

# Rule Tip of the Week Butterfingers' PayDay!

Golf klutzes around the world may forever celebrate January 1, 2017 because it is the effective date for a USGA and R&A-authorized Local Rule eliminating the penalty for the accidental movement of one's ball at rest on the putting green! Here is the recommended wording for this new Local Rule:



## Accidental Movement of a Ball on a Putting Green

Rules 18-2, 18-3 and 20-1 are modified as follows:

When a player's ball lies on the putting green, there is no penalty if the ball or ball-marker is accidentally moved by the player, his partner, his opponent, or any of their caddies or equipment.

The moved ball or ball-marker must be replaced as provided in Rules 18-2, 18-3 and 20-1.

This Local Rule applies only when the player's ball or ball-marker lies on the putting green and any movement is accidental.

Note: If it is determined that a player's ball on the putting green was moved as a result of wind, water or some other natural cause such as the effects of gravity, the ball must be played as it lies from its new location. A ball-marker moved in such circumstances is replaced.

Explanatory information regarding this Local Rule, including a video along with the attached diagrams, can be found at [www.usga.org/2017localrule](http://www.usga.org/2017localrule). Courtesy of the USGA, here are some interesting excerpts from this website:

- Accidental movement can involve a variety of actions in which the player unintentionally moves his ball or ball-marker. Examples include: dropping the ball-marker on the ball, accidentally making contact with the ball when taking a practice swing near the ball, accidentally making contact when addressing the ball, etc.
- The Local Rule does not apply to any intentional lifting or moving of the ball. Examples include striking or moving the ball in anger, lifting the ball without marking it, etc.
- The movement of a ball on a putting green has been one of the many topics discussed as part of The R&A's and USGA's ongoing Rules Modernization initiative to consider comprehensive changes to the Rules of Golf. For these particular situations, it was noted that the shape, slope and condition of many putting greens today increase the chances that a ball at rest on a putting green will move, and it can be difficult to determine whether a player caused the ball to move or whether the ball was moved by wind or other natural causes. Furthermore, when a ball moves while the player is doing nothing more than taking normal actions to prepare for a stroke, it may seem unfair for the player to be penalized.
- As part of our continued review of the Rules related to ball movement, and in particular our Rules Modernization initiative, it was noted that almost all "ball moved" instances occur on the putting green, and involve very minimal movement. Frequently, the movement occurs as the player is simply taking reasonable actions in preparing for a stroke and the ball can easily be replaced. These considerations are not the same when the ball lies off the putting green and we believe it is important to retain the penalty for those instances to reinforce the principle that the ball should be played as it lies.
- The Rules of Golf are typically revised every four years, with the latest version taking effect in January 2016. The introduction of the Local Rule is outside the normal revision cycle and enables committees to eliminate the penalty for ball-moved situations on the putting green. While the relevant Rules are under consideration as part of the comprehensive Rules Modernization project, we believed it was important to allow for committees to address this issue in advance of the full changes from that project taking effect.
- While it is anticipated that the Local Rule will be widely adopted throughout the professional and elite-level amateur tournaments (including all USGA and R&A championships, qualifiers and international matches), its use is recommended for all levels of play. The adoption of the Local Rule is ultimately up to each individual committee's discretion.
- Similar to other Local Rules (for example, the Local Rule for distance-measuring devices or the Local Rule that provides relief for an embedded ball through the green), the Committee in charge of the course must put the Local Rule into effect in order for it to apply. If the Committee does not put the Local Rule into effect, Rules 18-2, 18-3, 20-1, and the associated penalties, will apply for ball-moved situations on the putting green. If you are unsure if the Committee has adopted the Local Rule, you should ask the Committee or a member of the professional staff.

# LOCAL RULE: ACCIDENTAL MOVEMENT OF A BALL ON THE PUTTING GREEN

**WHAT IT MEANS:** *The committee in charge of a competition or course now has the option to adopt a Local Rule that eliminates the penalty for **all** circumstances when a player, an opponent or either of their partners, caddies or equipment **accidentally** moves a ball or ball-marker on the putting green.*

**HOW IT WORKS** | The following are examples where the Local Rule would apply:

**IF:** When preparing to make a stroke, a player accidentally causes the ball to move...



**THEN:** No penalty, and the ball must be replaced.

**IF:** A player accidentally drops his/her ball, which hits and moves the ball-marker...



**THEN:** No penalty, and the ball-marker must be replaced.

**IF:** A player accidentally drops his/her ball-marker, which hits and moves the ball...



**THEN:** No penalty, and the ball must be replaced.

**IF:** A player accidentally kicks and moves his/her ball...



**THEN:** No penalty, and the ball must be replaced.

**HOW IT DOESN'T WORK** | The following are examples where the Local Rule would not apply:

**IF:** A player intentionally moves or lifts his/her ball on the putting green without first marking its location...

**THEN:** One-stroke penalty, and the ball must be replaced.

**IF:** A player accidentally moves his/her ball that is lying on the fairway, in the rough or in a bunker...

**THEN:** One-stroke penalty, and the ball must be replaced.

