

Spring 2024, acceptable scores at RPGC

Everyone is aware of the prolonged wet conditions, difficulties maintaining the course, vehicle damage and animal holes. Whilst the playing surfaces are good there are situations where relief is not available from something that really affects the proper playing of the game.

Amendments to local rules

The cleaning ball and preferred lie rules will remain in place whilst necessary. As there is considerable badger and machine damage near the putting greens these areas are considered fairway height within 2 club-lengths of any putting green.

Where damage has been repaired certain areas will be identified by a blue stake and may be treated as Ground Under Repair (GUR). The edges of such GUR are self-evident, please replace stake if removed.

Areas of ground significantly altered by heavy vehicles may be considered GUR. This does not mean light damage or a skid mark but alterations to the contours of the ground.

What to do if a situation is uncertain

In stroke play other players cannot decide, it is probably best to play two balls. Make this decision before playing or dropping and the advice would be to let your marker know which one you want to count before playing, just say you want the ball you have taken penalty free relief with to count. You **MUST** report this procedure to the committee responsible for the competition and it will be best if you can photograph the situation. They will decide your score.

In match play you cannot play two balls but you can come to an agreement with your opponent about the status of the situation, is it an animal hole, GUR, temporary water or immovable obstruction? A simple solution until the players disagree. There is nothing wrong with disagreeing and when this happens the player whose ball is involved has choices:

1. They can play the ball, so long as it is not in a no play zone
2. They can take penalty free relief assuming they are entitled to it. In this case photograph the situation and request a ruling from the committee when possible. The hole will either be lost because relief was not allowed or stand as played. This might mean the state of the match is unknown, the players should acknowledge this and continue, possibly having two outcomes governed by the ruling
3. Take penalty relief

Spirit of the game

Our governing bodies have significantly restricted what is allowed within local rules for abnormal conditions. They don't play in the Midlands. However, their reluctance is based around golfers not following the spirit of the game and exploiting situations. Please don't do this otherwise the very helpful rule amendments will have to be withdrawn before conditions allow. Also do not assume that other courses will have anything similar.

Badgers

The obvious damage caused by badgers are animal holes, holes dug by an animal, including the spoil from such holes. Relief is clearly allowed. The problem with all such damage is deciding when it ceases being an animal hole. Once flattened by machinery it is difficult to distinguish between animal hole and an area without grass.

Vehicle damage



The images show a ball on vehicle damage, green arrow shows direction of play for a right handed stroke.

Situation on left hand image. Ball is on a fat tyre track which is flat. The surface of the ground has not been materially altered. There is no relief from this situation and this would be the case even if there were a tread pattern in the mud.

Situation on right hand image. Ball is on the edge of flat tyre damage and is actually in a rut caused by another vehicle. How the vehicle damage occurred does not matter. The surface of the ground has been altered and this would affect the playing of the stroke so relief is allowed.

Philip Askew
RPGC Rules Committee