

Winter Rules – Preferred Lies



Adverse weather conditions can affect the course playing conditions. To promote fair play and protect the course, a local rule such as “preferred lies” or “winter rules” may be introduced by the committee.

There are no definitions for rough or fairways under the rules, so the following terms are used to clarify what areas of the course are involved or excluded. Hazards are not included in the definition of “through the green”.

“**Through the Green**” all areas of the course. It excludes hazards plus the putting green and teeing ground of the hole being played: *plain English – “through the green” = fairway, rough, trees.*

“**Through the Green – closely mown**” all areas of the course that are closely mown, *plain English = fairways.*

“**Through the Green – cut grass**” *plain English - fairway and rough where grass is growing and is cut, height not specified.* Excludes areas under the trees where no grass is growing, excludes areas of high uncut rough around bushes.

Winter rules: a ball that is lying in an area “through the green – cut grass” (fairway & cut rough) may be lifted without penalty and cleaned. Before lifting, the player must mark its position. Having cleaned it, he must place it on a spot within 6 inches of and not nearer the hole than the original position. A player may place the ball only once. If he fails to mark the position of the ball before lifting it, he incurs a one stroke penalty. *Plain English – same for fairway & rough. No relief for areas under trees which have no growing grass, or from bushes where grass is uncut.*

Embedded Ball: at any time, a player may obtain relief for an embedded ball “through the green in a closely mown area” (fairway). In adverse weather conditions, the committee may introduce a local rule, enabling a player to take relief for an embedded ball anywhere on the course. The term “through the green” must be used

as this clarifies that hazards are excluded. Relief for a ball that is embedded may be obtained by lifting, cleaning and dropping the ball as near as possible to the spot where it lay, but not nearer the hole.

Staked trees: local rule in place, see back of score card. If such a tree interferes with a player's stance or area of intended swing, the ball must be lifted without penalty, and dropped within one club length of the nearest point of relief from the interference.

Casual water: casual water is a temporary accumulation of water on the course that is not in a water hazard and is visible before or after a player takes his stance. Dew and frost are not casual water. Snow can be either casual water or a loose impediment, at the option of the player. To obtain relief, the player must drop a ball within one club length of the nearest point of relief from the casual water that is not nearer the hole. If the casual water and the player's ball were on the putting green, the player must place (not drop) his ball at the nearest point of relief.

In summary, check the notice board for information on local rules. Check the wording to see if it's limited to closely mown (fairway only) or "through the green" (fairway, rough and trees) or "through the green – cut grass" (fairway and cut rough). Check to see if relief is within 6 inches or more. Some committees and clubs offer relief of one club length. Don't forget to mark the ball's position before lifting.

Happy Golfing

Aine Binchy 1st December 2016