

Divots and Divot Holes

What is a divot? The other day I took a poll of players in my group. They all agreed that a divot is the hole you make when taking a swing or stroke. Actually, the divot is the flap of grass or sod which detaches when you cut through the turf in making a swing or stroke. It is a loose impediment if fully detached and may be removed as long as it and your ball do not lie in or touch the same hazard (Rule 23). In the fairway or rough, the detached divot may be removed as long its removal doesn't cause your ball to move.

What if the divot is not fully detached and could affect your lie, stance or swing? You cannot remove it because it is not a "loose" impediment. If you do, you will be penalized.

Here are a few decisions from "Decisions on the Rules of Golf" which will help you proceed in dealing with divots and divot holes.

13-2/5 Replacing or Removing Undetached Divot

Q. A player's ball comes to rest in front of a divot which is folded over but not completely detached. The divot interferes with his backswing. May the player replace or remove the divot before playing?

A. No. A divot which is not completely detached is not a loose impediment. It is something fixed and therefore its removal or replacement would be a breach of Rule 13-2 as the lie and area of intended swing would be improved.

13-2/6 Replacing Divot in Divot Hole on Line of Play

Q. A player's ball comes to rest close to the putting green and he wishes to use his putter for his next stroke. However, there is a divot hole just in front of his ball on his line of play. May the player replace the divot before playing his next stroke?

A. No, Rule 13-2 prohibits a player from improving his line of play by eliminating an irregularity of surface (Revised 2000).

13-2/7 When Divot Replaced

Q. Under Rule 13-2 a player may not remove or press down a replaced divot. When is a divot considered replaced?

A. When substantially all of it, with the roots downwards, lies in a divot hole. The hole need not be the one from which the divot was extracted.

13-2/8.7 Player's Area of Intended Stance Affected by Another Player's Stroke

Q. The balls of A and B lie near each other through the green. A plays and in doing so affects B's area of intended stance (e.g., by creating a divot hole). What is the ruling?

A. B may play the ball as it lies, in addition, if the original area of intended stance could be restored, in equity (Rule 1-4) the area of intended stance may be restored as nearly as possible without penalty.

If the original area of intended stance could not be easily restored, in equity (Rule 1-4), the player may place his ball, without penalty, on the nearest spot within one club-length of the original lie that provides the most similar lie and area of intended stance to the original lie and area of intended stance. This spot must not be nearer the hole and must not be in a hazard. (New 2006)

13-4/18 Partner's, Opponent's or Fellow-Competitor's Divot Comes to Rest Near Player's Ball in Bunker

Q. A player's partner, opponent or fellow-competitor makes a stroke from near a bunker and the divot comes to rest near the player's ball lying in the bunker. May the divot be removed?

A. A player is entitled to the lie which his stroke gave him. Accordingly, in equity (Rule 1-4) the divot may be removed without penalty.

The same would apply if the player's ball was lying in a water hazard.

If you read and understand these Decisions, you will have become a divot expert!

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