

Rule of the Month

Sprinkler Heads Close to Putting Greens (Local Rule)

One of our local rules at North Adelaide allows relief from sprinkler heads close to putting greens when the sprinkler head interferes with our line of play.

This local rule classifies the sprinkler head as an Immovable Obstruction (Rule 16.1) and the player takes relief by dropping the ball in a relief area based on the nearest point of complete relief.

The rule is as follows:

Sprinkler heads close to putting greens (interference exists if an obstruction is on the player's line of play, and is within two club-lengths of the putting green, and is within two club-lengths of the ball).
Exception - no relief under this Local Rule if the player chooses a line of play that is clearly unreasonable.

But what does this really mean? A picture tells a thousand words, or in this case several pictures tell several thousand words.....plus a few words to explain the pictures.....



In our first picture, the sprinkler head is clearly within two club-lengths of both the green and the ball, and is directly on the line of play to the hole (marked with a red dot).

The player would be entitled to take relief with the reference point being at the nearest point of complete relief and drop the ball within one club-length of the reference point, no nearer the hole.



In our second picture, the ball is right behind the sprinkler head which is on the line of play to the hole, however, the sprinkler head is clearly more than two club lengths from the green, therefore the player would not be entitled to relief, and would have to play the ball as it lies or take relief for an unplayable ball (Rule 19.2) with a one stroke penalty.

Of course, we all know the options available for unplayable ball relief, don't we! If we don't, there is a very helpful picture on page 117 of the Player's Edition of the Rules of Golf, a copy of which I'm sure you all have in your golf bags.

clearly within two club-lengths of the green, and two balls A and B for which the sprinkler head is on the line of play to the hole (marked with a red dot).

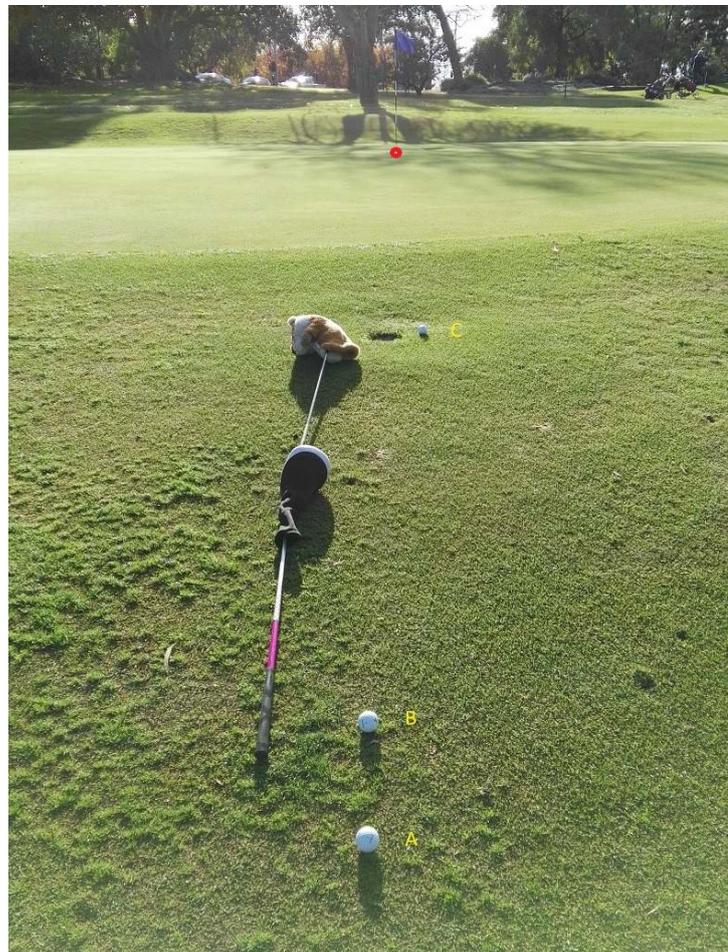
Ball B is just within two club-lengths of the sprinkler head, whilst ball A is more than two club-lengths from the sprinkler head, therefore a player would be entitled to take relief for ball B, but not for ball A.

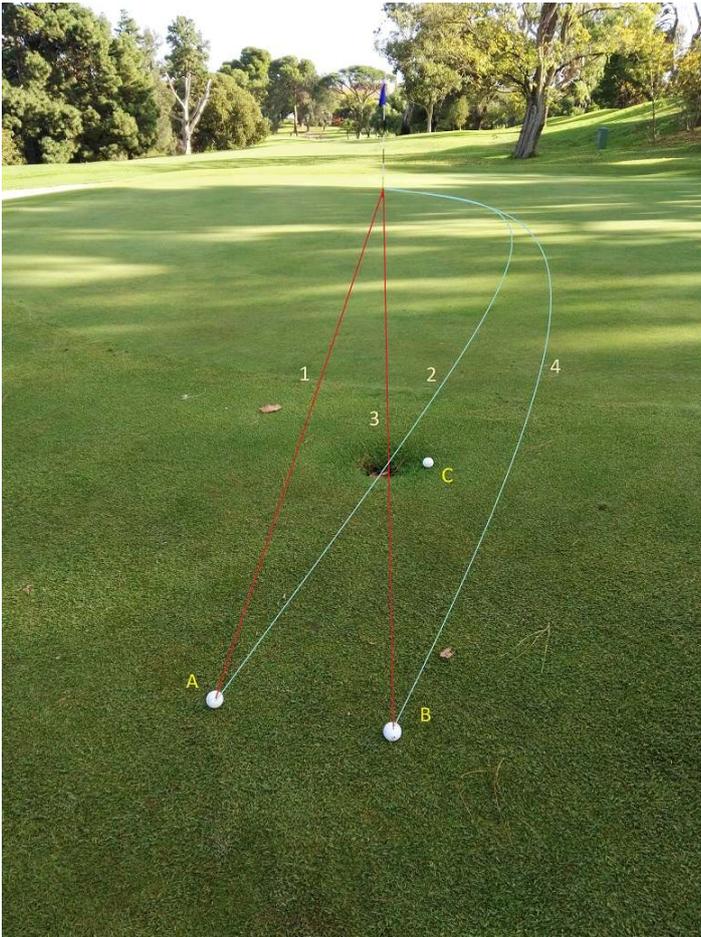
A third ball (C) is right next to the sprinkler head, however there is no direct line of play interference and the sprinkler head does not interfere with the player's ball, stance or swing. No free relief would be available for ball C.

A player may try to claim relief for 'mental interference' for ball C, however the rules of golf do not provide relief for 'mental interference', so the player would have to play it as it lies or take a one stroke penalty for unplayable ball relief.

Finally, just as you thought it was all simple, we have picture 4.....

Picture 3 shows a sprinkler head that is





You will recognise this as the 6th green on the South course which slopes significantly from right to left in our picture. Here, the sprinkler head is within two club-lengths of the green and all three balls (A, B and C) are within two club-lengths of the sprinkler head.

There is no direct line interference for ball C (or ball, stance or swing interference), so it would have to be played as it lies.

Ball B has the sprinkler head directly between it and the hole (line 3); however, the line of play (as indicated by line 4) is well to the right of the sprinkler head so the player would not be entitled to relief under our local rule and the ball should be played as it lies.

Conversely, the sprinkler head is not on a direct line between ball A and the hole (line 1), however, the player would be entitled to relief for ball A as the line of play (as indicated by line 2) passes over the sprinkler head.

The Last Word.....Please remember that this is a local rule at North Adelaide Golf Club and may not be the case when you play at other clubs. **You should always read the local rules before starting play at another club; you never know what help may be provided.**