



GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER®

THE INSIDE REPORT ON WORLD GOLF

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Dear Subscriber:

Ignis Aurum Probat "Fire Tests Gold"

A phrase referring to the refining of character through difficult circumstances; the motto of the Prometheus Society.

Broadly, we like to pretend, assume, or hope that golf should not, and in fact does not, change for the most part. However, suggesting that bunkers should be raked only once a year, or that *inequity* should be restored within the Rules, will be met with dismissal, disdain, and incredulity. Golf changes constantly, and most changes—such as the refinement and correction of existing Rules—have come to be expected, respected and obeyed; although others—such as the abolishment of the stymie—were initially so unpopular they were reversed only to be instituted later.

Incrementally, the pursuit of fairness and equity runs athwart of golf's most gripping, foundational principles. If we view golf as a reflection of current and past social trends, this comes without surprise. In all endeavors these days, we are expected to be fair, equitable, and inoffensive. The simple idea of punishment has become distasteful. More powerful is the idea that if we did not *intend* to violate, no punishment is warranted. Bringing those same social pressures inside the game of golf limits individual responsibility for player conduct and, in the process, erodes traditions that have called most of us to respect the game, revere the methods it requires, and the behavior it has always demanded. Brian Enos, the legendary competition pistol shot, reflects on this pervasive, social syndrome:

I hate "legislated incompetence" - laws that eliminate personal choices, while claiming we will be safer or happier. Compulsory anti-lock brakes, mandatory

helmet and seat belt laws, and gun control legislation all limit individual responsibility, thereby reducing competence. In addition, subtly, almost imperceptibly, automatic headlights, school crossing zones, and smoking restrictions increase dependency. As we surrender our inherent ability to pay attention we become lazy, self-indulgent, indifferent, and ultimately, weak.

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Inequity, a touch of irrationality, and art each have their places within golf and, indeed, make the game more compelling and irresistible. Dealing with these three elements reveals, reviles, or improves the character of those who play while they play and often extend to a player's

off-course behavior.

Six years ago golf's governing bodies announced their intent to *modernize* the Rules of Golf. Their "primary objectives [were] to make the Rules easier to read, understand and apply by golfers at all levels - whether experts, beginners or ordinary players and whether the play is competitive or social - and wherever the game is played." Two years later the modernization was put into practice. The greater hope was that modernization would make golf more attractive and, therefore, more popular among those who do not yet know or fully understand the game. The change to what most players had already dealt with while learning golf was moved, by the governing bodies, to a position of priority below that of those for whom it was hoped might play someday. What we had was purposefully diminished for what they hoped we might someday have.

The modern Christian Church has attempted similar transitions. The result has been diminished attendance from knowledgeable souls who were put off by new leniency, and no substantial attraction of new congregants.



Judgment is still being formulated as to whether modernization made the Rules easier to understand, but there can be little argument that the changes made the game easier than it was six years ago. Loose impediments in bunkers can now be moved; accidentally moving balls in search and on putting greens is excused without penalty; a double strike is now a single strike; results of dropping a ball from a lower altitude yields more predictable results, etc. We contend that these sorts of changes have eroded a bit of the randomness and personal accountability that allured many to the game.

Where there is no discipline for the decrease of standards, there will be decreasing standards.

Decision 34-3/10

The public outcry over Lexi Thompson's penalties [see THE GOLF LETTER, April 2017] during the final round of the 2017 ANA Inspiration provoked a quick and immediate decision by The R&A and the U.S.G.A. Please note that this was a Decision - an interpretation - not a Rule change.

DECISION 34-3/10 LIMITATIONS ON USE OF VIDEO EVIDENCE does nothing to prohibit the continued use of video review and call-ins from television viewers. The first two paragraphs of the Decision are essential to understanding the logic of the remedies that follow:

It is appropriate for a Committee to use video evidence in resolving questions of fact when applying the Rules (see Decision 34-3/9 [RESOLUTION OF QUESTIONS OF FACT; REFEREE AND COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITY]). Such evidence may lead to the conclusion that a player breached the Rules or to the conclusion that there was no breach. ...

However, video evidence can sometimes present complications because of its potential to reveal factual information that was not known and could not reasonably have been known to players and others on the course. Golf is a game of integrity in which the Rules are applied primarily by the players themselves. Players are expected to be honest in all aspects of their play, including in trying to follow the procedures required under the Rules, in calling penalties on themselves and in raising questions with other players or with the Committee when they are unsure whether they might have breached the Rules.

