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The USGA, in conjunction with the Royal & Ancient, in St. Andrews, Scotland writes, interprets, and maintains the Rules of Golf to guard the tradition and integrity of the game.

Several years ago, when I first became a PGA member, a large portion of business school was dedicated to learning the rules of golf. Even though it was years ago, I still remember the Rule of Golf instructor's advise. "***Learn the definitions.***"

The definitions are in the front of the rules of golf pamphlet issued by the USGA. These definitions are highlighted throughout the rule book in *italics*. Knowing these definitions really accelerates the learning curve for any golfer.

As a PGA member, I was proud to tell my junior students that golf is the only sport where the player feels compelled to call a ruling on oneself if an infraction is detected.

The rules not only protect the integrity of the game but a thorough understanding of them can benefit the golfer during official competitions.

See how knowledgeable you are without a Rules book and then try this exam with a Rules book.

1. In a stroke play competition, a competitor has decided to use a 5-iron to chip a ball from the bottom of an elevated putting green. The player's ball is chipped from the fairway, through the fringe, between two bunkers onto the putting green. Prior to the stroke, the golfer asks a fellow competitor to tend the flagstick prior to chipping the ball. This is a violation of the rules of golf. True False.
2. During a stroke play competition, a competitor hits an errant approach to the wrong putting green. The player takes the nearest point of relief, no nearer the hole, not in a hazard and not on the putting green to drop a ball without penalty. Prior to dropping this ball, the player cleans mud off the ball. This is allowed by the Rules of Golf. True False
3. In stroke play competition, a player determines that a fellow competitor's ball will interfere with her chip shot. Both balls are off the putting green at the bottom of the fringe, resting on the edge of the fairway. The player asks the fellow competitor to mark her ball prior to making the stroke. The fellow competitor states that she does not want to mark but will play first. Playing first versus marking the ball is a violation of the Rules of Golf. True False

4. A ball is deemed lost if it is not found or identified as his by the player within five minutes after the player's side or his or their caddies have begun to search for it. True False

5. During a stroke play competition, a competitor asks a fellow competitor if there is a blind hazard in front of the green on a par 5. The competitor is getting ready to go for this putting green in two shots and cannot remember if a hazard is in front of this elevated green. Asking for this advice in competition is a violation of the Rules of Golf. True False

Answers

- 1 False: Rule 17-1 permits tending the flagstick from anywhere on the course
- 2 True Rule 25.3 allows the relief and permits cleaning the ball prior to dropping
- 3 False Rule 2-2 permits the fellow competitor to play first in stroke play versus marking (FYI: had she marked versus playing, she *cannot* clean her ball)
- 4 True Definitions (Lost Ball) once the search begins, 5 minutes
- 5 False Rule 8.1 normally does not permit advice in competition but the definitions state that information on the *Rules*, distance or matters of public information, such as the position of *hazards* or the *flagstick* on the putting green, is not *advice*. (know the definitions)