

Rule 2 Match Play

The following Definitions are important in understanding Rule 2 and can be found in Section II of the Rules of Golf book. Please read the definitions and the Rule and then review the Key Points. Related Decisions are included.

- Holed
- Matches
- Referee
- Side
- Stipulated Round

Key Points

The first form of play is Match Play. You will recall in the Six Steps to Applying the Rules, that the second question to ask when making a Rules decision is “what form of play”. Match Play is the older form of play and dates back to the original Code of 1744. In Match Play, the game is played by holes, not strokes, and is played against an opponent or opponents. Each hole is a separate competition and the winner is determined by the number of holes won.

The Rules of Match Play and Stroke Play are substantially different and combining the two forms of play is not permitted. (Rule 33-1)

Throughout the Rules of Golf the penalties for a breach of a Rule are given for both forms of play. In Match Play there is no such thing as a two stroke penalty for a general breach. All general breaches result in a loss of hole penalty. In addition, in some situations where a penalty would apply in Stroke Play, the same action may not result in a penalty in Match Play. Finally, some disqualification penalties in stroke play result only in a loss of hole penalty in match play.

Language Key: Whenever you see the word “Opponent” it must be Match Play

Rule 2-1: The status of a match is expressed as the number of holes a player is up or all square, and number of holes to play. For example, when a player, or side in the case of partners, wins the first hole, they are said to be "one up". If neither side is up, the match is said to be "all square". Once a side is up as many holes as there are left to play, for example, three up with three holes to play, the side is said to be "dormie". This comes from the French word "dormir" which means, "to sleep". This is because the side could fall asleep and still not lose during the scheduled number of holes.

Rule 2-2: In the rare situation where a player has holed out and his opponent has a stroke for the half, if the player who has holed out subsequently incurs a penalty, the opponent is not required to play his next stroke and the hole is automatically half.

For example, Player A has holed out for a 4. Player B has a putt for 4 to halve the hole. Before Player B putts, Player A advises him that the putt breaks more than he thinks. Player A has breached Rule 8-1 for giving advice. Since Player B had a stroke for the halve, under Rule 2-2, the hole is automatically halved and Player B may pick up his ball and proceed to the next tee. In this case, Rule 2-2 overrides the loss of hole penalty the player would have incurred under Rule 8-1. If the same incident had occurred except that instead of putting to halve the hole, Player B had a putt for a 3 to win the hole, Player A would incur the loss of hole penalty because Rule 2-2 only applies if the opponent has a stroke to halve the hole. It does not apply in the circumstance when the opponent has a stroke to win the hole.

Rule 2-3: Once the match is over, the result is expressed by the number of holes up with the number of holes remaining. For example, a side that is three up after 16 holes wins the match 3 and 2, i.e., 3 holes up with two to play so there is no chance for their opponent to win.

Rule 2-4: Since Match Play is a game between opponents and not against a field of players; the Rules vary due to the fact that protecting the field is not an issue. For example Rule 2-4 permits a player

to concede a match, a hole or the opponent's next stroke at any time, provided the opponent's ball is at rest. Such concessions are not permitted in Stroke Play because the concession affects more than just the player's fellow-competitor. Once a concession is made, there is no going back. A concession may not be declined or withdrawn.

Rule 2-5: In Match Play if any doubt about procedure arises during the match, the players should request a ruling from an official. If no official is available, the players should continue play and the player who is affected should make a claim. A claim must be made before playing from the next teeing ground or in the case of the last hole, before leaving the putting green. The facts should then be presented to the Committee for a decision.

For example, Player A wishes to take relief from an area which he considers to be ground under repair. His opponent disagrees that the area in question is ground under repair. If no official is available to make a ruling, Player A must make a decision whether to take relief or play the ball as it lies. If he takes relief, Player B is entitled to make a claim under Rule 2-5. Play of the hole must continue and the order of play at the next teeing ground should be decided by lot unless the claim by Player B was to gain a half, in which case, Player A retains the honour if he had it at the last hole. The players must bring the matter to the attention of the Committee who will determine whether the Player A was entitled to relief or whether Player B's claim is valid. If the player was entitled to relief, the result of the hole stands as played. If Player A was not entitled to relief, the claim is upheld and Player A loses the hole.

In any case, later claims must not be considered by the Committee unless the facts surrounding the claim were not known to the player AND the opponent gave him wrong information. For a late claim to be considered, both of these conditions must be true.

Key Decisions

Decision 2-2/1 Player Putting for Half is Given Advice by Opponent

Decision 2-3/1 Players Under Impression Match is Over Later Realize It Was
All Square

Decision 2-4/9 Player Concedes Hole After Which it is Discovered Opponent
Had Played Wrong Ball

Decision 2-4/16 Valid Timely Claim Made After Concession of Match

Decision 2-5/2 Procedure For a Valid Claim

Decision 2-5/8 Status of Valid Claim if Players Accept Wrong Ruling from
Someone Not on Committee and Continue Match