



USGA and The R&A Media Teleconference Transcript
Monday, October 26, 2015

An Interview With:

Thomas Pagel, Senior Director, Rules of Golf & Amateur Status, USGA

David Rickman, Executive Director of Rules and Equipment Standards, The R&A

MIKE WOODCOCK: Good afternoon from St Andrews, and thank you for joining us for this teleconference to discuss the release of the 2016 Rules of Golf and Rules of Amateur Status. My name is Mike Woodcock, and I am the Media Manager at The R&A. I'm joined in hosting the teleconference by my colleague, Janeen Driscoll, Director of Public Relations at the USGA, who is in Far Hills, New Jersey.

You should have by now received a copy of the news releases announcing the publication of the 2016 Rules of Golf and Rules of Amateur Status, which was issued one hour ago. If you haven't, they can both be viewed at [The RandA.org](http://TheRandA.org) and USGA.org websites.

Our speakers on the teleconference today are Thomas Pagel, Senior Director of Rules of Golf of the USGA, and David Rickman, the Executive Director of Rules and Equipment Standards at The R&A.

We will shortly begin the teleconference with some opening remarks from Thomas and David before giving the opportunity to ask questions.

Thomas, can I start by asking you to explain the process for producing the 2016 Rules of Golf.

THOMAS PAGEL: Yes, Mike. Thank you, and good day, everyone.

So the process, the Rules of Golf process, the announcement today really represents the conclusion of our standard four-year review of the Rules of Golf and the decisions on the Rules of Golf, so everything that has been announced today will take effect on January 1st, whether rules or decisions.

Now, the process to get to this point is highly collaborative, and obviously involves both the USGA and The R&A and our Rules of Golf committee, but outside of that we have representation from the golf world. For example, The R&A has 11 advisory members on

its Rules of Golf committee, as does the USGA; we have five consulting members. Both committees have representation from the professional tours.

On the USGA side, some of our consulting members include the PGA Tour, PGA of America, LPGA Tour, our state and regional golf community as well as Mexico.

So again, very collaborative. Input is critical from throughout the game, and that is received as part of the process, as part of this responsive and responsible process.

Now, one thing I will note before we get in, one of the outcomes of the conclusion of this cycle is actually the appearance of the Rules of Golf book. You'll note as you look at the artwork that both the USGA logo and The R&A logo appear, and that's really just a strong indication of the collaborative nature between the USGA and The R&A with this process since 1952.

Now with both logos on the book, it really is a statement that there is a single set of rules that apply worldwide to all golfers. It's not The R&A rules or the USGA rules, it is the Rules of Golf. So again, what has been released today and what we'll discuss is the result of four years, our standard four-year cycle, and they will all take effect on January 1st.

MIKE WOODCOCK: Thomas, thank you. David, can I turn to you in terms of the publication of the new book. Can you give us an idea of the scale of the distribution of the Rules of Golf, please.

DAVID RICKMAN: Thank you, Mike, and good day, everyone. Even though we've produced the rule changes, the printing and distribution is quite a big logistical exercise, and both organizations are able to print and distribute the rule book free of charge, thanks to the kind support of Rolex.

From the USGA's point of view, they will print and distribute 1.5 million copies of the Rules of Golf for 2016 for distribution within the United States and Mexico, with copies being made available to the USGA website and through the USGA's extensive members program.

From The R&A's perspective, we will print 2.3 million copies for the four-year cycle, and we will make our copies available through our website, via our affiliated unions. The book itself will be delivered in the coming weeks to 96 destinations worldwide, and in Great Britain and Ireland, we will distribute the best part of a million copies to all of our golf clubs and societies. That starts this week, and obviously members of those clubs and societies can access the rules in that way.

In addition, translations of the Rules of Golf are made in ever-increasing numbers, and to date for 2016, we're looking at 36 translations. So if you want to try and look at the rules in other languages, you can look at them in Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, just to highlight three. But of course it's not just a printed product; the digital world gives us

lots of opportunities, and both organizations are producing Rules of Golf apps free of charge, and we will have foreign language versions of the Rules of Golf app, as well, Chinese, Japanese and Spanish being available shortly.

