

How about that Open!

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I was fortunate enough to be invited to work as a member of the Rules Committee at this year's U.S. Open at Torrey Pines. Wow, what a tournament! It had everything you could want and more: a spectacular host venue, the ultimate pairing of the big three (Tiger, Phil and Adam), Tiger and Rocco in a dramatic playoff and a few rulings along the way as well.

The U.S. Open Rules Committee consists of invited officials from golf tours and associations from around the world as well as members of other USGA Championship Committees. The USGA likes to have a referee walk with each group in all its championships to assist with any rulings or pace of play issues that come up. This helps to ensure that all players receive Rules assistance in a timely and consistent manner.

My assignment for the first round was as an observer for the Angel Cabrera, Pdraig Harrington and Davis Love III group. In the second round I was the Referee for the Kevin Streelman, Robert Dinwiddie and Artemio Murakami group.

Streelman started the second day as the leader. That would all change when he made his way to the par-3 third hole. Streelman hit his 7-iron tee shot a little heavy and it ended up in the greenside bunker with a nasty buried lie. He later said it was like someone had stepped on the ball in the bunker. He played a solid bunker shot out but the green would not hold it and it ended up rolling over the green and down into a playable position in the lateral water hazard.

As Streelman was evaluating his next shot from the lateral water hazard he waved me over. His ball was lying partially in some dry brush and a small bush that he would have to stand in to play his shot. Laying over the bush was a green television microphone cable that was running through the

entire hazard to a microphone on the left side of the green. Streelman's swing and stance would be impeded by this cable so he asked me if he could move it. I informed him that the cable was a movable obstruction and the Rules allow for movable obstructions to be moved anywhere on the course, including bunkers and water hazards. I helped him move it out of the way and he played his shot out of the hazard to the middle of the green and then three-putted for triple bogey.

Despite the train wreck on the third hole, Streelman was able to regroup and play some great golf ... that was, until his tee shot on the par-4 15th hole. He pulled his drive left over the gallery watching from behind the ropes and into a hillside behind the concessions stands. The hillside was covered with iceplant and was marked as a lateral water hazard. No one had heard the ball land. After searching for awhile I talked to the volunteers working the hole to try to get a point of reference as to where his ball entered the hazard.

Finally after about three minutes of searching Streelman found his ball in the iceplant. He picked it up and informed me that he would take a drop from the lateral water hazard. I was able to identify where his ball last crossed the margin of the hazard and this point was directly next to a cart path. Streelman measured two club-lengths to identify his area in which he could drop (this was on the cart path). He dropped the ball on the cart path, it bounced twice and ended up a foot to the right of the cart path in the rough. His ball was now in play as it had not rolled closer to the hole or more than two club-lengths from where it struck the course on the drop.

At this point Streelman would now be standing on the cart path. He decided to take his free relief from the path and dropped within one club-length from his nearest point of relief. Finally with a ball back in play and no obstruction interference he played a shot to the green and ended up taking a double bogey on the hole.

Those were the only two rulings I had during my two-day stint as a Rules Official at the Open. I did watch the weekend coverage on TV and saw an interesting situation with Brandt Snedeker. On the ninth putting green, Snedeker had marked and lifted his ball. While bending over to get closer to the ball marker, his ball slipped out of his hand and landed on top of the marker and subsequently moved it.

Snedeker's problem was that this accident was not "directly attributable" to the process of replacing his ball. If you saw the coverage on Sunday you heard USGA Executive Director David Fay referencing Decision 20-1/15 (meaning of *Directly Attributable* in Rules 20-1 and 20-3a), which covers this exact situation.

The Decision asks: What is meant by the phrase "directly attributable to the specific act" in Rules 20-1 (Lifting and Marking) and 20-3a (Placing and Replacing)? Answer: In Rule 20-1 the phrase means the specific act of placing a ball-marker behind the ball, placing a club to the side of the ball, or lifting the ball such that the player's hand, the placement of the ball-marker or the club, or the lifting of the ball causes the ball or the ball-marker to move.

In Rule 20-3a the phrase means the specific act of placing or replacing a ball in front of a ball-marker, placing a club to the side of the ball-marker, or lifting the ball-marker such that the player's hand, the placement of the ball or the club, or the lifting of the ball-marker causes the ball or the ball-marker to move.

Under either Rule, any accidental movement of the ball or the ball-marker which occurs before or after this specific act, such as dropping the ball or ball-marker, regardless of the height from which it was dropped, is not considered to be "directly attributable" and would result in the player incurring a penalty stroke.

The Referee in Snedeker's group properly issued him the one stroke penalty.