



GA Guidance for Committees: COURSE WITH BUNKERS FILLED WITH WATER OR OUT OF PLAY (Version – 07/2012)

Introduction

From time to time a committee will have to conduct a competition on a golf course which has bunkers that are either filled with water or otherwise out of play. This may be because the bunkers are being renovated (either as a part of the club's normal renovation or building program, or to fix damage that has been caused by flooding).

This can be a relatively common occurrence in some areas and is a problem faced by organisers of events ranging from Friday twilight competitions right through to international championships. The following information is provided to help committees handle these circumstances if they arise.

Explanation of the term 'Through the Green' (which is used below)

'Through the Green' is a defined term in the Rules of Golf. 'Through the Green' is the whole area of the course except the teeing ground and putting green of the hole being played, and all hazards on the course.

General Points Regarding Local Rule Options to Cater for Damaged Bunkers or Bunkers Filled With Water

- NOTE: Once a stipulated round has commenced, a Committee is not authorised to introduce a new Local Rule to apply for the remainder of that stipulated round. In a competition played over more than one round, a Local Rule may be introduced or rescinded between rounds.
- When a Committee considers a bunker to be damaged to the extent that it will require renovation to again become playable, the Committee may define the entire bunker to be ground under repair.
 - In such a case, the bunker loses its status as a hazard and is automatically classified as 'through the green'. (Therefore, unless a Committee specifically states otherwise, Rule 25-1b(i) applies, not Rule 25-1b(ii).)
 - Heavy rain has the potential to cause bunkers to flood. In many instances bunkers will be playable once the water has cleared. In other instances bunkers will be substantially damaged and they will remain unplayable even once the water is gone. This can be due to a significant amount of sand and/or soil having moved, or bunker surfaces being left heavily covered with a sludgy residue which would significantly impact the proper playing of the game.
 - In rare cases, there can be safety considerations attached to damaged bunkers.
 - A committee may consider that all bunkers on a course are damaged to the extent that they will require renovation to again become playable.
- When bunkers are completely flooded prior to a competition commencing but the Committee does NOT consider them to be in need of renovation, there is still an available Local Rule option. The Committee may introduce a Local Rule stating that certain specific bunkers are deemed to be ground under repair and classified as through the green.
 - In such a case, these specific bunkers must be known to be flooded prior to the competition commencing and there must be no reasonable likelihood of the bunkers drying up during the competition.
 - Under this Local Rule it will be permissible for a player to take relief outside these bunkers without penalty in accordance with Rule 25-1b(i).
 - A Local Rule may not be introduced to provide relief generally from all bunkers if the Committee does NOT consider them to be in need of renovation. (EXCEPTION: Where there are 15 or less bunkers on the course, the Committee may introduce a Local Rule stating that ALL bunkers are deemed to be ground under repair and classified as through the green, regardless of whether or not they need renovating.)
 - Specimen Local Rule when Renovation of Bunkers is NOT required: "The following bunkers are deemed to be GUR and 'through the green': [*list bunkers*]. The ball may be dropped without penalty at the nearest point of relief outside the bunker in accordance with the standard GUR relief procedure."

When No Local Rule is in Place – Relief from Casual Water in a Bunker

Where there is no Local Rule in place, whether a bunker contains a small amount of water or is completely filled, the Rule regarding Abnormal Ground Conditions (note: casual water is an abnormal ground condition) caters for all possibilities (see Rule 25-1b(ii)). In accordance with this Rule, a player experiencing interference from casual water always has the option of dropping their ball outside the bunker, under penalty of one stroke. If a player chooses this

option, they must keep the point where the ball lay directly between the hole and the spot on which the ball is dropped – with no limit to how far behind the bunker the ball may be dropped.

Impact on Course Ratings

When clubs have bunkers filled with water or otherwise out of play, they should continue to process competitions through *GOLF Link*. The following table provides advice on when a club needs to contact its State/Territory Association, and when its course ratings may be affected.

Number of Bunkers Out of Play	Period of Time	Contact State/Territory Association	Impact Club's Official Course Ratings
0-5	1 month or less	No	No
0-5	More than 1 month	Yes*	Possibly
6 or more	1-4 days	No	No
6 or more	5 days or more	Yes*	Possibly

* When you contact your Member Association, they will supply you with a form to complete which will briefly describe the number and location of bunkers you have out of play. Your Member Association will immediately assess the returned form and determine if they need to make any temporary adjustment to your course ratings through *GOLF Link*. It may be the case that the bunkers you have out of play will have an inconsequential impact on your course ratings, or that heavier conditions or greater rough heights will offset the bunker impact. (Note: This guidance has been designed with a view to ensuring the service of clubs may be as quick as possible.)

Competitions Conducted Contrary to the Rules of Golf

If a committee is unaware of the restrictions imposed by this document and the Rules of Golf and as a result conducts a competition with a Local Rule which is contrary to the guidance provided, the scores must not be used for handicapping purposes except with the approval of the Member Association.

Miscellaneous Measures to Assist Players

- In situations where there is no Local Rule in place and where only a few bunkers are badly affected, players will have to deal with balls coming to rest in bunkers they had not considered to pose a concern. To remove the surprise factor, and in addition to any maintenance work performed, it is recommended that committees pre-advise their fields of specific problem locations. This will give players the opportunity to take into account the problem areas when considering their course management. This can be done for example by posting notices on the starting tees.
- If a course experiences periods of prolonged wet weather, an option to consider is to have greens staff create an area of heaped or raised sand at a remote part of the bunker. This point should be positioned so that it can never be closer to the hole than any point at which a player's ball could originally come to rest within casual water. Such areas need not be large – even as small as one metre square – and can be created by dumping, scraping, or heaping sand from within the wet bunker. The location of the hole may need to be arranged to suit.

We hope this document assists in the management of play at your club. Please feel free to contact your Member Association if you have any queries or if you would like any further information.

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