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Week 11: Nearest Point of Relief: *What is it? How is it determined?*

The nearest point of relief is the reference point for taking relief from an immovable obstruction (Rule 24-2), abnormal ground condition (Rule 25-1), or a wrong putting green (Rule 25-3). This point is the place on the course nearest to where the ball lies that is not nearer the hole, and is a point where interference (of any kind) by the condition from which the player is taking relief would no longer exist – sometimes referred to as taking "complete relief". Within each of the Rules mentioned above, Clause a of the respective Rule defines interference for that specific condition.

Consider a situation where the ball comes to rest on the cart path. When the player determines his nearest point of relief, it must be a point where all three types of interference do not exist: the ball is not on the cart path, the player's stance is not on the path, and the path does not interfere with the intended swing.

To accurately determine the nearest point of relief, the player should simulate the stroke he would have made from the original position if the condition were not there. When simulating the address position, direction of play and swing for the next stroke, the player should use the club he would have used to make the stroke from where the ball came to rest on the cart path (or ground under repair). If the player originally would have used a 7-iron to make the stroke, he must use his 7-iron to simulate the address position, stance and swing.

Oftentimes you may see players take relief from an area without ever determining the nearest point of relief. While the player has not followed the recommended procedure, there is no penalty if, in the end, the ball is dropped correctly and played from the correct place. The process of determining the nearest point of relief is often interpreted as being quite complex, but when taken one step at a time, it is actually fairly simple.

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