

# **South Florida Bridge Player's Golf Tour Rules (amended 1/06/2020)**

Our (SFBPGTour) Rules were amended effective January 1, 2019 (the effective date of the new USGA/R&A "Rules of Golf for 2019"). Section C.1 was further amended effective January 6, 2020 to reflect the new Worldwide handicap system. These Rules represent a consensus of the group's thinking on certain technicalities. **Put a copy in your golf bag.** A **"Table of Contents"** follows below:

**Section A** lists our amended SFBPGTour "Local Rules" – i.e., variances from the 2019 "Rules of Golf".

**Section B** lists certain 2019 "Rules of Golf" that are strictly followed on our Tour. Some are new; some were previously part of our Local Rules but have now been formally adopted by the USGA/R&A.

**Section C** lists our SFBPGTour "Procedural Rules" relating to ethics and etiquette, as well as to our unique conditions of contest ("Four-Ball Sixes" matches, with "Individual" side matches at same time).

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## **A. SFBPGTour Local Rules**

### **1) Lift, Clean and Place**

Unless clearly and verbally specified by the host, “lift, clean and place” applies if your ball lies in your own fairway. Even if the host specifies “no lift, clean and place,” a ball in your own fairway in a divot may still be moved.

However, a ball may not be moved to improve a bad angle to the hole, or a poor lie due to a natural undulation or proximity to the edge of the rough, etc.

### **2) Extended Relief – Deemed Ground Under Repair & Immovable Obstructions**

#### **a) Area Surrounding Immovable Obstructions Deemed Ground Under Repair**

A ball lying in the fairway or rough may be moved to improve a poor lie caused by a drain, marker, sprinkler, etc. as if the uneven area surrounding the immovable obstruction had been circled with a white line as ground under repair. Relief area – one driver length from nearest point of complete relief.

#### **b) Line of Sight Relief from Immovable Obstructions in Closely Mown Areas**

A ball lying in the fairway may be moved to provide line of sight relief from a drain, marker, sprinkler, etc. that is on the intended line of play if the immovable obstruction is within 2 driver lengths of the ball and is also in the fairway. Relief area – one driver length from ball.

#### **c) Abnormal Ground Condition Deemed Ground Under Repair**

A ball lying in fairway or rough that is in such poor condition that it clearly should be circled as ground under repair can be moved as if the area was marked as “ground under repair”. Must be agreed by all opponents; default is “no relief”. Relief area – one driver length from nearest point of complete relief. Does not apply if in the “Boondocks” -- see B.6)

### **3) Inadvertent Damage to Course - If you inadvertently move, break or bend a tree branch or other growing or fixed object (during a practice swing or before): No Penalty. Do Not Abuse.**

### **4) Inadvertent Moving of Ball - If you inadvertently move your ball, no penalty. Just replace.**

### **5) Alternative Provisional Ball Rules if Ball May Be Lost (not in a Penalty Area) or Out of Bounds**

If after making a stroke your ball may be lost or out of bounds, you may proceed via 5.a or 5.b:

a) Play a provisional ball - A provisional ball may be played before moving on. If your ball is lost or out of bounds, your provisional ball becomes your ball in play.

b) Not play a provisional ball – Then, if your ball is lost or out of bounds, you must proceed as follows (you may not go back and play under “stroke and distance”):

i) Determine the point (Point A) where your ball was estimated to have come to rest in bounds or crossed the out of bounds line.

ii) Measure the distance from Point A to the hole.

- iii). Find the point (Point B) on the fairway nearest to Point A that is the same distance to the hole as Point A.
- iv) Your drop area is defined by extending the line between Point B and the hole backwards (i.e., away) from the hole, indefinitely. You must drop anywhere between that extended line and two driver lengths into the fairway from that extended line (not closer than Point B).
- v) Penalty – two strokes. For example, if your last stroke was your tee shot, you now lie three.

6) Extended Provisional Ball Rules if Ball May be Lost or Unplayable in a Penalty Area

If your ball may be lost in a Penalty Area, to save time, play a provisional.

If your original ball is found, and is playable, play it.

The honor system applies in cases where the ball is found and "might" be playable. Whether the provisional ball was a good shot or a bad shot should not influence the player's decision to play or not play the found ball.

7) Procedure if Ball Hit into Bushy Area May Be Lost or Unplayable

If the ball is hit inbounds, into a thick, bushy or grassy area where it may or may not be lost, and if found may or not be playable, and the players agree it came to rest within that area, then the following provisions shall apply:

a) If the Ball is Found

If you find the ball, you may play it, or declare it to be unplayable.

