

# The Golf Rules Review

An Intermittent Communique by the 2020 WWGA Golf Rules Maven

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## Do 2 Wrongs Make a Right?

Because of the rain on August, 4, our Tuesday League game was cancelled. Once the sun came out I played Mt. View with a foursome. It looked like we were the first group out and many of the tee markers on the tee boxes were moved further back than usual. Tee marker rotation is just a part of the golf course maintenance to let the teeing grounds recover from traffic and give divots time to heal.

When we got to hole 11, the markers were about 4-5 yards further back from the gold yardage plate. One of the players picked up the tee box marker and started moving it forward to where she thought it should be. A second golfer was agreeing with her because it was Tuesday and many of the players have difficulty reaching the green. The Golf Rules Maven told her she wasn't allowed to do that. It is considered changing the course conditions which would be at the minimum 2 stroke penalty and probably disqualification in a tournament. She said, "Ron (our Golf Pro) told me I could move them closer on Tuesdays" So is there a penalty?

- No one can change the Rules of Golf except the USGA and R&A. If Ron had told her she could move the tee markers when she thought they were too far back to on Tuesday, Ron would be changing the Rules of Golf which he is not authorized to do.
- Although the player was doing it because "Ron said she could", she would still get a penalty if she played her shot after moving the markers, because the Player (not Ron) is responsible for knowing the Rules of Golf when they play. Thus, 2 wRONGs don't make a right.
  - This is true even if The Golf Rules Maven is playing with you and makes an error in advising you what to do. If there are 2 different perspectives on what you should do, you can always play the second ball under the other perspective and ask for a ruling from the Pro at the end of your round on which score should be used.
- The player can avoid the penalty, if before they hit, they restore the "original object as nearly as possible to its original position so that the improvement created by the breach is eliminated".
  - This also applies if you move OB stakes in error, but move them back before you hit.
  - Another example where this applies would be if your ball is under low hanging branches and you decide to weave them together to get them out of your way. If you are told you can't do that and then unweave the branches before you hit, you then avoid the penalty.
  - If you can't restore the object to its original position, then you incur the penalty which is at the minimum 2 strokes in Stroke Play or loss of hole in Match Play. As an example, if as you were weaving the branches in the example above, some broke off, you would be unable to restore the object to its original position, so you would be assessed the penalty.

In the end, the Player moved the tee markers back before she hit and avoided the penalty.

### Q&A - What if the maintenance crew puts the markers aside to mow and forget to move them back?

If you can, call the Pro Shop to let them know and they can send maintenance out to put the markers where they should be in the rotation. Because you can't really wait for this to happen, set up using the yardage plate in on the tee box. This yardage plate corresponds to the hole yardage on the score card. You can use the width of the tee box and go back 2 driver club lengths from the yardage plate.

Sometimes the tee markers are much further back because there was a tournament with "Hole in One" competitions that require a minimum distance. If you are the first group out and you think this has happened, call the Pro Shop and they can advise. But there really is no problem with just leaving the longer markers and seeing if you could have won the competition. Of course, if you are playing in a League that day, everyone else would have to do the same.



*Remember, it's between the tee markers, not on top of them*