

Sharing Clubs and Unauthorized Flag Attendance Rules 4-4 and 17-1

I officiated at a Four Ball tournament recently in which one of the players lost his putter. This is not easy to do, but in this case the player's ball lay in deep rough about 30 yards from the green. He took his putter and wedge and found his ball. He laid down the putter and used his wedge to make a nice shot to the green fringe. He then proceeded to the green, wedge in hand. At the green he realized that he did not have his putter. He went back to search to no avail. I came on the scene at this point. The player explained the situation and said he would just borrow his wife's putter. He was advised that he could do this only if he and his wife, who were partners, had no more than 14 clubs between them (Rule 4-4b). He was also told that he could not borrow a club from anyone else playing on the course (Rule 4-4a). We talked about club replacement on the turn at the Pro shop, but replacement for a lost club is not allowed unless he started the round with less than 14 clubs (Rule 4-4a, Decision 4-3/10).

At this point the player was very frustrated and chipped his ball onto the green and again chipped it toward the flagstick. One of his fellow competitors, seeing that the ball might strike the flagstick, rushed over and removed the flagstick. This was very nice, but Rule 17-1 prohibits a player from attending a flagstick while a ball is in motion if he was not attending it before the player made a stroke. In this case, the attendance was unauthorized, so any penalty is charged to the fellow competitor (Rule 17-2).

This story does have a happy ending for the player who lost his putter. I found it about 5 minutes after the group left the green and returned it to its owner.

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