If you declare it unplayable, you may take relief under either the "two club-length" option or the "back on line with the hole" option. Penalty, one stroke. However, you may not proceed under the standard third option (i.e., you may not go back and replay previous stroke under penalty of stroke and distance). Instead, your third option is as follows:

- i) If you played a provisional ball, you may elect to play your provisional ball as your third option;
- ii) If you did not play a provisional ball, you may elect to proceed under rule 5.b, above. Penalty: two strokes.

b) If the Ball is Not Found

If the ball is not found, it is deemed "found and unplayable" (there is no need to use the full three minutes of search time before you deem your ball "found and playable"). The same options as under rule 7.a apply except that with respect to the "two club-length" option, your sixes opponents decide where the lost ball is deemed to have come to rest and, thus, where the margin of the two-club length relief ends.

c) Bushy Area Must Lie in Main Area of Course

For purposes of this Rule 7, balls hit into thick, bushy or grassy areas do not include balls hit deep into “Outer Mongolia” (like deep woods) or “The Boondocks” (unseemly areas that lie beyond the rough).

- 8) Gimmes - A ball need not be putted when entirely inside and not touching the (Becker) leather. If no Becker, then the shortest leather in the group is used.
- 9) Mulligans - Apply only to tee shot on first hole of a round.

The Tour default rule is that you can take a mulligan; if you do, you must play your second ball. If a player takes a Mulligan, he can at best tie in the sixes. Likewise, he can at best tie in his private matches, unless his opponent for that match has also taken a Mulligan.

Mulligans should be taken after all players have played their first stroke from the teeing ground. Where two or more players are considering taking a mulligan, the player with the highest course handicap decides first, etc.

The host may amend the Mulligan rule (e.g., “no Mulligans” or “best ball of two”).

10) Honors

The order of play is determined by reference to the sixes matches.

There are no honors on the first hole of the first match. Honors on the second hole of the first match are decided as follows:

- a) If one of the sixes teams WON the first hole, that team has the honor.
- b) If the first hole was halved in the sixes, the sixes team that had the lower net score has honors.
- c) If the teams are still tied, the honor goes to the team which should (mathematically) be happy to have tied the hole. (Compare Team B’s net strokes actually received/(given) on first hole against the sheet’s “Strokes for Team B (actual)” divided by 6).
- d) If still tied, coin flip.
- e) After the second hole, the honor shifts only when the other team wins a hole.

For the second and third sixes matches, honors are given to the team that includes the last player to win a hole, if any, in the previous match. (In the case where all six holes of the previous match were halved, the later match honors are determined as for the first match.)

If different tee boxes are being used, the rear tee players play first, and the forward tee players last. Within each tee box, the order of play follows the honors rules described above. However, on par 3’s, when different tee markers are in the same teeing area, regular honors should be followed.

11) Hitting Wrong Ball

If a player hits another member of the group's ball, the shot is cancelled if it is discovered before the other player plays his next stroke. The other player just drops a replacement ball at the spot from which it was erroneously hit. If the infraction isn't discovered until after both players have hit wrong balls and moved on, then both players are disqualified from the hole in their 6's matches and in their other private matches, but continue to play the wrong ball in their private match with each other. If a player hits a "wrong ball" that does not belong to a member of the group, and later discovers he hit the wrong ball, he loses (only) the hole where he hit the wrong ball.

12) Tee-off From Wrong Tee Box

All players are expected to exercise Active Ethics in making sure that all players tee off from the correct tee box. Nevertheless:

- a) If a player tees off from the wrong tee box, and it is discovered before a second player erroneously tees off from the same tee box, the player must re-tee from the correct tee box.
- b) If two or more players who are supposed to play from the same tee box erroneously tee off from the same wrong tee box, that tee box becomes the tee box for the hole for those two players and all other players who are supposed to play from "their" tee box for that hole.
- c) Once the group has left the teeing area, their tee shots are deemed to count, even if played from the wrong tee box. (No going back to the tee).
- d) If a player tees off from the correct teeing area but is "out of the box" (e.g., slightly too far forward, backward, left or right), the stroke cannot be cancelled.

13) Object on Green struck by Putted Ball

It is the responsibility of all players to mark their ball on the green (and/or ask others to mark their ball) and to ensure their equipment is safely removed from the possible area of the putt. If a ball putted on the green might strike another ball, clubs or a removed flag stick or other object lying on the green, players should move the object that may be struck out of the way.

Nevertheless, if a ball putted from on the green strikes another object on the green (another player's ball, clubs, a flag stick or other object lying on the green), the opponents place the ball exactly where they think it should lie, and in no case shall it be a generous placement, but there is no penalty.

