

## NEW GOLF RULES FROM JANUARY 1, 2019

### PENALTY AREAS

In 2019, ‘water hazards’ will be replaced by the expanded concept of ‘**penalty areas.**’ As now, players will get relief with a one stroke penalty if their ball comes to rest in this area. But, there will no longer be any special restrictions when a ball is in a penalty area. Here’s the detail:

There will be **two types of penalty area.** The first will include all areas currently defined in the Rules as a water hazard or lateral water hazard. The second will include any other areas the Committee chooses to define as penalty areas. Penalty areas may therefore include desert, jungle, lava rock fields and so on.

The two types of penalty areas will be known by the colour of their marking: **yellow**, which gives two relief options; and **red** which gives the additional option of lateral relief. Committees will be given the discretion to mark all penalty areas as red so that lateral relief will always be allowed. The term “hazard” will no longer be used in the Rules.

As a result of these changes, the General Committee has approved the following changes to the course:

- **On 7**, the Red stakes on LHS (as seen from the tee) to be moved out along the lines of the little trees and made visible. An intermediate cut of rough to be introduced from the current first cut to the new Red stake line.
- **On 9**, the Lake to be changed to be a Red penalty area. There is sufficient space on the other side of the lake to enable dropping should a ball hit the tree and go back into the water.
- **On 15**, the Red stakes around the lake to be extended back in a straight line back to the boundary fence.

A player will be allowed to touch or move loose impediments and touch the ground with hand or club for any reason. For example, a player can ground the club right behind the ball. However, they must not improve conditions for the stroke.

#### **Reasons for change**

The options to take relief back on a line behind any water hazard or within two club-lengths of where a ball entered a lateral water hazard have become important for pace of play. They mean the player can usually play from near the hazard, rather than having to go back some distance to play from where the previous stroke was made.

It has been recognised that requiring areas to contain water was an arbitrary reason for permitting such relief options. For reasons such as safety and pace of play, many Committees have expanded the use of lateral water hazards by marking areas that do not contain water and by marking water hazards as red where that is not specifically contemplated by the Rules.

The broader use of penalty areas will allow Committees to respond to the wide range of settings in which golf is played. They will be able to give relief from areas that present

similar obstacles to existing water hazards and cause difficulties with finding and playing a ball. This will also meet practical needs about pace of play.

Giving Committees the discretion to mark all penalty areas as red will make it simpler for players to learn the relief options and will further help the pace of play. The current distinction between yellow and red water hazards is not always well understood.

A strict prohibition on touching or moving loose impediments or touching the ground in a water hazard has never been practical. It created confusion and complications in applying the Rules. For example, it was necessary to decide when a player was or was not 'testing', what constituted touching 'as a result of or to prevent falling', and similar questions. So a series of exceptions were recognised in Rule 13-4 (see Exception 1), Rule 12-1 and various Decisions.

The current prohibitions have led to penalties that some view as overly harsh, such as: Where the breach was so inconsequential that the player could not have gained any advantage or where even a careful player could not have avoided the penalty, and In a televised competition, where the breach could not be detected by the player or others on the course and was discovered only through later video review.

Treating a penalty area the same as the general area for these purposes will simplify the Rules, reduce confusion and eliminate unnecessary penalties.

Removing these restrictions is consistent with the purpose of a penalty area. It's not intended to require the player to face a more difficult challenge in playing the ball, but to give the player appropriate relief options because it will often be difficult or impossible to play a ball from the penalty area, such as when the ball is under water