One last thing from me to say is that companion publications, so decisions on the Rules of Golf and Golf Rules Illustrated will be made available by both organizations next month.

MIKE WOODCOCK: David, thank you. I'll now turn back to the operator for some brief instructions about asking questions and then we'll open the floor to questions from there.

Q. A simple question: I looked at the changes to the rules of amateurism, and it says that amateurs may accept cash prizes if they are donated to charity, which is a great idea. Does that mean people at The R&A might give the amateurs the equivalent cash prize at The Open?

DAVID RICKMAN: Thank you for your question. This is David Rickman. Perhaps I should take that. As far as that particular idea, it really dates back to 2011 when after the disastrous tsunami in Japan, Hideki Matsuyama was invited to take part in an event and for his prize money to be donated to that very worthy disaster relief fund. At the time, we were not able to accommodate that request, but that prompted our review and is one of the main reasons for it.

Paul Dunne's recent exceptional performance at the Open Championship was not really part of this consideration. Arguably it came too late for us to consider it, and to be honest, some of the suggestions whereby funding could go to national unions, even more worthy aspects of this work which might be charitable, those are not considered to be what we have in mind here.

So we're looking for the governing bodies who have control of this process to direct these to charitable causes that have absolutely no connection to the amateur golfers concerned.

Q. David, I understand what you're saying there, but if a sponsor of any tournament said, look, if you've got an amateur and he finishes 19th, the money can go to a charity of his choice, what would be the reaction to that?

DAVID RICKMAN: Well, we would need to know about this in advance. As I say, the rule requires governing body approval in advance for this to take place. If the organizing committee wishes to do so, if the money was going to an independent and recognized charitable source, then obviously that approach would be given positive consideration.

Q. I'm just wondering about the new rule 14-1b. How concerned are you that clubs and organizations, golf unions will just simply ignore the rule and continue to allow players to anchor putters?

THOMAS PAGEL: I'll go ahead and take this. With 14-1b, obviously we've had the conversation for the last several years. We made the announcement three years ago. In

the time since, we have been very proactive and working quite closely with other golfing unions as well as here in the States with the PGA of America, with an effort and a focus on education and working together, and I can tell you that in speaking at least on our side, speaking on behalf of the USGA and working with our partners, I am not getting a great indication of that, that there will be those that choose to breach the rule. Rather it's really been a sense of collaboration where we're working to create educational materials and resources for those individuals to help assist and comply with the rule.

I don't see it as a great issue. Again, it's a matter at this point of education and working together, and there really has been that sense of partnership in the industry for the last several years.

Q. Thomas or David, just curious why you chose to lessen the penalty for using an artificial device, and then had one other question.

DAVID RICKMAN: As you know, the whole rules review process is a continuous process, and this is one where we're looking to try and find proportionate penalties, and we certainly had a couple of instances in the professional game. For example, Juli Inkster used a weighted doughnut. More recently D.A. Points used, I think, a foam ball, placed it under his arm. These were kind of one-off instances, and when we examined them, we felt that the penalty of disqualification was disproportionately harsh. When we talked about this, we thought, well, we like the idea of saying in the case of a first breach, we'll give the general penalty, loss of hole in match play, two strokes in stroke play, but retain the disqualification for a second or repeated breach.

This also has the benefits of addressing perhaps the use of distance-measuring devices, and the advantage of our current position is that we have flexibility via the local rule, but that flexibility can also create confusion and uncertainty, and therefore if somebody uses a distance-measuring device, for example, on the first hole, there is at least that opportunity for the player to realize themselves, or what often happens, somebody else to immediately say, oh, you can't do that. Under the current rules that is too late; the player is already disqualified; whereas from 2016, you at least have that first opportunity to catch that sort of situation.

