



“Ground under repair” should be marked consistently throughout the course. When in doubt, miss on the no paint side.

DO YOU KNOW THE RULES?

You should. Here’s why.

by R. A. (BOB) BRAME

THE RULES OF GOLF, as defined by the United States Golf Association and the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, Scotland, provides uniformity in golf for all players everywhere. In fact, without the Rules, golf would not be golf. Although that may sound a bit melodramatic, it’s true. When we fail to play by the Rules, the scores we shoot are worthless. The anchor or common denominator is lost. Clearly, it is not possible to play by the Rules if you don’t know the Rules. While this applies to all golfers, an elevated importance exists for those who maintain the playing field. The golf course superintendent must know the Rules to prepare the course properly for play.

The most obvious tie between the Rules and maintenance is marking the

golf course. It is impossible to properly mark out of bounds, water hazards, and ground under repair without carefully considering how the Rules will be administered. Ideally, the person interpreting the Rules or answering players’ questions should take the lead in course marking. Often, this is the golf professional. However, the golf course superintendent is part of the team and should understand how marking impacts rulings. Once the initial marking has been defined, it is the maintenance staff that must keep the stakes in place and/or the lines freshly painted.

How about the ground under repair? If it is under repair, then repair it so the marking won’t be permanent. Repairs should be made as quickly as possible so that white lines can be eliminated. Equally important, ground under re-

pair should be marked consistently throughout the course. When in doubt, err on the side of no paint. Sprinkler heads, valve box covers, and open stone drainage trenches do not need to be marked as ground under repair. Relief is allowed without the presence of white paint.

“That’s not a legal hole location,” says the aggravated player as his ball rolls off the putting surface. What do the Rules say about hole locations? In reality, there are several factors to consider when determining a hole location, but if it is cut on the putting surface, it is legal.

Bunker raking and edging will impact rulings and, therefore, playability. Is the ball in the bunker or not? The actual mowing of greens also is important. It should be easy to determine when a ball is on the putting surface. Thus, a distinct edge/line should exist where the putting surface and collar come together. The examples could go on, but it should be clear that course maintenance and the Rules are inseparable.

It also should be recognized that a working knowledge of the Rules when playing golf will increase the superintendent’s credibility. When players know the course is being maintained with the Rules in mind, their impression of the superintendent’s professionalism will be elevated. Equally important, playing regularly allows communication and dialogue about course conditioning to occur on the golfers’ level. If you struggle to break 110, take some lessons. The course is being maintained to play the game of golf. The superintendent’s agronomic and Rules knowledge should combine with regular play of the golf course to offer golfers an enjoyable experience.

Take a Rules seminar or workshop every couple of years, and apply the Rules to course marking and maintenance. Use the proper terms — *flagstick*, not *pin* (despite the continued errors of television commentators); *bunker*, not *trap*; *through the green*, not *waste bunker* or *grass bunker*. Play the course you maintain once a week, if possible. Make it known that you understand how to play the game and that you appreciate the Rules, which make golf.

BOB BRAME is the Director of the Green Section’s North Central Region. He visits courses in Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio. Don’t talk about “pins” or “traps” during Bob’s visit to your golf course.