

Rule of the Month - Matchplay

Have you ever heard of a situation where someone lost a hole or a match due to a rules incident that they were not sure about. Most golfers do not realise that there are important differences in the rules of golf for matchplay. Below are 10 tips that might be useful before commencing a match but first a question.

Question: In matchplay, player 1 plays their ball from the tee on a par-3. Player 2 then plays their ball from the tee and it comes to rest on the lip of the hole. Player 1 concedes the putt. Player 1 then makes another stroke and wins the hole. Explain! (answer at the bottom)

1. You may practice on the course on the day of a match (Rule 7-1) unless there is a local rule to the contrary. GolfSA pennants have such a rule.
2. You must not touch your opponent's ball in play, unless you are helping to search for it (Rule 18-3). Do not mark an opponent's ball on the putting green, unless they ask you to.
3. A concession of a hole may be given at any time and cannot be declined or withdrawn (Rule 2-4). You may putt out after receiving the concession and it makes no difference if you miss.
4. Incorrect information (Rule 9-2). If you give your opponent wrong information about your score you must correct it before they make their next stroke, or you lose the hole.
5. Order of Play (Rule 10-1). The ball furthest from the hole is played first. If your opponent plays out of turn you may let their stroke stand, or require that they cancel the stroke and play again in the correct order.
6. Your ball hits your opponent, or their equipment (Rule 19-3). You may choose to replay the stroke, or accept it and play your next shot from where the ball comes to rest.
7. A putt from the putting green hits a ball at rest on the putting green (Rule 19-5). There is no penalty in matchplay, the other ball must be replaced and your ball played from where it comes to rest.
8. Ignoring an opponent's breach of a rule (Rule 1-3). In matchplay, you do not have to call a penalty on your opponent if you witness a breach of Rule by them. But don't discuss the breach with the opponent before teeing off at the next hole, or you could both be disqualified for agreeing to waive a rule.
9. If you are unsure of a rule or procedure it is best to resolve it with your opponent immediately (Rule 2-5). If you cannot agree, a claim has to be made before teeing-off at the next hole. You must notify your opponent that you are making a claim, agree the facts and ask the Committee for a ruling.
10. Don't get 'bullied' into accepting a ruling by your opponent and don't get into an argument about it. Agree on the facts and seek a ruling from the referee. If a timely ruling is not available the match should be continued and played to a conclusion, whereby there is a definitive result that takes into account an eventual ruling for the disputed hole whether it is a win, loss or half.

Answer: Admittedly this is fairly unlikely but player 1 had played out of turn, so player 2 asked for the stroke to be cancelled, Rule 10-1c. After player 2 had conceded player 1's putt for birdie, the replayed shot was a hole-in-one to win the hole.