



Tournament Players Golf Club Rule and Play Information (AKA - The Rules By Ben)

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The Rules By Ben Play the Ball as it Lies

In casual golf, we pay our money to have some fun and hitting a mud-covered ball or a ball lying in a divot or a ball lying in the savanna grass doesn't qualify as fun. So we take great liberties in improving our *lie* or improving the area of intended *stance* or *swing*...all in the name of having **fun**. This cheats us out of the superior feeling of making a difficult shot or even the experience of how to do it. You will never know how to play a ball that lies in a divot until you start doing it. As players we could develop that experience at the practice range (who does that?) or during the play of our casual rounds.

In tournament golf, Rule 13-2 states, "Except as provided in the Rules, a player shall not improve or allow to be improved: (1) the position or *lie* of his ball, (2) the area of his intended *stance* or *swing*, (3) his *line of play* toward the hole, or (4) the area in which he is to *drop* or *place* a ball."

All the following actions are forbidden: (1) moving, bending or breaking anything growing or fixed, (2) creating or eliminating irregularities of the surface, (3) removing or pressing down sand, loose soil, or repaired divots, and (4) removing dew, frost or water from the line of play. We have all been guilty of violating one or more of these actions in our casual play.

Now for the exceptions, 1) On the *putting green*, where removing sand and loose soil follows Rule 16-1a, or repairing damage to the putting surface as Rule 16-1c allows. 2) On the *teeing ground*, where it's fine to create or eliminate surface irregularities. 3) Anywhere on the course, when you're making a *stroke*, including the club's backward movement for the stroke, or anything that may occur when you are fairly taking your *stance*.

Without the term "fairly," the exception would permit improvement of position or lie, or the area of intended stance or swing by anything that could be said to be taking a stance. "Fairly" is intended to limit the player to what is reasonably necessary to take a stance without undue improvement. No player is entitled to a "normal" stance or swing. You must accommodate the situation in which the ball is found and take a stance as normal as the circumstances permit.
