

# Principal Changes to the Rules of Golf effective from 1st January 2012

## Definition of Addressing the Ball

The Definition is amended so that a player has addressed the ball simply by grounding his club immediately in front of or behind the ball, regardless of whether or not he has taken his stance.

It follows that the Rules no longer provide for a player addressing his ball in a hazard. (See also related change to Rule 18-2b.)

## Rule 6-3a Time of Starting

Rule amended to provide that the penalty for starting late, but within five minutes of the starting time, is reduced from disqualification to loss of the first hole in match play or two strokes at the first hole in stroke play.

Previously this penalty reduction could only be introduced as a condition of the competition.

## Rule 12-1 Seeing Ball; Searching for Ball

Rule amended so that:

(i) If a player causes his ball to move while searching for it in sand *anywhere on the course* there is no penalty. The ball must be replaced.

Previously there was only no penalty if searching for a ball in a hazard.

(ii) If a player causes his ball to move while searching for among loose impediments (e.g. leaves) *anywhere on the course* there is a penalty of one stroke and the ball must be replaced.

Previously there was no penalty if searching among loose impediments in a hazard.

## Rule 13-4 Ball in Hazard; Prohibited Actions

Exception 2 amended to permit a player to smooth sand in a bunker at any time, including before playing from that hazard, provided it is for the sole purpose of caring for the course and does not improve the position or lie of his ball, the area of his intended stance or swing or his line of play.

Previously it was loss of hole in match play or a two stroke penalty in stroke play, if the player or his caddie smoothed the sand anywhere in the bunker before the player had made a stroke at his ball in the same hazard or a similar one.

## Rule 18-2b Ball Moving After Address

An Exception added that exonerates the player from penalty if his ball moves after it has been addressed when it is known or virtually certain that he did not cause the ball to move. For example, if it a gust of wind moves the ball after it has been addressed, there is no penalty and the ball is played from its new position.

Previously if a ball moved after it was addressed, the player incurred a penalty stroke even if it was obvious that the wind had moved it, and the ball had to be replaced.

*For further details of these and other changes and changes to the Rules of Amateur Status, please see pages 6-8 of the new edition of the Rules of Golf book*