The Decision then allows two situations in which video evidence is limited:

1.) When video evidence reveals things that could not reasonably be seen with the naked eye and the player was not otherwise aware of a potential breach, the player will be deemed not to have breached the Rules, even when video technology shows otherwise.

2.) When a player has made a reasonable judgment, players should not be held to the degree of precision that can sometimes be provided by video technology. In such situations the player's reasonable judgment will be accepted even if later shown to be wrong by the use of video evidence. This would apply in situations such as determining a spot, point, position, line, area, distance or other location on the course to use in applying the Rules e.g. for dropping, taking relief, replacing a marked ball.

In conclusion:

These "naked eye" and "reasonable judgment" limitations on the use of video and other evidence are not intended in any way to change or reduce each player's obligation to be honest in applying the Rules and to raise questions when they are uncertain whether they have breached a Rule. When applying this Decision in any particular case, it is the Committee's responsibility to assess all the circumstances in determining whether these standards have been met.

We applaud this quick and reasoned Decision that trumps unintended results when strictly applying the Rules. Acknowledged by the rule makers is the need to become even clearer with future Rules changes. While this new Decision gives the Committee the authority to use these new criteria going forward, what would have been the results of doing so in the more notable Rules controversies during the past four years?

- Lexi Thompson, 2017 ANA Inspiration - She would likely have been absolved from penalty using the reasonable judgment provision of the new Decision.
- Anna Nordqvist, 2016 U.S. Women's Open - She would have been absolved by the naked eye provision because her touching the bunker sand was indiscernible to her, and there was no advantage gained.
- Tiger Woods, 2013 Masters Tournament - His penalty would stand because it was clear from his words, as well as the video, that he dropped in a wrong place.
- Dustin Johnson, 2010 PGA Championship - His penalty would stand because he was in clear violation. Ignorance of the Rules is not a defense; neither, we must point out, is poor officiating.

Within the evolution of the Rules, there are three signal years: 1744, publication of the first code; 1952,

agreement between the Royal & Ancient G.C. and the U.S.G.A. on a uniform set of Rules; and 1984, reorganization of the Rules. Modernization in 2019 can be added to that thread.

The legacy and eventual elimination of the stymie (1952) is the best example of changes to the game that have diminished its demands, intrigue, lessons and appeal. For more than 90 years, from before 1744 until 1833, the stymie was a part of the game that added dimension and demanded the skills of either laying a stymie against their opponent or negotiating one laid against themselves.

In 1833 the R&A first attempted to remove this unusual facet of the game, but the public outcry was so great that the R&A was forced to reverse themselves. Following that reversal, the stymie lived and thrived for another century until meeting its final Waterloo in the 1952 uniform code of Rules that standardized how golf was to be played all over the world.

The 1952 elimination of the stymie from the Rules of Golf was so unpopular in Britain that it was bemoaned on the front pages of several newspapers. In America, Bobby Jones was so disappointed by the change that he commented, "The only place where I think a real mistake was made [in the 1952 unification of the Rules] came with the elimination of the Stymie." An entire chapter of Mr. Jones' *GOLF IS MY GAME* is devoted to the stymie's removal.

The modern player/governor was not content to allow a situation - being stymied - that appeared to so unfairly interfere with the individual performance of his/her game. This intriguing and intimate uncertainty could not survive an assault of *unfairness* by proponents of equity even with such a powerful stymie defender as Bobby Jones.

The word *stymie* was used in the early seventeenth century to denote someone who could not see well, more vulgarly referred to as a *blind stymie*. Our contemporary use of the word was promoted and imported into general

usage, according to the OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY, from its use within the RULES OF THE MUSSELBURGH GOLF CLUB in the mid-nineteenth century. As a verb it has come to mean "to impede, obstruct, frustrate, thwart".

Kenneth G. Chapman meticulously points out in



Hunstanton G.C. in Norfolk

Designed in 1891 and added to in 1904 by James Braid. Since 1914, the Club has hosted the Ladies Amateur, the English Amateur, the Women's Amateur, and the Barbazon Trophy.

In 1974, Bob Taylor holed in one at the par three 16th hole (189 yards) three days in a row - once in a practice round and twice in competition.