Q. David, if you use a range finder from the first fairway, you would get docked two shots but not disqualified?

DAVID RICKMAN: That is correct. Hopefully you hit it on the green and therefore you don't use it again from any closer to the green, because if you did, that second use would be viewed as a second breach, and I'm afraid that would be the application of the disqualification penalty.

Q. This is probably a really unfair question, but do you know how many various rules lead straight to disqualification?

DAVID RICKMAN: That's a very unfair question. (laughter)

Q. I know it is, but I'm just wondering if there's a general feeling amongst the USGA and The R&A to basically not be so harsh.

DAVID RICKMAN: I think we would take the view that we're certainly always looking to apply proportionate penalties, and we're very conscious that disqualification is a very serious situation, and the removal from the competition is something that we should use judiciously and therefore only when appropriate.

We feel that this is a step in that right direction.

Q. I'm just wondering on the distance-measuring devices, obviously Bronte Law fell to it this year, and I'm just wondering if there was ever any consideration as to making them legal in all competitions.

THOMAS PAGEL: Yeah, and certainly that is something that we have talked about. However, the committee just felt at this time that by use of local rule that the correct construct works, and it's worked well. So I would say that that will likely be an ongoing conversation, but for the time being the committees felt comfortable with the approach of permitting such devices by local rule.

Q. Can I just follow up on 6-6d? How would that work in practice? Remember the Padraig Harrington situation in Abu Dhabi? I imagine he would have been penalized a shot and then a two-stroke penalty and then allowed to continue; is that correct?

THOMAS PAGEL: Yes, that's correct, so the exception is it's a limited exception, and how it'll be applied is that if the player -- if the only reason his or her scorecard is incorrect is because they failed to include a penalty stroke or strokes that they did not know they had incurred, after they return the scorecard the committee will have the ability to go in, add the original penalty to the scorecard, plus an additional two-stroke penalty to that hole for breach of the scorecard rule, for 6-6d. So in that case Padraig Harrington would have received the original penalty plus an additional two-stroke penalty for signing an incorrect scorecard, but he would still be in the competition and playing golf.

Q. Is there a fear that players might take advantage of this situation, let's say plead ignorance, for example?

THOMAS PAGEL: No. It's certainly something we talked about, and I would just say that the prospect of four strokes being added to your scorecard after is still extremely severe. So while it's not disqualification, it would have a significant impact on one's position. I guess I'll just note that as with all other rules, our starting point is to assume the honor and honesty and integrity of the player. We try not to start -- we try not to write the rules from a starting point that we presume somebody will try and take advantage of it, so again, I think that's why we're comfortable, again, especially given the prospect of a four-stroke penalty.

Q. Without getting too muddled here, if this exception had been in place at the 2013 Masters, the whole issue with Tiger and the wrong drop, et cetera, this would have never have had to gone to that explanation of the rule that I can't think of off the top of my head; he just would have been given four shots going into Saturday; is that correct?

THOMAS PAGEL: This rule or this exception would not have applied in Tiger's situation. It was a little bit different. The crux of the issue there is the reason his scorecard was incorrect was because he didn't include -- the committee had ruled that he had not incurred a penalty. So he played from a wrong place, but the committee had made an initial determination that he had proceeded properly. The committee then revisited its position and determined that he had indeed played from a wrong place, and so that situation ultimately would have ended up the same.

First of all, you cannot hold the player responsible for a scorecard error when the committee -- the reason he got it wrong is because the committee had made a ruling. But you also should note that the committee always has the ability to go back in and correct a ruling, and that's what was done in that case.

Q. So just the two for him in that case?

THOMAS PAGEL: That's correct, so it's very important to note that this exception was not included in the rules as a result of that situation by any means.

DAVID RICKMAN: If I could add, one more thing from me, if you're looking for a case that does have direct relevance here, it would be the Camilo Villegas case from the 2011 Tournament of Champions.

Q. Kapalua?

DAVID RICKMAN: Exactly, where he played a chip shot, didn't quite get it up one of their steep hills. As the ball was rolling back, he flicked away a couple of loose impediments, and as they were on the player's -- the direction of the ball, that is a breach of rule 23-1, the loose impediment rule, but to be fair, really one of those tricky rules, not something that you would immediately look at and see as a breach. But that would be the type of situation where that is a breach of the rules. It was spotted overnight.

