

MARKING A GOLF COURSE FOR COMPETITION

WIAA and Conference tournaments bring with them tremendous excitement and emotion towards golf in our schools and communities. Preparing for these key tournaments is truly a difficult task that requires significant preparation by the school given the responsibility of hosting each of these tournaments.

Especially in a high school tournament, where high school players will be competing against one another to decide a winner, the golf course needs to be properly marked by the school in charge of the competition. This is the only way to ensure that there won't be any problems with rules interpretations. If a golf course is improperly marked, this can easily lead to a number of potential rules questions, which could have been avoided with proper preparation.

The most important components in marking a golf course include defining out of bounds, water hazards and ground under repair, as well as determining the status of obstructions and how they will be played.

For conference meets, these tournaments are organized and governed via the Bylaws of a conference. Each conference has its own protocols for developing and approving of rules. Normally, this includes a coaches meeting for each sport with coaches initially developing regulations. Coach's recommendations are then passed on to the Athletic Directors of a conference for review and their approval. Then Principals are asked to review rule proposals and give the final approval for adaptation as a Conference Bylaw in a sport.

It is always wise to include "Marking a Course" in the Bylaws of a conference's golf regulations. These rules provide the host school with specific direction as they prepare for hosting a conference meet. Certainly, host schools will need to work directly with the owners/PGA Professionals of a course and carefully review and utilize the Local Rules sheet in marking a course.

Listed below are simple, suggested procedures for marking a golf course. These marking ideas can be used as a guideline for marking a golf course whenever a school hosts a conference or WIAA tournament series meet. Golf coaches are encouraged to review these guidelines and develop recommendations that best fit the circumstances for hosting meets in their conference.

MARKING THE GOLF COURSE

Out of Bounds

It is suggested that white boundary stakes be situated about 15 yards apart.

They must be closer than that or painted using a white stripe if this is necessary to sight from one stake to the next without bushes, trees or anything else intervening.

A boundary can be defined by means other than white stakes.

A fence along the perimeter of a course might define out of bounds.

It is a common misconception that it is not proper to define "out of bounds" as an area within a course.

The USGA often marks as out of bounds areas such as parking lots, clubhouses, maintenance areas, tennis courts, practice areas, etc. using white paint.

Water Hazards (Including Lateral Water Hazards)

Water hazards and lateral water hazards need to be clearly marked with stakes and whenever possible hazard lines. Coaches/tournament managers are not able to indicate that “all woods, or other selected areas, are lateral hazards for a tournament without marking these areas.”

A water hazard is any sea, lake, pond, river, ditch, surface drainage ditch or other water course (whether or not containing water) and anything of a similar nature.

A lateral water hazard is a water hazard or that part of a water hazard so situated that it is not possible or is deemed by the Committee to be impracticable to drop a ball behind the water hazard in accordance with USGA Rule 26-1b.

A body of water, which can be properly classified as a lateral water hazard, includes a brook parallel to a hole if the terrain on the far side is rocky or wooded.

One-inch stakes about 18 inches in length serve satisfactorily as water hazard or lateral water hazard stakes.

If lines are to be applied, a paint gun designed to apply painted lines on grass can be obtained.

If both lines and stakes are present,

- lines define and
- stakes identify the hazard.

The Notice to Players should make it clear that the line, not the stakes, defines the hazard margin.

Stakes or lines should be placed where the ground breaks down to form the depression containing the water.

If there is a bush or tree just outside the natural margin of a lateral water hazard, it is suggested that the bush or tree be included in the hazard.

When only stakes are used, since the line from stake to stake determines the limit of the hazard, care must be used to ensure that no area, which should be within the hazard, lies outside the line.

If a body of water is part water hazard and part lateral water hazard, a yellow stake and a red stake should be placed together at the spot where the change takes place.

Ground Under Repair

Ground under repair is any portion of the course so marked by order of the Committee or so declared by its authorized representative.

It includes material piled for removal and a hole made by a greenkeeper, even if not so marked.

Note 1: Grass cuttings and other material left on the course which have been abandoned and are not intended to be removed are not ground under repair unless so marked.

Note 2: The Committee may make a Local Rule prohibiting play from ground under repair or an environmentally-sensitive area which has been defined as ground under repair.

The entire course should be gone over thoroughly before any GUR areas are marked because the Committee's conception of what should be marked might be different after a tour of the course than before.

It is recommended that ground under repair be defined with white lines, using a paint gun.

In general, bare areas in the rough are not marked as ground under repair, unless the areas are rutted. Such areas in the fairway are generally marked as ground under repair.

Obstructions and Integral Parts of the Course

Although most obstructions are self-evident, it is sometimes advisable to identify certain items as obstructions in order to clarify matters for players who are not entirely familiar with the Rules.

The Committee has authority to declare any construction to be an integral part of the course and thus not an obstruction.

If an artificially-surfaced road or path runs parallel to and is so close to a boundary fence that a player would incidentally get relief from interference by the boundary fence in taking relief from the road or path, it is recommended that consideration be given to declaring that section of the road or path to be an integral part of the course.

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