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Chapter 1: Intro

1.1 Welcome Volunteer Official

Although this manual is used as a main reference for volunteering as a Rules Officials, there are many great takeaways that can be used in any volunteer aspect for the Sun Country Amateur Golf Association. Golf is a game enjoyed all over the world by both players and fans. Golf, unlike most ball games, cannot and does not utilize a standardized playing area, and coping with the varied terrains encountered on different courses is a key part of the game.

The underlying principle of the rules is fairness.

*Play the ball as it lies, play the course as you find it, and if you cannot do either, do what is fair.*

Our main responsibility as a Rules Official is to assist players around the golf course by playing within the USGA Rules of Golf.

For your first time on the course you will be assigned to a seasoned SCAGA Rules Official. The idea is for you to accompany, observe, and learn from your assigned Rules Official till both you and the assigned Rules Official feel comfortable and confident that escorting is no longer necessary. Usually you will be accompanied at a number of events before going solo.

1.2 How Can I Help Attitude

Maintaining a polite and courteous attitude that suggests an aura of helpfulness and quiet confidence will help avoid a confrontation. When called to a scene, asking “How can I help you?” can serve to defuse an otherwise tense situation. Even if you know the player keep the dialogue professional and do not use names.
Here are a couple of quotes that conveys the essence of a good Rules Official from the USGA website: Volunteers Master ‘Art and Science’ as Rules Officials*

Carolyn O’Donnell

“Being a Rules official is more art than science,” she said. “The most important part of the equation is to enjoy working with the players. It is so important to let them know that the Rules of Golf are there to protect the players. This isn’t like hockey or basketball, where fouls are committed on every play and where players sometimes are trying to get away with things. In golf, the art is putting yourself in their positions and helping them get on their way without compromising their games. If an official doesn’t enjoy that interaction, they won’t last long.”

Grover Walker

“I got to work the U.S. Open at Southern Hills Country Club in 2001. “I didn’t get to make any rulings,” he said. I pride myself on having a good bedside manner, but my job is not to be their best friend or get to know them, it’s to help them make the best decision.

*https://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/clubhouse/2016-ungated/02-ungated/MCrulesofficials.html
Chapter 2: To the Course

2.1 What to bring to the course

- Pencil
- Rules Notebook (The full Rules of Golf)
- Official Guide to the Rules of Golf
- Umbrella and Rain Gear if Needed
- Watch with stop-watch capabilities
- Notebook or Clipboard or Paper to write on
- A few Tees
- String
- Water

2.2 What to expect at the course or emailed to you

- Evacuation Plan
- Notice To Players and Hard Card (USGA or SCAGA depending on Event)
- Tee Times Sheet with Pairings
- Pace of Play Time Chart (Raguzzi)
- Memo To Players
- Walkie Talkie with earpiece
- Golf Cart with Rules Official signage
Chapter 2: To the Course

2.3 Dress code

- SCAGA Polo Shirt, Khaki pants (or shorts if permitted), SCAGA Hat
- CRO will inform the color of the SCAGA Polo Shirt for that day
- A white USGA or SCAGA polo for USGA Qualifiers
- Rules Official Name Tag
- SCAGA Outwear if needed
3.1 Familiar with your area
If assigned to a hole or zone, become familiar with penalty areas, abnormal course conditions and any other potential Rules situations on your hole or zone. Check bunkers and be certain rakes are placed outside of bunkers and out of the way.

3.2 Familiar with your groups
If assigned to a group or several groups be at the 1\textsuperscript{st} hole before they tee off so you can be introduced.

3.3 Documents provided at each event
Read the Notice to Players, Memo to Players and other documents provided by CRO.

Become familiar with any local rules in effect for that competition.
3.4 Walkie Talkie

1. The radio is a good tool that needs to be used with discretion.

2. Use the earpiece with the radio so that you can stay alert to what is happening on the course with all the players while not being a distraction.


4. Press the push-to-talk button BEFORE you begin speaking—not as you begin speaking. There is a short delay between pressing the button and sound being transmitted to others.

5. Do not release the push-to-talk button too soon.

6. Two people cannot talk at the same time. Wait to hear the other person key off before speaking.

7. Keep the radio microphone pointed out of the wind. Cover the microphone with your hand if you are in a windy spot of the course.

8. Do NOT hesitate to use the radio to consult with a Rover or the CRO if you have any doubt about the proper ruling. Other officials have stated that listening to a Rover or the CRO verify a Ruling was one of the best ways to learn.