The decision at that time had to be disqualification, but for 2016 onwards, Camilo or the player in those circumstances would incur the original two-stroke penalty, plus the two-stroke penalty for the scorecard error but would stay in the event.

Q. What would happen if this happened on a Friday in a full-field event and the additional four shots caused him to miss the cut, or two shots for that matter?

THOMAS PAGEL: And that's something that we've discussed with the PGA Tour, and that's really a matter of policy, so I don't want to speak for them. But they would have the ability to adjust the field, if you will.

Again, I don't want to speak for the PGA Tour. I can tell you on our side, if it were to happen in a USGA championship, our position would be to remove the player if that penalty would have resulted in them missing the cut.

Q. Following up on the question on Pdraig, there was also a case years ago where he didn't sign his card and he didn't notice this until he saw it on display

because it was a course record. He would still be disqualified for not signing?

DAVID RICKMAN: That is correct. You're right. It was an event at the Belfry, and I think it was one of these very unfortunate cases where I think one of his playing partners, I think it was in the first round, was Michael Campbell, and Michael managed to sign more often than he should have done, and as a result, Padraig's scorecard had two signatures on it, but neither was Padraig's, and this only came about when they were looking to have the scorecard preserved for memorabilia circumstances, for reasons such as that, and I think they identified it on the morning of the final round.

So I'm afraid you're right. A long-winded way of saying you're right, this exception to Rule 6-6d is only for the type of situation where this has come about through the failure to include a penalty the player did not know they had incurred. Mathematical errors or other scorecard errors such as failing to sign the card will continue to be disqualification matters.

Q. I'm curious on 18-2b, and I'm probably a little confused on this one, I thought there was an adjustment, for lack of a better word, if it was very clear that the wind had moved the ball after address. I'm just wondering if you can clarify an example of when the one-stroke penalty would be applied. I mean, it says, "the facts would show the player has caused the ball to move." I'm sure if there was a twitch and he accidentally hit it, I understand that part. I think what's confusing me is some other things on HD and super-slo-mo, 3D and whatever television stuff is exonerating the player from a penalty. Can you clarify that, if that question made any sense?

THOMAS PAGEL: I will give it an attempt, and you let me know if I'm not answering the intended question. You are correct, 18-2b is the rule that says once you've addressed your ball, if that ball moves for any reason, you're deemed to have caused the ball to move, unless it's known or virtually certain something else caused your ball to move, and that exception, the unless part was added in 2012, to address those conditions which you stated. So it's likely wind. So the player's ball is on the putting green, he addresses the ball, wind causes the ball to move; well, we know, we have virtual certainty, we have knowledge that the wind caused the ball to move based on the facts, so we're not going to penalize you; play it from its new location.

I can tell you that that exception was really the start of a much broader discussion about, well, shouldn't all ball-moved situations just be treated based on the facts. The player caused his ball to move, yes or no, regardless of whether he addressed the ball or not. And so the rationale of that exception that was introduced in 2012 has really been extended now to the rule in its entirety, so what we'll look at is any time a player's ball moves, the committee will look at the facts of the situation. You know, and those facts could be where was the ball at rest, what was the player's proximity to the ball, what were the player's actions around the ball.

You're going to have some situations where it's very simple: you know the player nudged the ball accidentally with his putter. Okay, we know the player moved it. The player took a practice swing, and right as the player took the practice swing the ball

moves downwards in long rough or something. Well, more likely than not the player caused the ball to move. But then you're going to have situations such as if a player addresses his ball on the putting green, so he grounds his club immediately behind his ball and then steps back because he wants to revisit his line and maybe he steps off to the side or walks around the other side of the hole and some 10 seconds later that ball starts to move. Under today's rules, the player would be subject to penalty because he had addressed it 10, 15 seconds prior and he'd be required to re-place it.

