

The Golf Rules Review

An Intermittent Communique by the 2020 WWGA Golf Rules Maven

Issue X

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Not as Simple as it Sounds

The New Local Relief Rule for Lost or Out of Bounds Ball

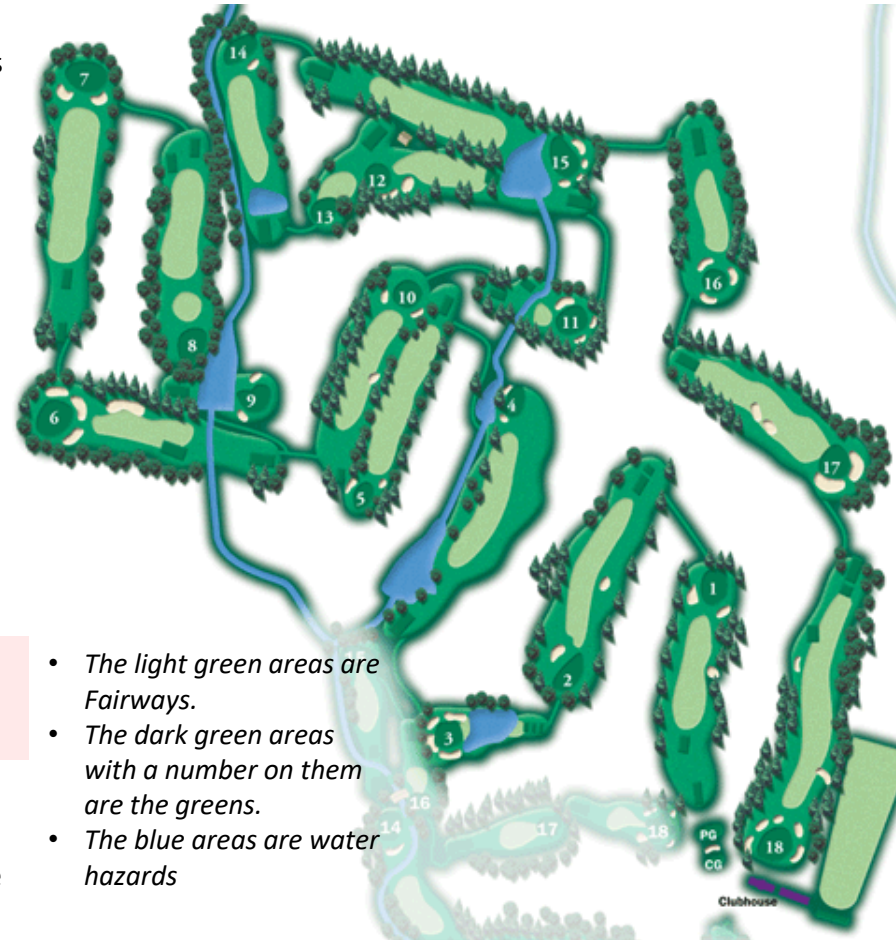
I recently played with someone who wanted to use the Local Relief Rule for Lost or OB balls, but was a little uncertain of the how to's. This issue of The Golf Rules Review will cover the how to's for this local rule so you can make the best decision on whether this is an option for you. I am changing up my format a little because I want to use the actual hole layouts from our courses as examples.

What is the Local Relief Rule for Lost or OB Ball

1. It is an alternative to Stroke & Distance Relief (i.e. re-hitting from where you last hit with a 1 stroke penalty) for a lost or out of bound ball only. Prior to 2019, returning to where you last hit and re-hitting was the only option.
2. Starting on 2019, a player has a second option... players may drop a ball within two club-lengths of the nearest fairway edge at an equal distance from the hole to where the ball was believed to be lost or went out of bounds and add two penalty strokes.
3. Forget about using this local rule if you have hit a provisional ball or your ball is in a penalty area... it's not allowed.

