

Are you still allowed to have the flagstick attended?

Question

I know that you are now allowed to either leave the flagstick in the hole or have it removed when you putt and there is no penalty if you hit the flagstick in the hole, but are you still allowed to have it attended and is there still a penalty (or 2) if you hit an attended flagstick?

Answer

The short answer is Yes - you can have it attended and, in most circumstances you incur no penalty if your ball hits the flagstick while it is being attended.

These days it is rare for professional golfers to have the flagstick attended, but Rule 13.2b(1) does allow the flagstick to be attended.

13.2b Removing Flagstick from Hole

- (1) Player May Have Flagstick Removed from Hole. The player may make a stroke with the flagstick removed from the hole, so that their ball in motion will not hit the flagstick in the hole.

The player must decide this before making the stroke, by either:

- Having the flagstick removed from the hole before playing the ball, or
- **Authorizing someone to attend the flagstick, which means to:**
 - **Hold the flagstick in, above or next to the hole before the stroke to show the player where the hole is, and**
 - **Then remove the flagstick during the stroke or after the stroke is made.**

You will see from that rule that the concept of attending the flagstick:-

1. doesn't require the ball to be on the putting green, and
2. involves the flagstick being removed from the hole either during the stroke or after the stroke is made.

If the flagstick is **NOT attended**, you must not have it removed after you play your stroke, in order to avoid the ball hitting the flagstick. (Rule 13.2a(3)) If you do, you incur the general penalty (two strokes in stroke play or loss of hole in matchplay).

If the flagstick **IS attended**, the following applies

If this deflection/stop was **accidental**, then:

No penalty to anyone, and the ball is to be played as it lies.

If this deflection/stop was **deliberate**, then:

Rule 11.2 applies as follows:

- If the stroke was at the ball on the green, then the stroke is cancelled and replayed.
- If the stroke was at the ball not on the green, then the player must estimate where the ball would have come to rest.
 - If this was not on the green, they need to drop in the relief area.
 - If this was on the green, they need to place it on the green.

Technically, if it was thought that the ball would definitely have come to rest in the hole, it could be placed in the hole.

Penalties

If the person who deliberately deflected the ball was the player or caddie, then the player incurs a general penalty.

If the person who deliberately deflected the ball was anybody else, then they incur the general penalty.

NOTE: This information is of a general nature and is not intended to cover every possible situation. If you are unsure of your situation please either check the Rules of Golf, or seek specific advice from a Rules Official.

If you have any questions about the Rules of Golf or how they apply at Royal Adelaide, I'm happy to do my best to answer them. Questions can be submitted to me arnewman1949@icloud.com

All questions will be attempted to be answered in a manner that doesn't identify the asker, unless you indicate that you are happy to be identified.

Tony Newman