BCMGA rules of play

Below are the explanations of some of the rules under which the Boulder City Men’s Golf Association conducts its tournaments.

Members have the right to expect fair competition. We play in threesomes and foursomes, and every member has the responsibility not only to adhere to the rules when playing his own shots, but also to be alert that his playing partners are doing the same thing.

If you think a playing partner misunderstands a rule, please respectfully ask if he needs help. Because we want our competitions to be both friendly and fair, you should take care not to accuse anyone of anything, but rather to offer assistance.

If you and another player cannot agree on what the rule requires, please do the prudent thing: Have the player in question play two balls – one by his interpretation, one by yours – keep the scores separate, then, at the end of the round, ask the tournament director to help come up with the correct ruling. The tournament director has The Rules of Golf, revised as of January 2019. If the Rules book doesn’t resolve the problem, the tournament director will enlist the help of someone on the golf course staff.

Remember this slogan: Protect the field. We do not have officials or rules experts on the course to help with rulings, so each player should pay attention to the play in his group.

Local rules

**At the start of a tournament:** Tournament play begins at 8 a.m. Players should arrive at the course no later then 7:30 a.m. so the tournament director can adjust pairings in case of unexpected absences or additions. Jim Stasiowski, the tournament director for 2021, will have his cellphone (410-608-2822) at the BCMGA desk, so if you are running late but still will compete, please call him as early as possible. **No texts, please.** If you show up late for the 8 a.m. tee time, you will be assessed a two-stroke penalty. If you are signed up, but you don’t show up and don’t call Jim, you will be assessed a two-stroke penalty at your next tournament.

**Important definition:**Some of the rules below concern when a player may move a ball before making the stroke. If a rule refers to “dropping” a ball, you hold the ball at knee height and, without deliberate imparting any spin or tossing action, drop the ball. When it comes to rest, the ball is in play. If a rule refers to “placing” a ball, you may lean over as far as you like and set the ball in your desired lie.

**Root rule:**If your ball is on a root, or if your clubhead will strike a root in your swing, you may, without penalty, place your ball within one club length, no nearer the hole. This rule does not allow free relief if only your stance is affected by roots.

**Leaf rule:**In the fall and through much of the winter, some areas of the golf course accumulate large numbers of leaves. Finding a ball in such areas can be extremely difficult and time-consuming. An optional local rule for BCMGA play, invoked by the tournament director at an individual tournament, will allow a player to use a free drop for a ball lost in leaf-prone areas. UNDER THE RULE, THE PLAYER IS ALLOWED THE FREE DROP ONLY IF ALL MEMBERS OF THE THREESOME OR FOURSOME AGREE THAT, BECAUSE OF THE LEAVES, THE BALL IS NOT FINDABLE. The player and his playing partners must agree on the closest point of relief. The player then may remove leaves at that point, then drop the ball, putting it in play. No penalty is assessed. Before the start of play, the tournament director will declare whether the leaf rule is applicable.

**Rangefinders:**They are allowed in BCMGA tournaments, but the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) forbids the use of rangefinders that show the gauge ormeasuring of slope.

**Sprinkler heads at or near greens:** Under a local rule, a player may receive free relief from a sprinkler head that is just off the green and will interfere with the line of a putt. If the sprinkler is within 2 club lengths of the green, and the ball is within 2 club lengths of the sprinkler, and the sprinkler interferes with the line of play, the ball may be dropped to at the nearest point that is not nearer the hole, avoids the sprinkler heads and is not in a hazard or not on the green. In short, you don’t have to putt over the sprinkler head if your ball and sprinkler head meet the distance conditions.

**Improving lies in fairways:**A ball that comes to rest in the fairway of the hole being played may be picked up, cleaned and placed within one club length of the original lie. That policy is known as lift, clean and place.

**Improving lies off fairways:** Before play begins, the tournament director may declare that lift, clean and place in the rough is applicable for any tournament. Usually prolonged cold weather that may leave the longer grass damaged is the reason for allowing lift, clean and place in the rough.

**Former ground-under-repair areas:** The grass bunkers to the left and right of the Hole No. 11 green and the area between the tee and the fairway bunker to the right of Hole No. 16 fairway have, in the past, been considered ground-under-repair. However, a check with the course in mid-January confirms that both of those areas are no longer grounds-under-repair. Thus, the BCMGA will play them as if they are ordinary places on the course. Many tee shots to the right of the fairway on Hole No. 16 probably will qualify to be moved and placed, without penalty, under the “Root rule,” above.

