



TOMGC Rules and Greens

April 2018

I like it when I get a rules question after our normal play. Last month, after a Wednesday round, Scott McClellan had a good question about a ball being moved by a fellow competitor. Apparently one of his fellow competitors was taking a practice swing at a ball in play, and made contact with the ball, sending it off forward and right. The question was, is this a penalty, or because he was not making a stroke at the ball, does he just put it back where it was and try again? Well, if you look at Rule 18-2, you will find the answer. Now, a key component in this situation, is that business of the *ball being in play*. If you are on the tee box, and your ball is on a tee, or not, that ball is not yet in play until you make a stroke at it. Otherwise, you could take a practice swing and knock that ball off of the tee, and there would be no penalty, and you could just put the ball back on the tee and carry on. However, and this is important, if you make a stroke at the ball and knock it off of the tee, you must count that stroke, and now you have put the ball in play, so you must now play it from where it lies. You don't get to pick the ball up and re-tee.

Rule 18-2 says, in short, if a ball in play is moved by the player, his partner, his caddie, or his equipment, he is penalized one stroke, and must put the ball back where it was before it was moved. Now suppose the guy takes that practice stroke and moves the ball forward and decides he will take the stroke and just play the ball from where it came to rest after the practice stroke? Well, rule 18-2 does not provide this as an option. If you did not intend to hit the ball, the ball should be replaced as close as possible to where it was, and play continued with the addition of one penalty stroke.

I'm often asked about how many club-lengths are allowed when dropping a ball. Well, the basic rule is simple. If you are taking a drop with no penalty, it is one club-length. If you are taking a drop as a result of a penalty, it is two club-lengths. Again, this is a basic rule, there are other factors involved. For example, if your ball lies in the middle of the cart path, and you are a right-handed player, the nearest point of relief is going to be on the left side of the cart path, looking towards the hole. Using the club, you would use for the upcoming shot, you would take your stance and place a tee where the ball would be. Then, you are allowed an additional club length from where the tee is, using any club in your bag, going no closer to the hole. Now, the ball is dropped somewhere between those two tees. As long as the ball does not roll closer to the hole, or more than two club lengths from where it struck the course, the ball would be in play. If you are dropping a ball from a lateral hazard, and you are using the two club lengths from the margin of the hazard for your drop, you would use any club in your bag to measure two club lengths from the margin of the hazard, no closer to the hole, and drop your ball somewhere in the two-club length area. Again, as long as the ball does not roll closer to the hole, or more than two club lengths from where it struck the course, or back in the hazard, the ball is in play with the addition of the one stroke penalty. Remember, there are 5 different options for taking a drop from a lateral hazard, so know your options. Refer to rule 20 for more clarification on lifting, dropping, and placing a ball when putting it back in play. Good day, and good golf.