**B. Certain Rules of Golf that are Strictly Followed (including new 2019 rules)**

1) Roots/Trees - Rules of golf.

If you don't want to break your wrist (or club), take a penalty stroke and a proper drop.

2) Out of Bounds Defined - Rules of golf.

But, "ambiguous" cases resolved in golfer's favor. Ambiguous means if it is "right on the imaginary line" between two stakes, and you can't really tell if ball is entirely inside that line, then it is In Bounds. If the stake appears to be slightly misplaced, too bad. The stake determines the outcome. Draw a line between the two white stakes -- if it is out, it is out. Out of bounds stakes

cannot be removed or moved. If swing is impeded, too bad. If the grass is cut so that the out of bounds appears by the cut of the grass to be inbounds -- too bad. If the host cites a special local rule (not shown on the scorecard), then that takes precedence. (Hosts are encouraged to document such special local rules and/or pre-announce them). A ball is O.B. if it resides on any property that is not part of the golf course (a street, someone's back yard, etc.). If O.B is defined by a white line, and any part of ball touches the white line, it is O.B. A ball is O.B. if there is both a cart path and a sidewalk and the ball resides on the far side of the sidewalk.

3) Penalty Areas Defined – Rules of golf.

If Penalty Area is a water hazard and no line or stakes are visible, it is assumed to be a Red Penalty Area. If NO red or yellow line is visible, but there are stakes, draw an imaginary line between the stakes, following the physical contour/features of what appears to be the Penalty Area being defined. If there are no stakes or visible lines, a water hazard red line is imagined to be one driver length from where the water should be. A ball in excess water spilling out of the hazard is treated as lying in casual water. A ball in excess water on the hazard side of the visible (or imagined) red line may not be moved without penalty.

4) Penalty Areas – Relief - Rules of golf.

You must take relief using the spot where the ball last crossed the margin of the Penalty Area (and can go as far back from that area, keeping the pin in line with the drop). No liberal misuse of this rule by dropping too far up. Relief for Red Penalty Areas includes lateral relief – drop within two driver lengths. You may ground your club in Penalty Areas, and remove loose impediments from Penalty Areas (these are new rules).

If such player did not see where his ball entered the penalty area, he defers to those who did. If he did see it, he determines where to take the drop. However, if one or more members (unanimously) disagree with the player, the player should reconsider where to take relief (but still has the final say).

5) Bunkers - Rules of golf.

No penalty for inadvertently touching sand with club, but testing sand with club and touching sand behind the club at address or during your stroke are NOT allowed. Loose impediments (stones, leaves, twigs, worms, beer cans) may be removed. If your ball lies in casual water or your stance is affected by casual water, take drop in the bunker at nearest point that provides maximum relief, not closer to hole. If unraked, footprint, etc. -- tough luck. Exception: On a public course (not a recip), a drop can be taken if the foursome agrees that a player has a bad lie.

6) In the "Boondocks" or "Outer Mongolia" - Rules of golf.

Bad lies (tire tracks, ruts, sand, loose branches, etc.) in areas that don't get mowed beyond the rough are tough luck. Play ball as it lies, or take an unplayable lie and a penalty stroke.

7) Ball Not on Green Hits Any Golf Cart or Other Equipment - Rules of golf.

No penalty -- no re-hit -- play where the ball ends up.

## **C. SFBPGTour Procedural Rules**

### **1) Cap on Strokes Taken and Picking Up**

For score posting purposes, the maximum a player can post is the gross score that produces “net double bogey” relative to his Course Handicap for the day. **Your “Course Handicap for ESC Purposes” is shown on Tour Strokes Calculator sheet for the day.** In sixes and private matches, a hole can be won with a net triple bogey or less. Players pick up when they can no longer score a net triple bogey or less in any of their matches. A player who has picked up can tie the hole if his opponent(s) also fail to score a net triple bogey or less; thus, all such opponents must finish the hole (or receive a concession) to defeat the picker-upper. A second picker-upper should be reminded that he will tie someone who picked up earlier.

### **2) Private Match vs. Team Match and Conceded Putts - The Tour expects “Active Ethics” by a player who knows his or his teammate’s putt makes no difference in the team match. Putts that make no difference in the teams and are somewhat on the same line as his partner should be called to the attention of the opponents to see if they want to concede the putt in the teams. If a putt is conceded in the teams, it can’t be putted until the outcome of the hole is determined for the teams, at which time the putting order reverts back to who is away next.**

In a team match, either opponent may concede a putt on behalf of his team, and that concession may not be retracted. Unless stated otherwise, if a short putt (nearly in the leather), is conceded in the teams, it is conceded in the private match between the “conceder” and “concedee.” That said, irrational concessions (such as a player thought someone else lay 4 when in fact he lay 3), may be retracted. Also, an opponent's irrational concession should be sportingly rejected.

