



It seems that when we are discussing the rules of golf and/or violations thereof, we seem to very often be having the same discussions. About when to drop, how to drop, how many penalty strokes to take if I am taking a drop, and so on. This is all very well and good, but sometimes it is not the rules of golf that we are dealing with? Well, not directly anyhow. On occasion, I have talked about our local rules, which are rules that we have adapted or slightly altered for some reason. As in the most recent change, when we adopted the model local rule E-5, which altered the “Stroke and Distance” penalty for a ball hit out of bounds. Well, just recently, we had a situation in which one of our local rules was actually cause for discussion, and as it turns out, a two-stroke penalty.

For speed of play, as things tended to back up at the third tee, we adopted a local rule which said that if it appeared that a ball were hit into the penalty area on the third hole, a ball could be played “provisionally” from anywhere on the forward tee box. This was meant to save people from having to come back and hit another ball when they had gotten to the other side of the bridge and then couldn’t find their original ball. The key word here, is “Provisionally.”

During the recent Player of the Year competition, one of the players hit a ball which appeared to have gone into the penalty area. As our local rules provide, this player hit another ball from the forward tee box and the group moved on. When they reached the other side of the bridge, this player found his original ball in the penalty area. This is where things got a little dicey. A “provisional” ball is played thinking that the original ball is likely to be lost outside of the hazard, or might have ended up in the penalty area. Regardless, if the original ball is found, the provisional ball becomes null and void, and the original ball is the ball in play. The player got in trouble when he played a stroke at the original ball, didn’t like where he was, and decided to go out and play the provisional ball instead. He is now playing a wrong ball, and was thusly penalized beyond the strokes he had already made. Know your local rules. Good day, and good golf.