

Rule of the Month – Ball Played As It Lies

Situation 1



Picture A

A player's ball has come to rest just off the fairway with a tuft of grass just behind it that interferes with the player's swing for their next shot (Picture A).

1. Is the player allowed to press down the tuft of grass so as to reduce the swing interference (Picture B)?
2. Is the player allowed to break off the longer pieces of grass so that they do not affect the player's swing (Picture C)?



Picture B



Picture C

Answers

Situation 1:

1. No.
2. No.

Under rule 13-2 the player must not improve or allow to be improved the area of their intended stance or swing by moving, bending or breaking anything growing or fixed. Both of the actions in situation 1 would incur a two stroke penalty (or loss of hole in match play).

The player is allowed to ground their club behind the ball, but this must be done lightly, and the club must not be pressed to the ground.

Situation 2



Picture D

A player's ball has come to rest under trees between two fairways and is surrounded by twigs, pieces of bark and gum nuts and other debris (Picture D).

3. Is the player allowed to remove the twigs, pieces of bark, gum nuts and other debris (Picture E)?
4. Is the player allowed to brush or sweep the debris away from the ball (Picture F)?



Picture E



Picture F

Answers

Situation 2:

3. Yes – twigs, pieces of bark and gum nuts are examples of 'loose impediments' which may be removed under Rule 23-1 provided the ball and loose impediment is not in a hazard, and the loose impediment is not fixed or growing, not solidly embedded and not adhering to the ball.
The player must carefully remove the loose impediments as causing the ball to move during their removal would result in a penalty.
4. No – sweeping or brushing the debris away would cause the sand or soil around the debris to be removed, which is not allowed (Rule 13-2)

Under rule 13-2 the player must not improve or allow to be improved the area of their intended stance or swing by removing or pressing down sand, loose soil, replace divots or other cut turf placed in position. This action would incur a two stroke penalty (or loss of hole in match play).

Note that sand and loose soil may be removed on the putting green.

Reference: Rule 13-2 Improving Lie, Area of Intended Stance or Swing, or Line of Play