In the future the committee will have the discretion to say, look at the time that has elapsed between the time the player addressed the ball and the time that ball moved. He was not the cause of the ball's movement, so no penalty; play the ball from its new location.

It's really a matter of extending that rationale that currently exists in the exception to all cases where a ball has moved.

Q. What would you do, though, Thomas, if you're playing on a soft day and you grounded your club, your putter, right behind the ball and then you stepped away, and the indentation the putter has created on a soft green allowed it to kind of wiggle backwards and then roll off? How do you decide that one?

THOMAS PAGEL: Again, every situation is going to be a little bit different, so it's tough. I can tell you that first of all, for those that are familiar with the decisions, there's going to be a guidance decision in the book, 18-2/0.5, which goes through all these facts to help guide a committee to a conclusion. In the situation you described there, I would say that the player's actions are what caused that ball to move. The fact that the player grounded his club and created an indentation that wasn't there when the ball originally came to rest, it was the player's direct actions that caused it to move.

Again, every situation is going to be a little bit different so the committee is going to have some discretion, and it's going to be all about were the player's actions the result of that movement or not.

Q. I have a follow-up question on 18-2b, and it's because the way it reads to me now, it looks like there's an element of intention, and in our mind, as you were explaining, it's more an accidental fact that the player makes the ball move, causes the ball to move. And I have a second question but I can wait for this.

DAVID RICKMAN: I think I've understood the point. Yeah, intent is not relevant here. It is simply the player's actions. Those actions may be accidental rather than deliberate, but yeah, if the player's actions caused the ball to move, then there would be a penalty.

Q. I have a language question. In my case the Spanish version is relevant. I'm curious to know the designated review process where you make sure that your Spanish version is understood by all the Spanish-speaking countries.

DAVID RICKMAN: Thank you, yes, a good question because I understand that, yeah, Spanish is a widely spoken language, but there are variations. We certainly, for our part, will certainly work with the Spanish Golf Federation, the Royal Spanish Golf Federation.

We'll also work with the Argentine Golf Association, and they liaise with each other. There are similarities there and also one or two differences.

But we as a matter of course look to the national union to do this work. They kindly do this work. We have a license with them. We try and help them where we can, but we feel that the host nation and golfers and experienced administrators within that organization are the people in the best position to do this work.

Q. I have a little bit of a follow-up on what you were saying before about 18-2b. My question is how much consideration was given to the run of general amateur play as opposed to high-level tournament play in removing the very, very clear understanding that if the ball moved, a player caused it to move, because it seems as if you are introducing a complication that can be determined by high definition and a committee but much less so by players in their normal course of play.

THOMAS PAGEL: Yeah, look, that's a great question. I'll tell you it was absolutely given consideration from our end. This rule change was not necessarily about the professional level events. This was about a rule that could be applied worldwide to all golfers, and I can tell you that there are those situations that are going to be tough calls, and there are situations where it's going to be subjective based on the facts of each situations, but the test that has been included with this guidance decision is the standard will be if it's more likely than not that the player caused the ball to move. So that means that there's going to be some level of doubt that could still exist, but if it's more likely than not that you as the player caused your ball to move, then you're going to be subject a penalty of one stroke and you need to replace it, so it's not an absolute anymore.

As far as the clear line and the deeming, if you recall, we used to have an old rule, 18-2c, as well, that stated if you moved a loose impediment within one club length and your ball moved, you were deemed to have caused it to move. That didn't seem right because the rules makers felt that we should act on facts.

This is following the same logic. Again, I'll go back to the case that I suggested where it's pretty clear the player did not cause his ball to move after stepping aside and walking away for some 10 or 15 seconds, but because he had taken one simple act of addressing the ball, the rule is deemed him to have caused the ball to move. The committees felt that, yes, there was going to be a level of subjectivity inserted; however, given the guidance and the standard of more likely than not, that this will lead to more fair results in the majority of circumstances.

Q. My question is regarding the anchoring and the length of the putter. The R&A and USGA just changed the rule regarding the anchoring, but the length of the putter can affect a stroke, also.

