

CHANGES to the DECISIONS on the RULES OF GOLF

From January 1, no relief allowed from divot hole or repaired divot hole

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As usual, half way through the four-year life of an edition of The Rules of Golf, the R&A has published a new Decisions Book. This contains some 30 new decisions and amended versions of further 49 revised decisions which come into effect on January 1, 2010.

Many of these merit detailed consideration only by serious students of the rules, budding referees and quiz masters and require a thorough knowledge to understand their complexity. **However, there is one change that will require immediate action by many club committees and the awareness of all golfers.**

New decision 33-8/34 now removes the authority for a committee to make a local rule “providing relief without penalty from a divot hole or a repaired divot hole (i.e. filled with sand or seed mix)”

At least half the golf clubs in Scotland have such a local rule and these must be withdrawn immediately before any qualifying competitions for handicap purposes can be played. Such a local rule contravenes Rule 13-1 which states that a ball must be played as it lies and has generally not been used in professional and major amateur competitions.

It is often mistakenly believed that this rule protects the golf course. If relief is given or indeed demanded from a seeded divot hole, a second divot hole is created and requires repair, leaving two seeded divots holes. If the ball is played from the original hole it may require repair but only one hole remains.