesson here for all golfers is that you may not assume that your opponent will concede your next stroke, you must receive a positive indication that this is the case, from them and from no-one else (e.g. their caddie). Other points to remember about concessions are contained in Rule 2-4;

A player may concede a match at any time prior to the start or conclusion of that match.

A player may concede a hole at any time prior to the start or conclusion of that hole.

A player may concede his opponent's next stroke at any time, provided the opponent's ball is at rest. The opponent is considered to have holed out with his next stroke, and the ball may be removed by either side.

A concession may not be declined or withdrawn.

There is a video of this incident at [this link](#) (starting around at 4 mins 20 seconds). Erica Shepherd went on to win the final and the US Junior Girls' title.

Drops from Bunker Linings – Charley Hoffman

On 29th May this year I blogged about Branden Grace using the Rules to his advantage by claiming (unfair?) relief from a rubber lining in the bunker in which his ball was plugged on an upslope lie (see [this link](#)). Well, here we go again! Charley Hoffman was faced with a plugged bunker lie at the RBC Canadian Open, shuffled his feet in the sand to take a stance and called over a Rules official, claiming that his feet were touching the 'concrete' lining of the bunker. You can make up your own mind as to whether Hoffman should have been given relief from this immovable obstruction, or if he should have been made to play from the bunker by viewing [this video link](#) (scroll down to the video).

Remember the days when bunkers were hazards in the non-golfing sense of the word? As a member of a Club that has new, concrete lined bunkers, I recommend that other Committees that have them should at least consider introducing a Local Rule along the following lines;

"The concrete bunker linings are integral parts of the course. The ball must be played as it lies or deemed unplayable (Rule 28)."

Good golfing,

Barry Rhodes