



Rule of the Month

June 1, 2018

Stroke of Genius

Differences Between Stroke Play and Match Play

As the golf season moves into summer and clubs begin to provide a variety of competition opportunities, it is important to understand the differences between stroke play and match play. While many competitions will have a stroke play qualifier followed by match play, Rule 33-1 prohibits playing both forms of golf simultaneously. The Rule states, in part, that “certain Rules governing stroke play are so substantially different from those governing match play that combining the two forms of play is not practicable and is not permitted”. When the two forms of play are combined and a rule situation occurs, it may be impossible to get a final ruling that is equitable to both forms and may result in the players being disqualified from the stroke play competition and the match declared null and void.

The biggest difference in the two forms of play is the number of golfers a player may be playing against at any given time during a competition round. In stroke play, every player is competing against every other player in the competition. But in match play, a player will be competing against only one or two other players in the same grouping, depending on the format. A competitor in stroke play expects every golfer in the field to adhere and enforce the Rules properly. However, in match play, since the round is between one or two opponents in the same group, players are less concerned with what is going on in other matches, but they have a vested interest to protect their own rights by observing an opponent’s play and procedures.

This month we look at the differences between match and stroke play by offering ten scenarios where you must decide if the situation pertains to stroke play, match play or both.

Questions: Stroke Play / Match Play / Both Forms

1. A ball strikes another player’s golf bag and comes to rest on the grass. The player plays it as it lies.
2. The stroke for a ball played from the wrong teeing ground is cancelled without penalty and replayed from the correct teeing ground.
3. At the end of the round, a score card must be returned to the Committee as soon as practicable.
4. Players agree to disregard a penalty incurred by one of them and are disqualified.
5. A player is uncertain of a procedure and completes the hole with two balls.
6. A player is disqualified for failing to hole out.
7. Practice on the course is prohibited on the day of the competition prior to the round.
8. There is no penalty for playing out of turn.
9. While searching for a player’s ball, another player accidentally moves the ball. There is no penalty to either player.
10. Provided the competition isn’t delayed, players may agree to discontinue the round due to rain.

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