

Tree Roots

I am often asked if a Committee may make a local rule giving relief from tree roots. Decision 33-8/8 tells us that such a rule is not authorized. Relief without penalty can only be provided if an abnormal condition exists. The existence of exposed tree roots is not abnormal.

So what can a player do? The player can play the ball as it lies. This may necessitate just chipping it out to an area clear of the roots. The player may also take relief, with a one stroke penalty, under Rule 28-Ball Unplayable. The options here include stroke and distance, dropping behind the ball along a line running from the hole through the point where the ball lay as far back as the player wishes, or dropping within two club lengths of where the ball lay, no nearer the hole.

If the ball lay within an area of exposed tree roots within a bunker, relief could be taken outside the bunker as described above. (Decision 13/2 states that trees, like grass, are not part of the bunker.)