



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

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The Rules By Ben Play a "Second" Ball

Golf is a game of good and bad breaks. We are all familiar with a tree kick that deflects our ball back into the fairway and the sour feeling of the opposite when our ball is deflected out-of-bounds. On a par three hole recently, I hit my tee shot and it appeared to go through the wrought-iron boundary fence and out into a public street. Following Rule 27-2, I announced and played a *provisional ball* from the teeing ground and it came to rest just over the green. As I proceeded forward to search for the original ball, "The Fates" or a "good Samaritan" decided to give me a break and tossed or deflected the ball back into play...and even onto the green. So here's the question, am I laying ONE with my original ball or am I laying THREE with my provisional ball?

Of course you know how I wanted it to go (laying one) and my *fellow-competitors* wanted the opposite (laying three). We had a doubt as to the procedure and I hate to be told that I HAVE to do something. Unfortunately for me I let anger cloud what now turns out to be the perfect solution. Rule 3-3 states, "In stroke play only, when during play of a hole a *competitor* is doubtful of his rights or procedure, he may, play a second ball without penalty. After the situation, which caused the doubt, has arisen, the *competitor* must announce his decision to invoke this Rule and select in advance the ball he would like to score with. If the score is the same for both balls there is no harm no foul, if the score is different the *competitor* shall report the facts to the *Committee* for a determination of which ball counts."

Decision 3-3/1 allows me to play the original ball AND the provisional ball as my second ball under Rule 3-3! I only needed to announce my invoking of the Rule and select the ball I wanted to score with. The gnashing of teeth and the angry retorts could have been avoided and my question of, "What makes my original ball NOT in play?" dealt with some civility. Stay tuned as I forward this question to the NCGA rules officials for their determination. Always remember the purpose of Rule 3-3 is to allow a competitor to avoid a penalty when he is in doubt as to the proper procedure.
