

THE WINDS OF KAPALUA

The weather conditions for the Plantation Course at Kapalua for the Hyundai Tournament of Champions wreaked havoc on the opening event for the PGA Tour for 2013. The balls were blowing off the green and even off of the tee. After several false starts the tournament, which was supposed to begin on Friday, finally got underway with 36 holes being played on the following Monday and a final 18 holes on Tuesday. Because 54 holes were completed, the event was considered to be “official” and Dustin Johnson was the ultimate victor.

Many of you may have wondered what the consequences would be under the Rules of Golf if a player’s ball at rest were blown off the green into a bunker, into a water hazard, or even out of bounds. The answer is found in the definitions of the terms “move or moved” and “outside agency” and the provisions of Rule 18-1.

In golf, a ball has moved only if it “leaves its position and comes to rest in any other place.” If it merely oscillates, then it is not moving as far as the Rules of Golf are concerned. Most of us know that it is a breach of the Rules to make a stroke at a moving ball, but since oscillation is not movement, it is permissible to make a stroke at an oscillating ball [See Decision 14-5/2].

Rule 18-1 provides: “If a ball at rest is *moved* by an *outside agency*, there is no penalty and the ball must be replaced.” What is an “outside agency”? The Definition tells us that: (1) in match play, it is any agency other than either the player’s or opponent’s side, any caddie of either side, any ball played by either side at the hole being played or any equipment of either side”; and (2) in stroke play, it is any agency other than the competitor’s side, any caddie of the side, any

ball played by the side at the hole being played or any equipment of the side.” The Definition also explicitly states “Neither wind nor water is an outside agency.”

So, if a player’s ball at rest is moved by the wind, then it has NOT been moved by an *outside agency*. Thus, Rule 18-1 does not apply to such an event and the ball is not to be replaced. It must be played from its new position. If it has been blown into a bunker, the player must play from the bunker; if it has been blown into a water hazard, the player must play it as it lies or take relief under Rule 26-1 dealing with balls in a water hazard or lateral water hazard. If the ball has been blown out of bounds, the player must proceed under Rule 27-1, under penalty of stroke and distance, and play again from the spot where he or she last played.

But wait - what if the wind blows the ball into the hole? Then it’s your lucky day - pick it out of the hole and go on to the next!

What if the wind blows a tumbleweed, a paper bag, or some other object into the ball and the ball moves? In such a situation, Rule 18-1 does apply. The object blown by the wind is an outside agency. The ball must be replaced on its original spot without penalty and played from there. See Decisions 18-1/6 and 18-1/7.

If a player drops his towel on the ground, and the wind blows his towel into the ball and moves it, what then? Remember – the towel is the player’s equipment. Since it was the player’s own equipment that caused the ball to move, the player is deemed to have caused his ball at rest to move under Rule 18-2a, resulting in a one stroke penalty in both match play and stroke play. The ball must be replaced.

Suppose you have already replaced your ball on the green, lifted your marker and then the wind blows the ball to a new location? The ball was in play as soon as it was replaced

(whether or not the marker was lifted). Since the wind is not an outside agency, play the ball from its new location. [Decisions 18-1/12 and 20-4/1.]

OK – what if the ball is lifted and marked and the wind blows the marker to a new location? In this instance the ball has not yet been put back into play. Rule 20-3a requires that it be put back into play on the spot from which it was lifted. So, replace the marker – no penalty [Decision 20-1/10.5].

Replacing a moved ball when it shouldn't be replaced or failing to replace a moved ball when it should be replaced will both result in a loss of hole penalty in match play or a 2-stroke penalty in stroke play because you have played from a wrong place [Rule 20-7].

If you learn these points and keep your wits about you when playing in windy conditions, you will be able to avoid unnecessary penalty strokes.

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