

The Golf Rules Review

An Intermittent Communique by the 2020 WWGA Golf Rules Maven

Issue XIV

August 27, 2020

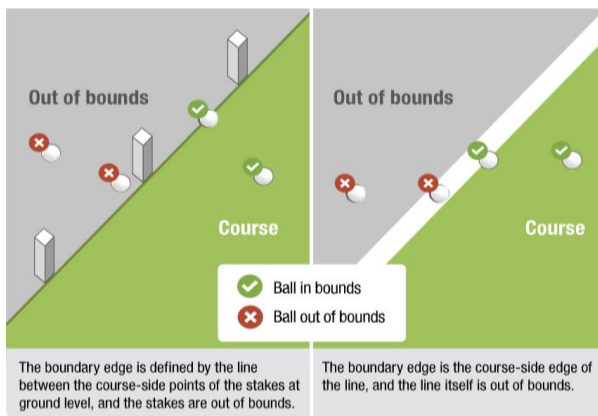
Are You In or Are You Out?

When a ball lands on a line the question that often arises is “Is the ball in or out?” These lines, or boundaries, is the topic of this issue of The Golf Rules Review.

Preparing these lines/boundaries is referred to as Marking the Course. There are 3 main areas that golf courses are marked: Out of Bounds, Penalty Areas and Ground Under Repair. Although not marked, putting greens and bunkers also have margins to determine whether the ball is on the green or in the bunker.

Basic Rule – Except for Out Of Bounds, a ball touching a line is in the area covered by that line.

1. Out of bounds is most often marked by a white stake. The side of the stake facing the course is the start of OB. Structures such as a fence or road could be used. When such a structure is used, the local rules usually state that the structure is out of bounds (See side bar). You might also see white paint used to indicate out of bounds such as near club houses, maintenance buildings or practice areas.
 - If the ball on the line or outside the line, it is **OB**.
 - If any part of the ball is on the course, the ball is in bounds.



2. Penalty Areas – water hazards or other areas where it is not possible to play the ball
 - Penalty Areas are often defined by stakes and sometimes lines. When both stakes and lines are used, the lines take precedent over the stakes in defining the start of the hazard.
 - When only stakes are used, the entire stake is in the hazard and the hazard line starts at the outside edge of the stake.
 - Unlike out of bounds stakes, any ball touching the hazard line (or stake) is in the hazard.
 - Yellow stakes/lines indicate you must drop behind the Penalty Areas
 - Red stakes/lines are Lateral Penalty Areas and are usually situated such that it is not possible to drop a ball behind the hazard.
 - If a water hazard is not marked, then the natural margins of the water define the boundary.

It is merely wishful thinking that just because a water hazard is not marked, you could claim your ball is in casual water.

Q&A – Do I get free relief when an out of bounds structure interferes with my swing or stance even though my ball is in-bounds?

No, this is no different than if a white OB stake were in the way. Your choices are:

1. Try to play your ball as it lies.
2. Re-play your shot from where you last hit with a one stroke penalty.
3. Take an unplayable lie with a 1 stroke penalty by dropping within 2 club lengths from your ball, no closer to the hole.

At The Woods, the most obvious OB structure, other than the white stakes, that we may encounter is the curb for the road along the right side of SL Hole #1. If your ball is close to or even touching the curb but your ball is still in-bounds, and the curb is in your way, you could use one of the 3 options above.

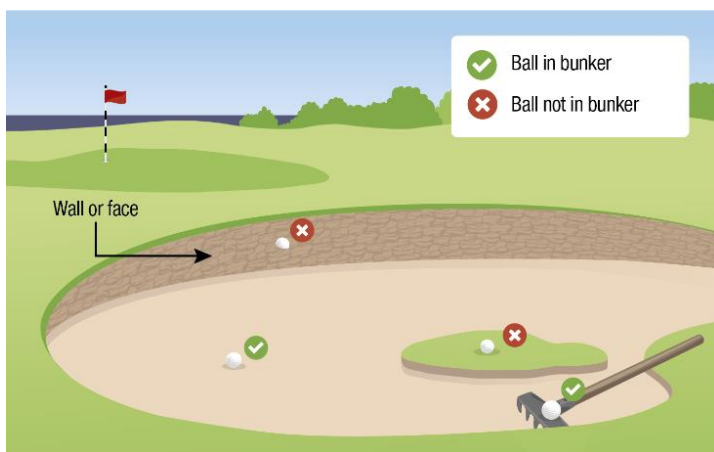
3. Ground under Repair (GUR)

- GUR is marked with white lines.
- The players has the option whether to play the ball in GUR or take free relief, unless a local rule has prohibited play from GUR.
- Often players may notice a pile of grass clippings were dropped (usually around the 200 yard marker on the left side of MV hole 15). These are not GUR, just loose impediments.
- Just like penalty hazards , **any ball touching the GUR line is in the GUR.**

4. On the Putting Green, a ball is **on the green when any part of the ball touches the green.**

5. Bunkers

- Bunker margins are defined by sand. A wall or lip not covered in grass is still a part of the bunker even if the sand has washed away and just soil or exposed plastic lining is showing.
- The bunker ends where the grass starts growing, but **any ball partially touching the sand and the grass is on the bunker.**
- If there is a grass island within the bunker, any ball on the island is not in the bunker. I noticed the Boulder Course at Rock Harbor in Winchester has a bunker like this.
- A prepared area or artificial wall of a bunker consisting of soil, grass or stacked turf is not a part of the bunker. If your ball is embedded in its own pitch mark, (i.e. part of your ball is below the ground) in this prepared area, you may take embedded ball relief. But you do not get relief for an embedded ball in a bunker. *We do not have any prepared areas or walls like this at The Woods.*



Internal Out of Bounds

Imagine having white OB stakes in the middle of a course. The area is surrounded by the course, looks like it should be in play, but is designated as out of bounds. Well it happens.

Royal Portrush, in Northern Ireland, the site of the 2019 British Open has internal out of bounds areas right on the first hole. There is triangular patch of grass in the left rough that is OB where if you hit into it, you must return to the tee and take the penalty.

In-course-out of bounds is an historical feature at older clubs in the British Isles. It represents a plot of land or property the course did not own. As a nod to the club's history they continue to play, these charming areas as internal OB.