**Bunkers:**Since the pandemic that began in early 2020, the golf course has not supplied bunker rakes. As a result, unraked sand often results in bad lies in bunkers. Thus, as a local rule, if a ball is in an unraked spot, the player may place his ball in a smooth spot at the closest point of relief no nearer the hole. No penalty for such a placing.

**Every stroke counts:**Putt out everything. There are no gimmies, no matter how close the ball is to the hole.

**Every stroke counts, continued:** No mulligans.

**Scrambles and Shambles:** Team members choose the preferred shot, then are allowed one club length to place their balls for the next shot.

Frequently applied Rules of Golf

**Local Rule for out-of-bounds and lost balls:**Starting on Jan. 1, 2019, the Rules of Golf, as revised by the ruling bodies of the sport, simplified one rule that previously had bedeviled those of us who play in serious but not top-level competition: the rule regarding stroke-and-distance penalties for lost balls and balls hit out of bounds.

This local rule, which the Rules of Golf allowed “for general play where golfers are playing casual rounds or playing their own competitions,” no longer requires a player to go back to the original spot from which the out-of-bounds shot or lost ball had been played. Instead, the Rules of Golf approved what many players already did in such circumstances: A player would take a penalty, then drop another ball near where the first ball was either lost or crossed the out-of-bounds line.

The BCMGA is adopting for play in 2021 that local rule. In this explanation, the term “first ball” refers to the one that was either lost or hit out of bounds. The term “penalty ball” is the one that is dropped for the next shot.

STEP 1: You hit your first ball out of bounds; or, youhit you first ball, which you think has remained in bounds, but a 3-minute search for the ball does not find it.

STEP 2: You take note of the place at which the out-of-bounds ball most likely left the golf course. That is called a “reference point”; or, if you hit the ball that could not be found, you estimate where the first ball probably was. That also is known as a “reference point.”

STEP 3: You estimate the distance from the hole to the reference point. If you have a rangefinder, that should be easy.

STEP 4: You go from the reference point to the closest point of the closest edge of the fairway that is not closer to the hole than the reference point. In other words, if your reference point is 180 yards to the hole, go to the point at the edge of the fairway that is closest to the reference point, but no closer than 180 yards from the hole.

STEP 5 You are allowed to drop your penalty ball in the fairway, but no more than two club lengths from the edge of the fairway.

STEP 6 When your penalty ball comes to rest, it is in play. Even if you or someone in your group then finds your first ball, once you complete the drop, you must play the penalty ball.

STEP 7 You must take a two-stroke penalty. Thus, if it is your drive that either landed out of bounds or could not be found, after you dropped the penalty ball, you are lying 3, about to hit your 4th shot.

NOTE: Even though the Local Rule will be in effect for all BCMGA tournaments in 2021, a player still may use the traditional stroke-and-distance penalty. In other words, if you hit a ball you believe to be out of bounds, and you follow with what we call a “provisional ball,” that provisional ball becomes your official response to the out-of-bounds ball. You are not allowed to hit a provisional ball, then decide you don’t like that option, so you wish to take the Local Rule option, you’re out of luck. You may use either the provisional ball option or the Local Rule option.

**Unplayable:** If a player deems his ball unplayable, the player has three options, each of which includes a penalty of one stroke: (1) Go two club lengths in any direction (except nearer the hole) from the unplayable lie, and drop the ball, ensuring that it stays within two club lengths and does not move nearer the hole; (2) draw a line from the hole through the unplayable ballback as far as the player wishes, and drop the ball within one club length of that line; (3) go back to the spot from which the player hit the ball, and play it again.

**Red penalty areas:** Formerly known as lateral water hazards, red penalty areas may come into play on Holes Nos. 3 (the concrete flood-control channel), 6, 7, 8, 9, 12 (the pond to the left of the green), 13, 14 and 17. If a player hits a ball into one of those penalty areas, he may play from the penalty area with no penalty attached. However, if the ball is in the penalty area and not playable, the player should take note of the point at which the ball crossed into the hazard. He then may drop the ball within two club lengths of that point, no nearer the hole. The penalty is one stroke. The player has two other options, both of which result in a penalty of one stroke: (1) He may go back to the point at which he hit the shot that went into the penalty area, and play the shot from there. (2) Drawing a line from the hole back through the point at which the ball entered the hazard, the player may go as far back along that line as he wishes, no nearer the hole, then drop the ball in a semicircle two club lengths in diameter.