THE RULES OF THE GREEN that the evolution of the stymie began in 1744 within the first code of the rules of the Leith golfers. The word *stymie* was not used, but the Leith code allowed that "if your Balls be found anywhere touching one another, you are to lift the first Ball till you play the last." Thirty-one years later, such interference was extended to balls that are touching or within six inches of one another.

Therefore, if your opponent's ball lay on your line of putt *more than six inches* from your ball you were stymied and had no alternative but to risk hitting your opponent's ball when playing toward the hole. Many scorecards were

six inches in width to help measure the stymie distance. Understanding this 275-year-old antecedent also helps to clarify why under Rule 19-5 today there is no penalty in match play for striking another ball while putting.

For those who look for loopholes within the Rules, it may occur that one who was stymied could simply concede their opponent's putt and thereby clear their own line of putt. However, the Rules in force before the stymie was banned in 1952 allowed such a concession only after the player had himself holed out. There was no way around (or over) a stymie except by playing over or around it.

There are several descriptions of putts struck using a method for imparting spin and thus causing the stymied ball to curve around the blocking ball and into the hole. There is also film of notable players, such as Bobby Jones, practicing short lofting shots that sent the stymied ball over the blocking ball and into the hole. Jones was adept at this technique and when making his case for retention of the stymie wrote, "within a radius of two feet, a competent player can make, almost every time, any stymie that can be laid him". 🏌️

151st Open Exemptions Confirmed

The R&A confirmed, Feb. 21, exemption categories for those who may wish to compete at Royal Liverpool in July. There appears to be no significant change to the criteria from previous years. In addition to past Open champions under the age of 60 and the top 10 finishers in last year's Open, the first 50 from the Official World Golf Rankings (as of week 21, 2023) will be exempt. Additionally, other major and amateur champions and those ranked highly in various world tours are exempt as in past years..



LIV and CW Announce Broadcast Contract “If you can't see it; you can't sell it.”

Norman pronking was upon us once again in mid January as The CW Network unveiled its first ever national sports broadcasting deal as a multi-year contract with LIV Golf.

Broadcast details call for LIV's weekday rounds to be streamed on The CW's computer applications, and weekend rounds to air on the network. YOUTUBE will no longer stream LIV competitions.

The CW—originally debuted in 2006 by CBS and Warner, thus the CW—was bought last October by Nexstar. In 2022, Nielsen audience ratings reported The CW to be the 25th most watched network in the U.S. By comparison, THE GOLF CHANNEL was the 94th most watched.

In attempting to untangle a confusing legacy, it became clear to us that Nexstar bought a network with



For H.C.A.D.:

Unlike the male codfish, which, suddenly finding itself the parent of three million five hundred thousand little codfish, cheerfully resolves to love them all, the British aristocracy is apt to look with a somewhat jaundiced eye on its younger sons.

Lord Emsworth, Earl of Blandings Castle
pondering his younger son Freddie Threepwood
THE CUSTODY OF THE PUMPKIN
by Sir P.G. Wodehouse, ca. 1924

a wandering legacy of ownership. The network was used as a proving ground for its former owners and reportedly never posted a profit. It touts an unusually young viewership demographic, although those numbers are skewed by a difficulty in measuring the difference between broadcast TV demo reporting and streaming. The CW seems to claim their presentation of viewing opportunities in 98 percent of U.S. TV markets.

What this will mean to viewership of LIV Golf is impossible to measure at this point. LIV's tournament schedule begins in late February in Mexico. Eight of their 14 events will be played in the U.S. and production is expected to remain a LIV responsibility. The CW will simply broadcast what LIV produces.

“From where [LIV] is at, something is better than nothing and it creates an opportunity for other networks to kind of see how this all plays out. ... If you can't see it, you can't sell it,” Patrick Riske said noting the obvious. It is anticipated that LIV's team competition will be emphasized, as it is a differentiating angle to that tour.

From the National Golf Foundation

Rounds played in 2022 finished 3.7% below the record setting prior year. Yet the overall volume of rounds continues to outpace pre-Covid levels, with 2022 running 15% above the average of the 2017-2019 period.



In Memoriam

John Norrie Paramor, 67, Open Championship Referee, Chief Referee PGA European Tour (*sic*), Chief Referee Olympic Games. Learned, intuitive, fair, compassionate, taciturn.

Yours vy truly,

Gary A. Galyean
Editor & Publisher

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