9. Be aware that there is normally a radio in the pro shop and at the scoreboard and occasionally with coaches. These act as miniature PA systems. Keep conversations professional and do NOT mention players’ names over the radio – an exception may be in attempting to locate a player who is late reporting to his or her starting hole. If there is a need to pass on a player's name to the CRO/OIC, meet the CRO/OIC at a convenient place and provide the information face-to-face or if available speak on a private channel.
4.1 Making a rules decision

Officials should make any decision or ruling about which s/he is certain.

1. Be firm and positive but take your time. If you or the player have the slightest doubt, use your radio to consult with a Rover or the CRO.

2. If you are unable to reach a Rover or the CRO and if a player disagrees with your decision, you may suggest the player invoke Rule 20.1c(3). The case will automatically be reviewed by the OIC and or CRO.

3. Remember that our goal is to prevent any Rules infractions that we can. Although there is no formula to follow, always use tact and good judgement. Always seek a second opinion if there is any hesitancy by the player so we not only ensure a correct decision but also provide good service to our Customers – The Players!

4. It is sometimes desirable to show or read the pertinent rule/decision to the player to offer assurance that you are making the correct ruling.

5. You can give the player his options under the rules if asked or you may ask if the player would like to hear their options, but remember you cannot give advice of how to play the stroke or which option is best.

6. If a ruling requires determination of question of fact, this is one of the hardest decisions for a Official. You may ask other players or spectators what they observed. You should also observe the area of the course where the ball is located or maybe located. This would be a good time to ask for a Rover or the CRO to assist.

Remember, it is the Rules of Golf that impose the penalties and provide the options, not you as the Official!
Chapter 4: Rules Decisions

4.2 Understanding the Applicable Rule
1. The Official is to assist with the understanding and application.
2. Ask if the player understands all the options. Assist the player with a relief procedure, if asked. Ask a Rover or the CRO for verification if in doubt.

4.3 Intention of Player
Frequently, in reaching a decision, the intention of the player can be of primary importance. Before any decision can be made, the first order of business should be the determination of the player’s intent.

4.4 Ground Under Repair
If you believe players are entitled to relief from an unmarked area of GUR, contact a Rover or the CRO/OIC for authority to mark or have the area marked.

4.5 Referee Error
1. If in error, you authorize a player to infringe a Rule of Golf the player is not penalized. Contact the CRO/OIC as soon as possible.
2. If you become aware you have made an incorrect Ruling, there are times it must be corrected. Contact the CRO/OIC as soon as possible.

4.6 Final Decision by Rules Committee
The Rules Committee decisions on the Rules of Golf shall be final.
Chapter 5: SCAGA Pace of Play Policy

As recommended by Rule 5.6b(3) in the Official Guide to the Rules of Golf the following policy is set forth for SCAGA tournaments and generally follows the guidelines of Model Rule 8K-2. It is designed to ensure that competition is played at a prompt pace of play for the course and conditions under which the competition is being conducted.

5.1 Out of Position

The tournament committee or their representative will establish a set length of time for each hole to be played. If a group exceeds their cumulative time at a given hole and are more than 14 minutes behind the group in front of them, they are considered out of position. For the first group of the event, exceeding their cumulative time at any hole will render them out of position.

Once a group is determined to be out of position, they will receive a warning and have three holes in which to make progress toward getting back into position. If, after the three holes have been played and the group has not made any progress, they will be put on the clock and each player in the group will be monitored.
5.2 Timing

When on the clock each player is expected to make his/her stroke within 40 seconds once they have had a reasonable opportunity to reach their ball, determine it is their turn to play, and can do so without interference or distraction. Time taken to select a club and to determine yardages will count as part of the time taken for the next stroke. Timing will start on the putting green when a player has had a reasonable amount of time to lift, clean and replace their ball, repair their own ball mark, and repair damage and remove loose impediments that interfere with their line of play. Time taken to line up a putt will count as part of the time taken for the next stroke. In the following instances a player may have up to 50 seconds to play their stroke:

The first player to play a stroke on a par 3 hole; a second stroke on a par 4 or par 5 hole; a third stroke on a par 5 hole; a stroke around the putting green; a stroke on the putting green; and trouble shots that may entail more effort to determine a course of action.

Timing stops when the group is back in position and they will be so advised.
Chapter 5: SCAGA Pace of Play Policy

5.3 Penalty

The notice to the group that it is out of position is considered a warning, therefore, if the group is put on the clock after not making progress within three holes the following penalties will apply to each player:

- First breach (bad time) - 1 stroke penalty
- Second breach – General penalty (two-strokes)
- Third breach - Disqualification.

