

Who's in charge here?

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When asked, "what is the most important section in the *Rules of Golf* book?" the answer from the SCGA will be, "the Definitions!" Without a basic fundamental understanding of these definitions, the balance of the book might seem like a foreign language. Furthermore, when encountering a rules situation on the golf course, a simple breeze through the Definitions section will often be enough to resolve your problem.

However, there is one definition in the book that may leave you even more confused than before you started. "The 'Committee,'" says *The Rules of Golf* book, "is the committee in charge of the competition or, if the matter does not arise in a competition, the committee in charge of the course."

Now, you may say to yourself, "It was awfully nice of them to define the word committee with the word committee." That tactic never seemed to work when taking a vocabulary test in grammar school. Nevertheless, there is a reason behind the vagueness. It allows for a broad interpretation of the word, and therefore, allows a competition or club to establish a committee comprised of whomever it deems fit.

When we at the SCGA are asked to recommend the number of people to make up a committee, we often jokingly answer, "an odd number less than 3." This policy generally leads to the fewest number of debates within the committee. However in SCGA events, we usually have between five and nine rules officials who serve on The Committee.

Whatever the number, there should be one common trait: all committee members should have a working knowledge of *The Rules of Golf* and feel comfortable applying

them. If this is not practical, your club or event must have a source of information on *The Rules of Golf* on which to draw. In most cases, the SCGA Rules and Competitions department can provide committees with any information they may need, and we invite you to contact us via phone or email.

The Committee (better known by some players as *the dreaded committee*) is supposed to be the authority when it comes to the *Rules of Golf*, yet, many of us don't have a clue as to who these people are, where to find them, or even what they really do.

Rule 33 (*The Committee*) of *The Rules of Golf* contains eight subsections outlining the Committee's duties and responsibilities. Some of these guidelines will apply for everyday play at your golf course; others will apply only to tournament play.

33-2 THE COURSE

The Committee must define the status and margins of each entity on the golf course. It is important to maintain these markings for everyday play at the course, but it's even more important in preparation for tournament play.

The entire course boundary must be defined throughout by establishing a clear out-of-bounds periphery.

Each body of water must be identified as either a water hazard (yellow) or lateral water hazard (red) with their margins defined with stakes, lines, or artificial bordering.

Any man-made item on the golf course is, by definition, an obstruction. However, if there are man-made objects on the course that are structurally significant (e.g., a concrete lining to a water hazard) or may provide an unfair relief opportunity for a poor shot (e.g., a cart path running adjacent to an out-of-bounds wall), then the Committee would be justified in declaring these objects as integral parts of the golf course (no relief without penalty).

Finally, any abnormal ground conditions other than casual water

or burrowing animal holes must be either declared or lined as ground under repair.

33-8 LOCAL RULES

Creating local rules for your golf club is an important role for the Committee. All club-sponsored local rules for everyday play must be posted at the club (they're often on the scorecard) for all players to see. Such local rules may include an internal out-of-bounds or the extension of the embedded ball rule through the green. For tournament play, additional local rules may be cited and should be distributed to the players in writing prior the competition. These tournament local rules should state whether or not the club's local rules are in effect for the competition.

In addition, the Committee must establish conditions under which a competition is to be played. These conditions should include the method of entry, eligibility, number of rounds to be played, etc. Local Rules must come from *The Rules of Golf* and are used in addition to those rules.

So who is the all-inclusive "Committee" at your golf club? Whether you play a private club or a public facility, more times than not, the head golf professional will assume that role by default. However, there are a number of clubs throughout Southern California who have established Rules and Tournament Committees that work closely with the head professional and course superintendent to ensure that the course is marked properly and the *Rules of Golf* are being upheld throughout the membership.

Whichever the case, if you have ever hit your ball into a water hazard only to approach the hazard to see two stakes, one red and one yellow, on opposite sides of the pond, you know how important the role of the Committee can be.

So, when someone asks you to serve on The Committee and you're qualified to do so, please consider seriously saying "yes."