DAVID RICKMAN: I may have misunderstood so come back to me if I have. But yes, the putter length is not regulated. This is a method of stroke change, and that was deliberate because we felt that it's always better to tackle the real cause of concern, and in this case, it was the anchoring of one end of the club, whether that be directly via the

top of the grip or through gripping hand, or whether it be through the creation of an anchor point. We felt that that was the right target for this particular rule, and therefore we did not consider changing, as it were, the equipment rules governing the length of the putter. So they can continue to be used.

Q. My question is regarding the anchoring of putters again. I just wanted to check what consideration was given to the players who actually used the anchoring, the belly putter technique, before the rule was being debated? The big names who do use belly putters, were they ever considered in the debate that you guys put up?

THOMAS PAGEL: Yeah, you recall it was quite a deliberate and all-inclusive process that we went through when we first announced 14-1b. We went through a 90-day comment period where we accepted comments and feedback from all levels of the industry because I think it's important to note that this rule just as all other rules is not about any one level of the game. It's about golfers worldwide and the fundamental nature of making a stroke.

So certainly consideration was given to those players that were and are anchoring, and they were provided an opportunity for that level of communication just as were all other golfers. Yes, we had active dialogue, but at the end of the day, the governing bodies of the USGA and THE R&A felt it was appropriate to make sure that the fundamental nature of swinging a golf club, making a stroke, was preserved, and that was the reason for the rule change.

Q. If I can sort of follow up on that, I'm just reading a quote from a former USGA executive director David Fay who said that "putting is a very individualized art form and that to inhibit a golfer's individual style would take some of the fun out of the game." Does that obviously contradict with the new rules?

THOMAS PAGEL: I guess I will say that one of the things we found in the 90-day comment period is that everybody has an opinion, and there are impassioned opinions on both sides of the argument, and that is certainly the case.

Even with the rule change, I would argue that given the wide variety of clubs that are still available, again, any club that conforms today the player will be able to use as of January 1st, as well as all of the wide variety of grip styles. You look at Matt Kuchar, you look at the old Bernhard-Langer (style); there are still plenty of variations that players will have the opportunity to maintain their specific art form, if you will, when it comes to making a stroke.

Q. And just finally, since the publication of the revisions, have there been any oppositions from any players, any organizations, any clubs?

THOMAS PAGEL: Again, as I said at the beginning of the call, what we have found over the last two-plus years is really a sense of collaboration throughout the industry. You know, I think that the conversation and the 90-day comment period and everything that followed after that was quite healthy, and beyond that, once the rule change was announced, everyone has really come together and focused on education.

I can, again, speak for the USGA, but we've worked quite closely with the PGA of America, the PGA Tour and other partners here in the U.S. and Mexico, and with the focus on education, how do we prepare golf clubs and golfers to adjust to the new rule on January 1st.

And it's all been very positive. Again, highly collaborative.

MIKE WOODCOCK: I think we will begin to draw things to a close if there are no more questions. I will hand over to Janeen just to get some details about the media information that we're making available today.

JANEEN DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mike, and thank you to Thomas and David and to all of you for your time today. As mentioned previously, a copy of each release can be found on RandA.org and USGA.org. You will also find within the body of each release under the "notes to editors" section that we have provided you all with two links, one with static images that includes infographics, illustrations on each of the four new updates, and documents, including the new 2016 rules book cover art that can be used for editorial purposes.

The second link provides you with a series of video assets, both in long and short social-friendly versions. We hope that encourages you to use these assets to inform and educate your audiences.

Both Mike and I are here to assist should you have any follow-up questions, interview requests or any other needs.

Within the same section are book ordering instructions for golfers in each country and region.

Just one more follow-up, a transcript of this conference call will also be available via our respective websites later on today and certainly upon request as needed. Thank you all again for your participation. This ends our conference call today. On behalf of the USGA and The R&A, we thank you very much for your participation and your interest. I hope you all have a great day. Cheers.

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