If your putt is irrelevant to anything but your own score, you may putt out or pick up. If you putt out, you should make an honest effort to hole out – no three-putting. If you pick up, you should score the hole with your expected outcome, taking into account other irrelevant putts picked up or putted out earlier that round, if any.

### **3) Rain Out Settlements - All completed bets (threes, sixes, nines) are payable. All sure wins are payable (up two in the match with one to play). In incomplete sixes and privates: use fairness and common sense to determine an equitable settlement. (Depends on strokes coming, number of holes remaining and probabilities).**

### **4) Knowing Who Gets Strokes and When - Every member of the group is responsible for knowing where strokes are given to a member(s) of the group. If someone thinks the hole is over and picks up his ball, he is considered to have conceded his ability to have won or tied the hole (in the 6's or the privates), *unless the benefactor volunteers otherwise*. If the discovery is made after the hole is over or after the match is over or before the day is over or before you die....the strokes are still assigned to the proper holes and the matches recalculated. It is tough luck (rub of the green) if a player, whether an opponent or a partner, incorrectly announced it was or was not a stroke hole for so and so.**

### **5) Course Rules on The Scorecard Are to be Followed - unless the host deems [permanent] exceptions. Hosts must know the rules of the course as to whether balls can be moved without penalty (like, when a ball resides in a flower bed, on a dirt / coquina cart path, on mulch, drop area locations, etc.)**

- 6) Disruption While Hitting - If someone is talking or if a horn or siren or other extraneous noise sounds ...tough luck. When a player is addressing the ball, try not to talk, clank clubs, unlock the brake, move when in sight of the hitter, or otherwise do something that might disrupt a player. No one should ask a player to speed up while he is addressing the ball.
- 7) Advice - If a player generally asks for advice, freely offer it. But:
- a) Do not provide advice, even yardage to pin, to someone who has begun to address the ball.
  - b) Do not provide advice to someone familiar with the course unless asked.
  - c) A player experienced with the course should freely provide information to players unfamiliar with the course.
- 8) Active Ethics and Behavior - Behave in a way that improves others' enjoyment of their round. If a player knows more about the course than an infrequent guest (e.g., about a tee shot, hidden bunkers, lurking water, a putt), say something. If a player is getting a stroke and may not know it, say something. Follow other players' shots, especially tee shots. Cart mates should help each other find their balls. If you take an extra stroke that others might not have noticed, announce your score upon arriving at the green, possibly earlier if you have taken a penalty. Players should view putting from at least a 45 degree angle from the putter's line to the pin, and stand a reasonable distance away from the "putterer." Similarly, do not stand in line with a player chipping to the green. Do not give "schtick" when someone has begun addressing the ball.
- 9) Honor System - Nobody is ever presumed to lie or intentionally break a rule. If the host says "this is treated as Ground Under Repair," or "this is considered O.B." then it is. If somebody says "We pressed," then they did (even if nobody heard). If they forget to press -- then they forgot -- even if it was "obvious" -- there is no press unless somebody states it. However, if the opponents should probably press and may have forgotten, say something. Players who have announced that they ALWAYS press their private matches are deemed to have done so unless stated otherwise.
- 10) Pace of Play - Play ready golf. The (usually) shortest hitter's cart should try to not tee off last. The slowest player to return to the cart should not tee off last. Be ready to hit when it's your turn. Players in the same cart due to hit consecutively should manage their positioning and use the cart to minimize the time it takes for them to hit. Do not drive or walk ahead of a player who might need you to move out of the way. Do not remove and then replace head covers during the round if it might delay the game. After hitting a shot or leaving green, do not put clubs in your golf bag if it will delay the game. Keep cell phone usage to a minimum.
- 11) Disputes - If any conflict or dispute arises re application of the Rules of Golf or the Tour Rules above, "common sense" prevails. If still no agreement, then the host makes the ruling.

### Disclaimer

The South Florida Bridge Player's Golf Tour Rules are based on equity. That said, if not covered by these rules, the default is that we play the Rules of Golf. The Tour Rules are a compilation of the "average" consensus of our group. Not everyone is expected to agree with all rules / interpretations as laid out here, but it is better to have something than nothing. These rules are intended to prevent (not cause) and to settle (not create) disputes. A host can amend these rules for his course. Generally, such amendments are PERMANENT.