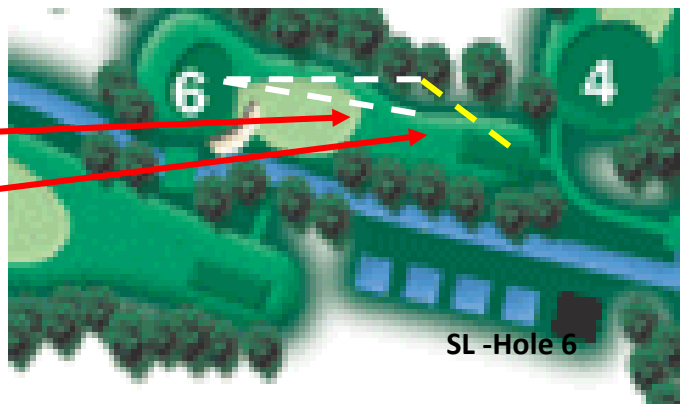
What do you have to know when using this local rule relief?

1. You need a fairway on the hole or grass of fairway height or less (e.g. Tee Box), in the general course area. The general course area stipulation means you cannot drop your ball on a green or in a penalty area.
 - Looking at Mountain View, hole #9 doesn't even have a fairway and hole #3 has just a very small fairway in front of the tee box. So you are better off taking stroke and distance and teeing the ball up at the tee box.
 - Hole 13 is also a little iffy. While the map shows a fairway, but actually, the grass is not cut to fairway height, so there really isn't a fairway to use. This is unfortunate because it is time consuming to walk back to the tee for a lost ball.
 - All the rest of the holes may provide an opportunity to use the local relief rule, but there further considerations.

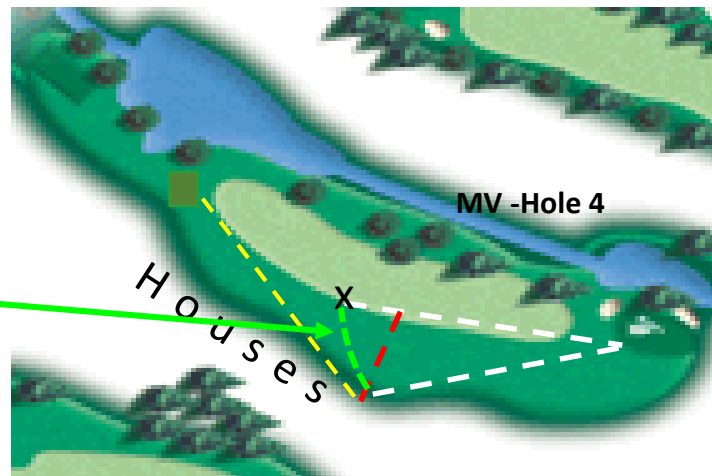


- The light green areas are Fairways.
- The dark green areas with a number on them are the greens.
- The blue areas are water hazards

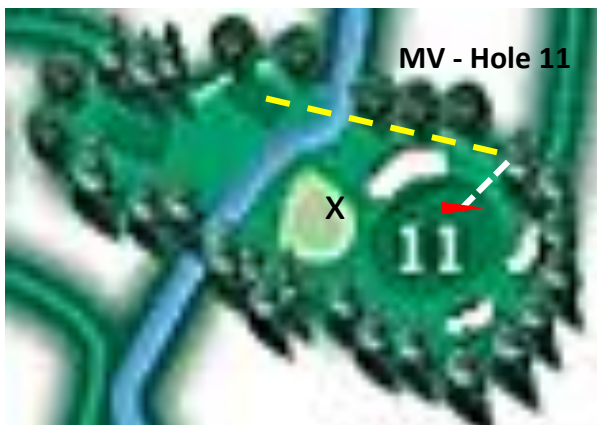
2. Your errant ball needs to travel further than the start of the fairway. If it didn't, you have no fairway to bring your ball to without it being closer to the hole. Let's look at SL Hole #6.
- Let's say your tee shot goes right into the woods as shown with the yellow line and it is lost. The white lines is the distance between where your ball was lost and the flag. The lower white line shows you cannot bring your ball to the nearest fairway without being closer to the hole. You also cannot drop your ball in the rough in front of the fairway if it is lost or OB...you must have a fairway.
 - Your only option in this case is to re-hit your tee shot under stroke and distance relief.
 - Some courses cut a path that is fairway height from the tee box to the fairway. If they do, then you can use the edge of that path to drop. We don't have any of those paths here at The Woods.



