

Rule Tip of the Week

Rule 19-5b "Down Under"

Site of the 2017 Australian Master of the Amateurs Tournament, the West Course of the Royal Melbourne Golf Club in Melbourne, Australia is a marvelous test of golf. In 2016, Golf Digest ranked the West Course No. 1 in Australia and No. 6 in the world!

One of the more challenging holes of Alister MacKenzie's 1926 design, is the par-4 dogleg right 6th hole. Distance off the tee is not nearly as important as positioning for the execution of a precision uphill approach shot to a green that slopes from back left to front right. With the players facing dry and windy conditions, their approach shots, although landing on the green, often rolled down the slope and off the green, sometimes as far as 50 yards from the hole! Not only did this hole give the players fits, but it also gave new meaning to the phrase "down under."



During the second round, an unusual situation occurred as one particular threesome played this hole. Charlie Dann, the eventual winner of the event, was first to play his approach shot to the green. After his ball landed in the middle of the green, it began to meander very slowly down the green. Eventually, his ball came to rest a couple of yards off the green in the fringe without rolling further down the slope. Second to play was Kevin Yuan. His approach shot also found the middle of the green and, it too, started on a slow journey down the green. Third to play was Andrew McCain who wasted no time in getting his ball airborne. Much to everyone's surprise, his ball landed squarely on Kevin's ball which was still inching its way down the green! The freak collision caused both balls to pop straight up into the air. After landing back on the green, the two balls slowly trickled into the fringe, coming to rest about a yard from Charlie's ball.

For this situation, the applicable Rule is Rule 19-5b [Ball in Motion Deflected or Stopped by Another Ball in Motion] which states, in relevant part, "*If a player's ball in motion after a stroke other than on the putting green is deflected or stopped by another ball in motion after a stroke, the player must play his ball as it lies without penalty.*" Thus, both Kevin and Andrew had to play their balls from where they came to rest off the green.

Now for some "what if" scenarios related to the foregoing:

What if Kevin's ball had been at rest on the putting green when it was struck by Andrew's ball? In that case, he would have to replace his ball on the putting surface, per Rule 18-5 [Ball at Rest Moved by Another Ball]. That Rule states, "*If a ball in play and at rest is moved by another ball in motion after a stroke, the moved ball must be replaced.*" What if Kevin was not certain of the spot where his ball had come to rest on the green? In that case, he would be required to replace his ball on the green in accordance with Rule 20-3c [Placing and Replacing: Spot Not Determinable], i.e., he would place his ball as near as possible to the estimated place where it lay, but not in a hazard.

What if either Kevin's or Andrew's ball had collided with and moved Charlie's ball at rest in the fringe when they trickled off the green? In that case, Rule 18-5 [Ball at Rest Moved by Another Ball] would be the applicable Rule, and Charlie would be required to replace his ball. What if Charlie was not certain of the spot where his ball had come to rest in the fringe? In that case, he would be required to drop his ball in accordance with Rule 20-3c [Placing and Replacing: Spot Not Determinable], i.e., he would drop the ball as near as possible to the estimated place where it lay, but not in a hazard or on the putting green.