



tee time

Oct 2022

NEWSLETTER OF THE WELLINGTON GOLF REFEREES ASSOCIATION INC.

New Rules Coming January 2023

The scheduled fully revised Rules of Golf to be effective from January will be advised to international golf federations in early November. Despite our requests to see the



Official Guide 2023

changes, the Rules authorities (the R&A and the USGA) are keeping their cards close to their chests. There is speculation on the Internet about what changes we can expect, but nothing we can verify. The WGRA plans to advise all Wellington area clubs of the

significant changes as soon as possible after their release.

Rules Clarifications Jul/Oct 22 Updates

The quarterly Rules clarifications issued by the R&A and USGA on the 3rd of October had no new clarifications. There was one new clarification in July: if a player discovers a non-permissible external attachment on their club (eg a sticker on the clubface) they may remove the attachment without penalty to render the club conforming again. This is very likely a reaction to Hideki Matsuyama's DQ on the PGA Tour in June for paint on his fairway wood clubface. (See below).

The 'Leaf' Rule?

There has been some publicity about the so-called 'leaf' rule in US golf publications recently with the onset of fall in the northern



hemisphere. I thought this story would simply refer to moving loose impediments. But in

fact, the concern is balls being lost in piles of fallen leaves. And there is a Model Local Rule (MLR) that allows clubs to apply a remedy. MLR F-14 allows committees to treat piles of loose impediments as GUR from which free relief is allowed. There are definitely some courses in NZ that could usefully use this MLR in autumn!

Is This Legal?

Can you legally reach across the hole and putt the ball back towards the hole? If you do, are you not standing astride the line of your putt? Well, no, because the line of your putt ends at



the hole. So, although I've never seen it done, it is okay under the Rules. But remember, you must strike the ball, not drag it!

Take Advantage of the Rules

A couple of times this year I've noticed pros not taking potential advantage of the Rules. One was at the road hole bunker during the Open in July. The player's ball lay against the front wall



of the bunker. He elected to play backwards with one hand, being fortunate to

move the ball a foot or so to a playable position. But had he declared the ball unplayable, he could have achieved the same result but with more certainty by being able to drop the ball anywhere within two club lengths in the bunker.

Rules Incidents

Luke Donald: Wrong Ball

Luke Donald had a first at the Italian Open in September. He played a wrong ball in the second round when in contention. The stray lay near his own ball in the rough on the 16th hole. Fortunately, he realised his error before teeing off at the 17th and corrected his mistake. It's good reminder to always positively identify your ball.

Thomas Pieters Escapes Penalty

Belgian Thomas Pieters got away with one recently at the French Open when he was



distracted when putting by his son coughing during his stroke. The ball

travelled only a few feet coming up well short of the hole. Two Rules officials deemed it an accidental hit and allowed him to replace the ball without penalty. However, later the chief referee reversed the ruling pointing out that

Pieters had made a stroke. The original ruling stood since Pieters acted under the guidance of a referee.

Dylan Frittelli - Tree Trouble

Dylan Frittelli had an animated discussion with a



Rules official at TPC Deere Run when his drive ended up in an animal hole hard against a tree. The referee told him he wasn't entitled to free relief because of the tree. Frittelli took

unplayable relief but, strongly disagreeing with the ruling, asked to meet a second official later. Who, of course, confirmed the ruling.

Justin Thomas – Drain at US Open



Talking of players frustrated by officials' rulings, Justin Thomas

made his displeasure known at the US Open when his ball landed near a drain. The official denied free relief when Thomas admitted he probably wouldn't hit the drain on his swing. After the resultant poor stroke, he was overheard calling the ruling 'bulls***'.

Equipment Woes

Hideki's DQ



As noted earlier, Hideki Matsuyama suffered the first DQ of his career at the Memorial Tournament earlier this year, when

paint was seen on the face of the club, which

made it non-conforming. Apparently, the paint had been applied to the 3 wood to help with alignment at address. The officials ruled it a breach of Rule 4.1a for which the penalty is DQ.

Maja Stark DQ



Maja Stark was another DQ at the Ascendant LPGA event earlier this month. She

used a new Ping driver, which she had been trialling. It is actually a conforming club, but hadn't yet been added to the USGA's list of conforming clubs. Frustrating, but to her credit, Maja accepted the blame for the mistake.

Pro DQ'd on 1st Hole at DP Tour Q School

Young American Blake Abercrombie travelled to Denmark to attempt to qualify for the DP World Tour, paying a Euro2000 entry fee for the privilege. Unfortunately, he was DQ'd on his very first hole for using a rangefinder. A fellow American had no sympathy: there was a sign on the first tee saying rangefinders prohibited, and the starter reminded every group of the ban.

US Amateur Equipment Violation

I pity poor Ty Gingerich who was DQ'd from the US Amateur four ball tournament back in March



for having two grips on his putter. Golf has some arcane rules especially when it comes

to equipment, but this one must take the cake. The rule says that you can have split grips, but among the specs is a requirement that they be separated by at least 1.5 inches. Yep, Ty's grips were less than the ordained distance apart. Oh dear! To his credit, he accepted the ruling.

WGRA News

Bill Cracks 200 Days Officiating!

Our president, Bill Stratford recently passed 200



days refereeing. He's been involved since 2000, 22 years. 200 days amounts to about 1600 hours on courses assisting players with their Rules decisions. Of course, the Rules have not been static all that time, so like any professional, he's had to keep up the study, as well as lead a bunch of others in his role as WGRA president. Well done, Bill!

Rules Questions or Incidents

If you have any questions on anything to do with the Rules of Golf, any observations or comments, or rules incidents to share, please do send them to Terry Gardiner at gardfam77@gmail.com

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