

# THE RULES THEY'RE A'CHANGIN' ...AGAIN



## THE DOCTOR IS IN

**F**ollowing several years of anticipation and discussion over the new Rules of Golf, the change has finally come. Those of you who are spending the winter in warmer climates have no doubt played your first few rounds under the new Rules, experimenting with whether or not to leave the flagstick in the hole, and taking advantage of your newfound right to move loose impediments in bunkers and penalty areas. At long last, we finally have a new set of Rules that will be set in stone for the next three years, right? Well, not so fast.

Just as the updated Rules are new to you, they're equally new to the USGA and R&A, and now that the Rules have finally been put into practice, some unexpected results are already arising. As such, the USGA and R&A have made it clear that they're willing to adjust the Rules of Golf as new issues come up, to ensure that the game of golf continues to be as fair as possible for all players, and that the spirit of the game remains intact despite the changing language of the Rules.

If you've been tuning into the various PGA Tour events so far this winter, you've surely been privy to the controversial rulings regarding caddies standing behind their players



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(on an extension of their line of play). At the Phoenix Open last month, Denny McCarthy received a two-stroke penalty when his caddie stood behind him as he prepared to make a stroke from the fairway, and the penalty was later rescinded. The original "violation," as well as PGA Tour Official Slugger White's explanation of the entire situation can be viewed by clicking the image below.

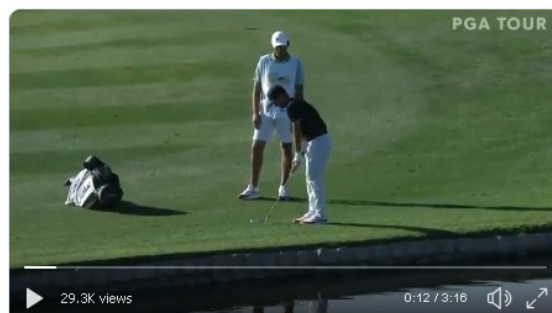
The USGA and R&A wasted no time in addressing this situation (as well as several others just like it). Almost immediately, they released an addendum to the new Rules of Golf which clarifies what it means for a caddie to "deliberately" stand behind a player as the player takes their stance. The most substantive change to the Rule is that the player can now avoid penalty under this Rule by backing out of their stance (the Rule, as previously written, explicitly contradicted this). If you use a hard copy of the rule book, I'd recommend making a note on page 86 that this Rule has changed pretty dramatically, so you don't wind up in the awkward position of penalizing one of your members inappropriately.

While it's important for us all (whether as a golfer or a golf administrator) to be aware of specific Rules of Golf such as this



Denny McCarthy's two-shot penalty from Friday's round has been rescinded.

Here's why:



Denny McCarthy ruling and interview with Slugger White  
For more video go to PGATOUR.COM

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one, the most important thing to take from this article is that the Rules are not a static document that stays the same from day to day. They can, and will, change on a daily basis as unexpected situations arise. Therefore, knowing and understanding the Rules is an ongoing process, and if you don't keep up with the changes, you'll get left behind. Probably the most effective way of staying up to speed is by downloading the Rules of Golf app, which will be updated regularly as these changes occur. I'd also recommend periodically checking in on the R&A's Rules Clarifications page, which keeps a running list of Rules updates that are not included in the printed rule books. [This list of clarifications can be found here.](#)

As Thomas Pagel of the USGA said, "Experience has taught us that introducing a new Rule requires us to balance patience with a willingness to act quickly when necessary." Act quickly they did, and it's up to us as golfers to react just as quickly, and stay on top of the ever-changing Rules of Golf!



## MASSGOLF/NEPGA RULES SEMINARS

The NEPGA will be collaborating with MassGolf to conduct five day-long Rules of Golf seminars in March and April. [Click here for more info and registration.](#)



## NEPGA/Maine Chapter Rules Seminar

The seminar will highlight the major changes to the New Rules of Golf and how these changes will affect your member's play during the upcoming 2019 season. The Seminar will be March 28 at the Purpoodock Club in Cape Elizabeth, Maine from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Reistration is \$30.

[Click here to register.](#)