The penalty for slow play is cumulative. A record of all breaches will be used to justify any penalties. Players should know their position on the course relative to the other groups around them, monitor and speak to individuals causing slow play, and may ask for their group to be monitored without identifying an individual causing slow play.
Chapter 6: Special Situations

6.1 Checkpoint Timing
Some Tournaments have Checkpoint timing for Pace of Play. There will be a maximum allowable time to reach each Checkpoint. The Checkpoint holes will be identified in one of the handouts. If your area includes a Checkpoint Hole notify the CRO or OIC of any groups that do not make the Checkpoint time.

6.2 Dropping the Ball
If a player has elected to drop a ball in taking relief, it is recommended that you warn the player, in advance, NOT to touch or pick up the dropped ball until it is determined whether it is a correct drop. (Note: Players can be very quick in picking-up a dropped ball that rolls on impact with the ground; when, in fact, it may be a correct drop and the ball is in play.) When the drop is correct, you should announce in a firm tone, "The ball is in play."

6.3 Out of Bounds
When a ball is clearly out of bounds give the player a chance to verify that it is, indeed, out of bounds. If the call is close, stretch a string between the inside edge of the two bounding OB posts at ground level with the help of a player, if necessary.

6.4 Penalty Areas
If the ball is in a Penalty Area or Red Penalty Area and the player is going to take relief, the place where the ball last crossed the margin of the Penalty Area needs to be determined. If you did not see the spot, it is proper to get the player, or all players who observed the line-of-flight, to agree on the place where it last crossed the margin of the Penalty Area. Once agreement is reached, that place becomes the spot from which relief is taken.
6.5 Identifying a Ball
In attempting to identify the ball a referee should not touch the ball. Only the player should touch the ball. NOTE: The player must mark the ball before touching the ball and may only clean that portion of the ball necessary to identify the ball.

6.6 Ball Cut or Cracked
Generally, as an Official you should not participate in the procedure for determining whether a ball is cut or cracked, unless the players cannot agree. If the opponent, marker or fellow competitor wishes to dispute a claim that the ball is cut or cracked, this must be done before the player plays another ball.

6.7 Outside Influence
In case you inadvertently run over a ball, step on a ball during search, stop or deflect a moving ball, move a ball in play, etc., it is helpful to remember that you are an "Outside Influence."
6.8 Lost Ball Procedure

1. Start timing when the player or his or her side arrives at the scene to begin the search. This does not preclude you from proceeding promptly to the likely area of the ball to begin searching before the player arrives (Note: There may be times when you may want to be sure the player wishes to search for his or her ball before searching, e.g., when the original ball is in deep vegetation and the provisional is in a good location).

2. When the player/side arrives, start the clock and notify the player that the clock has started. You do not have to be at the scene to begin timing. If you are at a distance and see a group searching, start timing immediately. Do not wait until you arrive on the scene.

3. Spectators may participate in the search if they so desire.

4. Once an Official arrives at the search, he should ask the player whose ball is lost, how long the search has been going on and determine how much time remains to search for the ball.

   **NOTE:** If you happen to move a ball in play, you are an outside influence and the ball must be replaced
Chapter 7: Unsportsmanlike Conduct & Serious Breaches of Etiquette

7.1 Observing Possible Infraction

For SCAGA tournaments or USGA Qualifiers, you MUST immediately report any act(s) of unsportsmanlike or objectionable conduct, or breaches of etiquette to the CRO for Rules Committee investigation and action. Do NOT discuss the conduct or name of the player over the radio. Instead, call the CRO/OIC and arrange to meet at a convenient location.
8.1 Volunteer Rules Official Practice Exam

Use the SCAGA Practice Exam as preparation before going to your 1st solo assignment and practice for the USGA 80 Question Exam. Contact the Sun Country Golf House to receive a SCAGA Practice Exam.

8.2 SCAGA Rules Workshops

- USGA 80 Question Rules Exam
- Strive to score 70 to earn SCAGA Rules Certification

8.3 Definitions

- **CRO (Chief Rules Official)** — The person in charge of the Rules Officials
- **OIC (Official In Charge)** — The person in charge of the competition.
- **Rover** — The person assigned by CRO to assist Referees with Rulings.
- **Rules Committee** — The group in charge of determining rulings referred to them by a Referee.
Chapter 9: References

9.1 USGA Rules Notebook: Amateur Championships

9.2 USGA Rules of Golf (Full)

9.3 USGA Interpretations

9.4 USGA Clarifications

9.5 Authors
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