

Chapter 4: The
Rules of Golf



All Pianos Have Keys & Other Stories

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Chapter 4: The Rules of Golf

Golf Center
The Dominion Country Club
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Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

The following are my answers to the PGA/USGA Rules Quiz in the August-September 1993 issue of the Golf Center News, a publication of The Dominion Golf Center.

I like and appreciate rules. The best rule of our club is the one which prohibits pets on the golf course. One of my cousins was married to a guy who was a member at the old Turtle Creek Country Club, which did not have a “no pets” rule. Every time he tried to play golf, the cats would bury him in the sand traps. I guess those little animals knew by instinct what it took my cousin so long to find out.

Obviously, there are a lot of rules, and it is important that all golfers follow them. However, following rules is not as difficult as it sounds. In addition to the PGA/USGA rules there are also Common Sense Rules, Hustling Rules, and Drive-You-Up-The-Wall Rules. It is a question of deciding which rules to apply.

If you don't know the rule, ask a player in your group to lend you his cellular phone and call the Pro Shop where you will receive instant assistance. If you are playing with a lawyer do not borrow his phone until he has had a chance to call his wife and tell her that he is tied up in his office taking a lengthy and important deposition. It is a well known Courtesy Rule that you don't yell, “Fore” when the lawyer is talking to his wife on the phone. (These are known in golfing circles as “Super Rules” which is lawyer talk for “Super Rules.”)

The following are the correct answers to the four questions in your article:

1. Accidentally moving the ball in ground under repair

Balls can be moved in ground under repair, the same as in any part of the fairways, roughs or greens, as long as the mover says in a clear, loud voice, “I'm sorry, but I accidentally moved my ball. I'm putting it back where it was.”

However, as a rule, if this happens more than twice on any hole it is obvious that you are being hustled. In that case go to the nearest maintenance worker and ask him, “*Esta caliente el sol?*”

He will give you a lengthy response in Spanish which you pretend to translate. “He says that I have a very important call at the club house, so I am going to have to leave.”

A lot of this hustling can be eliminated by following a very important rule. When you tee up on the first hole, make it a rule to ask yourself, “Who is being hustled in this group?” If you can’t spot the sucker, then it is probably you.”

2. Responsibilities in scoring

In every group there is a guy who insists on taking the scoring responsibility. These people know everybody’s handicap, never make mistakes on the scorecard, and they always know the handicap number for every hole. Golfers are anxious to help. If you meet a golfer with a handicap of thirty-four, notice that he is always looking for a golfer with a handicap of 36 in order to give him some golf tips.

The obvious answer is: play with someone who knows. You cannot change rules, but you can change who you play with.

3. Movable obstructions

Movable objects are easy to determine if you follow the General Guidelines. (See Combined PGA, Seniors PGA and LPGA Rules, Section XXI, Subsection W, Rule 378, Article 79, Pages 474 to 968.)

A tree, unless recently transplanted, is not movable. A portable toilet, as the name implies, is obviously movable. All other objects can be placed in either of these two categories. You then apply the rule, “If it bothers you and it is movable, move it; if it is not movable, then move the ball, stupid.”

4. Immovable obstructions outside the bunker

This item is a tricky one. Last Sunday, I played a round with my wife. In Holes 1 to 5, I had an immovable obstruction outside each bunker. On Number 6, I finally told my wife, “Go stand somewhere else, and quit being an obstruction.” She said, “I like it here.” I wanted her to move voluntarily so that I wouldn’t have to decide if she was movable or not. Deciding whether your wife looks more like a tree or a portable potty is definitely a no-win situation.

The correct question is, “What is an immovable obstruction?” The correct answer is, “If its movable, move it.” For most golfers, this rule is not very important because if the ball is in a bunker, they are never going to hit it anyway.

I disagree with your statement that rules can be dull. Rules are what make golf such a fun sport. It is especially gratifying to see Dominion golfers in the middle of the first fairway reading the

rules on Saturday mornings and having all seven players in the group confer on the correct interpretation. Golfers should be asked to think up more rules. As every golfer knows, “The more rules; the more fun.”

I can’t wait for your next issue in anticipation of another challenging quiz like this one. Please apply my winnings on this rule contest to my Dominion account which, as a rule, keeps getting bigger as my income keeps getting smaller.

Sincerely,

José A. Cárdenas

Membership Number X - XXXX

(This is not my real number. I don’t want to give my new number because some sorry S.O.B. charged a lot of beers to my old number. You know my number, anyway.)