

Rule Tin of the Week Size Matters?

As we all know, golf is the game for all ages, and its players come in all shapes and sizes. We may be short or tall, slim or not so slim, younger or more mature, male or female. The myriad of differences among golfers in terms of height and weight is uniquely accommodated by the Rules of Golf in such a way that the same Rules apply to everyone.

Does size really matter? Well, it might surprise you, but size does matter, at least when it comes to certain applications of the Rules of Golf! For instance, for the most part, taller players use longer clubs, whereas shorter players use shorter clubs. The difference in the lengths of clubs is one area where size matters in terms of the Rules of Golf.

Consider, for example, the depth of the teeing ground. By definition, the teeing ground is a rectangular area two club-lengths in depth, the front and sides of which are defined by the outside limits of the two tee-markers. The adult male golfer, equipped with a 45" driver, will be allowed to tee his ball within a larger area than his junior counterpart equipped with just a 30" driver.

A similar example is the allowable area for dropping when taking relief. The adult male golfer using a standard length driver to measure (a) one club-length from the nearest point of relief under Rules 24 or 25; or (b) two club-lengths from where his ball last crossed the margin of a lateral water hazard under Rule 26; or (c) two club-lengths from where his ball lies for an unplayable ball under Rule 28, will be able to drop within a larger area than the junior using a much shorter driver when measuring the one club-length or two club-lengths for her allowable dropping area.

One's stature comes into play when considering the height at which the ball must be dropped when taking relief. All players are required to drop from shoulder height. Therefore, the shorter player will be dropping from a height that is nearer to the ground than the height from which the taller player drops his ball. The result is that the ball dropped by the shorter player will probably not bounce or roll as much as the ball dropped by the taller player once it strikes the ground.

According to Rule 20-2c, once the ball is dropped, it must be re-dropped if it rolls and comes to rest more than two club-lengths from where it first struck a part of the course. It would seem that the player who measures the dropping area with a longer driver may not have to re-drop as often as the player who measures with a shorter driver. But then again, the player establishing the allowable dropping area with a longer club will likely be dropping his ball from an increased height so his ball will be striking the ground with more velocity and his ball may bounce or roll farther after first striking the ground. So who knows?

Last, but not least, consider the definition of "casual water" which includes any temporary accumulation of water that is visible after the player takes his stance. As two players approach their balls lying side by side in a pool of casual water, the heavier player is likely to be the first one to discover casual water appearing around his shoes. Thus, his nearest point of relief will probably end up being further from where the two balls came to rest than the nearest point of relief for the player weighing less!

