



Talking in the 19th Hole

DRIVER. The umpire in baseball, the referee in soccer, and the referee in boxing are responsible for permanently monitoring the regulations' application in their respective competitions. Unlike many sports, golf is played, for the most part, without the supervision of a referee or judge. The game rests on the integrity of the individual to follow the rules. But how can the golfer follow the rules if he doesn't know them, and how is he going to know them if he doesn't study them.

All of us remember the childhood games in which we participated. The games were even and fun; they had rules; if a child did not know them, he would feel confused and did not enjoy the game. This principle of establishing rules in games and the different life activities is intended to regulate behavior and set equity conditions among the participants.

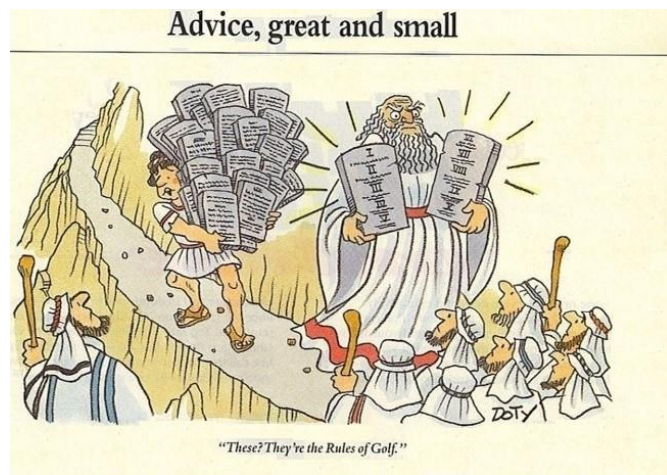
Golf rules are not a subject that players are passionate about. I think that in each Club there are only two or three people interested in meeting them. Problems occur when the pro of the Club or the rules judge penalizes us for not following them. Some of the saddest situations and some of the strongest conflicts that occur on golf courses result from players' ignorance of the rules.

Knowing and applying the rules is part of the strategy area because it involves making smart decisions. Knowing the rules has the following benefits:

- Prevents the player from having unnecessary penalties for inadvertently breaking a rule.
- Allows the player to follow procedures that work in their favor.
- Allows the player to obtain advantages that save part or complete strokes.
- It allows the player to use the rules to his advantage without actually breaking them.

Thus, we see that knowledge of the rules is part of strategic preparation. This knowledge is so influential that it is considered to be the 15th club. A smart player knows the rules and uses them to his advantage.

The rules of golf are some of the broadest and most complex due to the characteristics of the game and the size of the course. His learning has a problem similar to that of technique; the players only limit themselves to learning what their pro or caddy teaches them. They often cite third-parties as the source of their knowledge but cannot locate the respective text in the rule book.



The rules state that the player is responsible for knowing and applying the rules. Still, greater responsibility has the personnel who work on a golf course, especially those in direct contact with the players. In each Club, there are enough stories to convince anyone that it is worth dedicating time to this responsibility. If those cases were not enough, there are very famous experiences that had a considerable economic cost in the professional field. Unfortunately, until we pass the bitter cup, quite challenging to digest, a Rule is applied to us, we are convinced of it.

I propose a three-step plan for players and employees to improve our knowledge and application of the rules:

1. Recognize the problem. When I started working as a professional at the Vallescondido Golf Club, I was surprised to see many yellow and red stakes and not know what to do. I realized that I did not precisely know the penalty areas' procedures, even though I had been playing for 28 years. This experience made me reflect on my knowledge of the rules, and I told myself that I would study until I knew as much as the people who wrote in the magazines.

Acknowledging our ignorance is not a sign of weakness or inferiority; on the contrary, it is a sign of overcoming, of wanting to be better. This decision is not easy because of our idiosyncrasy: the players, due to their economic level, feel that they are right, truthful, and knowledgeable in everything; and the golf staff and caddies believe that they do not need to learn more because they know everything, their philosophy is "that this one will teach me." Having an open attitude to learning the rules is key to progress in this area.

2. Study the rules. When I decided to study the rules, I began to collect the articles from the magazines; I had an illustrated book brought from Spain, I bought the book of Decisions and began to underline it. I propose that you commit to studying the rules. I invite you to:

- Download the book "Rules of Golf" published by the USGA.
<https://www.usga.org/content/dam/usga/images/rules/rules-modernization/golf-new-rules/Rules%20of%20Golf%20for%202019.pdf>
- Download the illustrated book "I know the Rules" for kids.
<https://www.rfegolf.es/ArticulosDocumento/OTRAS%20PUBLICACIONES/Otras%20publicaciones%202020/2020%20Libro%20reglas%20ni%C3%B1os%20-%20ingl%C3%A9s.pdf>

- Watch the videos “Rules of Golf explained” published by the USGA.
<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/videos/2018/09/12/2019-rules-of-golf-explained-provisional-ball-2.html>

If you want to go deeper into the subject:

- Buy the Official Guide to the Rules of Golf published by the USGA and the R&A.
<https://www.usgapublications.com/collections/rules-of-golf-2019/products/the-official-guide-to-the-rules-of-golf-effective-january-2019?variant=12624113696848>

The Official Guide is a reference book designed for those involved in golf management at all game levels. The Official Guide contains the golf rules with Interpretations in force since January 2019. It is the bedside book for those of us who work in golf.

Start reading the Contents, how to use the Rules book, and Definitions sections. Underline the concepts that interest you most. Try to learn little by little. Time is relative, and it continues its march; the important thing is that we do what we propose. In 2 or 3 years that you are a "scholar in rules," no one will remember that before you did not know. Remember that, in the land of the blind, the one-eyed is king.

- Participate in USGA Rules of Golf Workshops or your Golf Federation Rules seminars. Learning from the experts makes it easier for us to understand the rules.
<https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/education/pga-usga-rules-of-golf-workshops.html>
- Participate in the RANDA Rules Academy.
<https://www.randa.org/en/rulesacademy>

3. Follow the rules. To inspire you to be an example in applying the rules, I recommend two golf movies that teach us the value of following the rules. The Legend of Bagger Vance and Bobby Jones: Stroke of Genius

The rules are a code of honor that teaches us to be courteous, respectful, orderly, considerate, and honest. Unfortunately, some dare not to be in the desire to win. These people are undoubtedly the same in other areas of your life.

By observing people's attitude towards the rules during the game, we can know their personality and know if their principles and values are what they claim to have and represent. Rules are a glass through which we can see who it is with whom we are playing. If you dare to learn and follow the rules, your ability to do so will increase, and at the same time, you will do so in the other aspects of your life. **FORE.**

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