

# THE HACKER

## # 12 (April 2011)

### Rule 19-6: Ball coming to rest, close to the hole

Dear Reader, you are respectfully advised that someone has got my gander in the Northerly direction. Or to put it another way, I am in possession of the Camel's back. Consider me 'Peeved of Epsom'.

My beef is with the R&A and their so called Rules of Golf book. On page 5, in the forward by the chairmen, their very first line states 'this book contains the Rules of Golf'. So you must forgive me for assuming that this official tome did in fact carry the rules, such as they are, in their entirety. And yet I can disclose to you that they have been totally and utterly inept in this respect. They have left a rule out! Not just some flippant, obscure directive that has virtually no effect on the game, but a huge great whopping one. And having seen it used by hundreds of other golfers, it is one that could save you and me two, three or perhaps even four shots in a single round!

Now because the R&A have been so careless as to forget to place this rule into the book, I have had to try and learn of its statute through the experience of my own eyes and ears.

I have been undertaking this research for many years now in the hope that I could fully understand all its nuances and once proficient, I could then in turn pass the knowledge on to you. Rest assured I am not telling you anything I have not included in my letter of complaint to Messrs Brown & Bunch, and to that end I can advise that I am very close to the root of the matter.

My letter began by letting them know of the omissions from the index; there are two. The first is on page 180 under the heading BALL, between 'Cleaning' and 'Damaged, unfit for play'. The missing entry is: 'Coming to rest, just short of the hole (Rule 19-6) ...p86'.

In my missive I also advised them that the inclusion of slang or commonly used golf terms should be included in the index to help players find relevant rules quickly. I therefore suggested a second addition; GIMME between GENERAL PENALTY and GOLF CARTS that should direct readers to page 188.

So to the rule itself. Now remember, because it has been left out of the book no amateur seems to know the definitive explanation. Thus I have seen different players apply it in subtly different ways. I have heard for example that it is rare to see it invoked during competition play, though not unheard of. However it seems prevalent in forms of play such as swindles which indicates some kind of applying criteria. We can presume that this criteria is not one of a financial nature for there is often large sums of money at stake in swindles. Hopefully my letter will not only receive a grovelling apology but full disclosure of Rule 19-6 and clarification of exactly when and where it can be entreated.

The first great mystery this perplexing edict brings forth is who is the first player allowed to call on its use. Again my research has thus far been unable to pin this down with any satisfaction.

Suffice to say that at some stage in the round one of the players will strike his ball towards the hole (interestingly the question of whether the ball starts from on or off the putting surface appears to be of no consequence) and it comes to rest close to the hole. Now it is interesting and important to note two things at this point. Firstly there appears to be no official distance from the hole that qualifies for the rule to be used. Secondly for the first use of the rule in the round it cannot be the player himself who asks for it. Instead, once their ball has come to rest one of the other players may choose to say 'take it away' and the player is allowed to pick up his ball and score the hole as completed with the use of just one additional 'free' stroke.

A most interesting transition happens at this point, for the player who received this 'gimme' now seems to move from being the gimmee to the gimmer. From my observations, from this moment on he is under severe pressure to bring parity to the round and award the ruling to each of his playing partners in turn. Even it seems, if that player's ball is further from

the hole than his one was. His obligation to reciprocate thereby manifests itself with his echoing cry of 'take it away'.

A further codicil appears to be the ability for players who have as yet not received their gimme to call on the gimmer directly with a call of 'surely that's a gimme?' My experience indicates that this is guaranteed to receive a positive reply and the ball is picked off the surface with due haste. And thus it is that an inexorably growing length of putt is given under 19-6 as the round plays out.

Perhaps now you can understand my anger at the R&A for stupidly omitting this rule. I regularly miss putts such as these and have therefore been unfairly penalised with dropped shots that clearly by the actions of others could, and should have been fairly given under this resolution.

You will I hope reader, forgive me for admitting that during my research I did suffer bouts of doubt. Was there really such a rule? Could an organisation such as the R&A really make such a school boy omission? Of course these indecisions came when I was at my lowest - the middle of the night, or after a particularly bad round.

But always I was pulled on by the comfort of knowing that ours is an honourable sport, played by honourable people. I eventually became able to laugh at my apprehensions and see them for what they truly were - silly! After all there is no way that Rule 19-6 could be a fallacy, for if that were the case then the dozens, scores, nay *hundreds* of players I had seen invoke it would in fact - just be cheating....

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