

Ball at Rest Moved

What happens if your ball at rest is moved by wind on the putting green **before you address it**? The answer is very simple, yet we seem to see a lot of players getting the answer wrong. Since wind is not an “outside agency”, you should simply play the ball where it comes to rest at its new position.

(Definition: **Outside Agency** - An “outside agency” is any agency not part of the match or, in stroke play, not part of the competitor’s side, and includes a referee, a marker, an observer and a forecaddie. Neither wind nor water is an outside agency.)

For some reason, most players feel like they have to replace their ball. You would even play the ball from its new position if you had left your ball marker behind the ball when you step back to read your putt. The ball marker is just a moveable obstruction. If the ball happens to run down a hill into a nearby water hazard - that is bad luck, but if the ball rolls down the hill into the hole - you have holed out with your last shot.....all skill.

However, if your ball **moves after address** (you have grounded your club immediately in front of or immediately behind the ball, whether or not you have taken a stance) you receive a one-stroke penalty for causing your ball to move and you must replace it back in its original position or suffer a total penalty of two-strokes or loss of hole in match play.

EXCEPTION: If it is known or virtually certain that you did not cause your ball to move, Rule 18-2b does not apply.

Decision: 18-1/12 Ball Replaced and at Rest Is Thereafter Moved by Wind

Q. A player replaces his ball on the putting green and the ball is at rest. **Before the player addresses the ball**, a sudden gust of wind blows the ball farther from the hole. The player plays the ball from its new position. Is that correct?

A. Yes. Wind is not an outside agency — see Definition of “Outside Agency.” Accordingly, Rule 18-1 does not apply.

Decision: 18-2a/7 Ball Moved by Wind Replaced

Q. In stroke play, a competitor’s ball was moved by wind. Since wind is not an outside agency (see Definition of “Outside Agency”), he should have played it from where it came to rest, but he replaced it. What is the ruling?

A. The competitor incurred one penalty stroke under Rule 18-2a, and, before playing his next stroke, he should have replaced the ball on the spot where it came to rest after being moved by the wind. If he did not do so, he incurred a total penalty of two strokes — see penalty statement under Rule 18.

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