3. You cannot drop your ball closer to the hole.
- Lets look at hole #4 on Mt. View where balls have a tendency to go missing or OB.
 - The yellow line is the trajectory of your tee shot that went OB.
 - The white lines indicate the distance to the hole from your OB reference point and from your drop area. Both lines are the same distance.
 - The red line is the WRONG line to drop because your ball would be closer to the hole.
 - You must use the same distance from the point your ball went OB to the flag. The light green line indicates where you can walk to the fairway to drop your ball as indicated with the "X". If you prefer, you can drop further back from the "X" behind the green line in the rough.
 - One way to judge the right distance drop your ball is to move in an arc that is parallel to the edges of the green. Alternatively you could use GPS/range finder to measure the right distance.



4. You must use the fairway on the hole your are playing. If there is not fairway equidistance from the ball's reference point to the flag, you can use the nearest fairway point that is farther away from the hole. Let's look at hole #11.
- Your ball is lost somewhere in the gully to the left of the green. The pin is also back left. There is no fairway on that side of the green. So you can go to the fairway in front of the green at the spot marked by the x. Please note, on this drawing, it looks like the errant shot is close to the green, but it is much farther because there is a deep gully. You measure terrain, not the shortest airspace in this example.
 - If the errant shot flew over the green and went OB, get a measurement to the flag from the edge of the course. You can do this by pacing off the distance from the OB boundary to the flag. Then use your paces to walk back towards the tee to find the nearest fairway edge. Remember, you can only go 2 club lengths into the fairway.



5. You cannot drop on the green or in a penalty area, you must be able to go to a fairway or an area of fairway height of less. Although unusual, you may drop on the fringe, as long as you are not closer to the hole than where your ball was lost or where it went OB.
6. You are dropping within 2 club lengths of the Fairway edge, not just anywhere in the fairway.
 - 2 Club lengths is the most you can go into the fairway when your drop is the same distance as your reference.
 - If someone is dropping more than 2 clubs lengths into the fairway from the edge, they are probably dropping in the wrong place which is a 2 stroke penalty. However, look item 7 below for the exception.
7. The area of relief can go farther back away from the hole than you think.
 - The USGA has a wonderful diagram that shows this. As you can see section “C” shows how large the relief area is. In fact this hole looks similar to hole #4 on Mt. View where both lost and OB balls frequently occur. Note: On the USGA diagram the 2 clubs lengths into the fairway appear much longer than they actually are relative to the fairway.



GOLF'S NEW RULES: STROKE AND DISTANCE

A new Local Rule will provide an alternative to stroke-and-distance relief for a ball that is lost outside a penalty area or out of bounds. This new Local Rule will be available beginning January 1, 2019.

BALL OUT OF BOUNDS

LOST BALL

If the Local Rule is in effect, you can still take stroke-and-distance relief, but you will now have the following additional option that comes with a penalty of two strokes:

A DETERMINE SPOT where your ball went out of bounds (left diagram) or is likely to be lost (right diagram).

B FIND NEAREST FAIRWAY EDGE no closer to the hole.

C DROP YOUR BALL IN SHADED AREA as defined on one side by a line from the hole through point A and on the other side by a line from the hole through point B, and not nearer the hole. The relief area is extended on both sides by two club-lengths.

This Local Rule is not intended for higher levels of play, such as professional or elite amateur level competitions.

Q&A – Can a ball be considered lost if it is in Ground Under Repair (GUR)

The good news is yes, if you are 99% certain it is somewhere in the GUR. If you are certain, then you get free relief which is 1 club length from the nearest point of relief outside the GUR (see Issue V of The Golf Rules Review).

The bad news is if you are not certain, then your ball is considered lost. Your options are either Stroke and Distance Relief or use the Local Relief Rule for Lost or OB Balls.