

Margins in the Rules of Golf



I don't like these weekly blogs to be too complicated, as my objective is to make the Rules easier to understand for the majority of golfers and not to confuse them. However, I have been asked a question about the vertical limits of margins, which can trouble the best of us. I hope that I can shed some light on their

significance by describing some scenarios that you may encounter on the course.

First, let me summarise what the Definitions say about margins;

- The margin of ground under repair (GUR) extends vertically downwards, but not upwards.
- The margin of a bunker extends vertically downwards, but not upwards.
- The margin of a (lateral) water hazard extends vertically upwards and downwards.
- The line of play extends vertically upwards from the ground, but does not extend beyond the hole.

And now for some scenarios to help explain the differences;

Ground Under Repair (GUR) Margin:

A ball lies against the root of a tree that is growing inside GUR, but the root is outside the white line margin.

Ruling: There is no relief available, without penalty, because the margin only extends downwards.

Although a player is standing well outside an area of GUR there is still interference to their swing from an overhanging branch of a tree that is rooted in GUR.

Ruling: As the tree is growing in GUR it is part of GUR and because the margin does not extend upwards the player may take relief without penalty.

Bunker Margin:

A ball enters a burrowing animal hole in a bunker and rolls underneath and past the margin of the bunker.

Ruling: The ball is not in the bunker because the margin only extends downwards. The player may take relief, without penalty, from the abnormal ground condition outside the bunker.

A ball lies on the edge of the bunker overhanging, but not touching the sand.

Ruling: The ball is not in the bunker, because the margin does not extend vertically upwards.

(Lateral) Water Hazard Margin:

A ball lies in the branches of a tree inside the margin of a (lateral) water hazard.

Ruling: The ball is in the water hazard, even if the tree is rooted outside it, because the margin extends upwards.

A ball enters a burrowing animal hole and comes to rest underground, but within the margin of a (lateral) water hazard.

Ruling: The ball is in the hazard, because the margin extends downwards.

Line of play Margin:

A player's ball lies a few yards away from a tree which has mosses hanging from its branches that are directly in the line of play.

Ruling: The player may not move the mosses, which are considered to be part of the tree (Decision 13-2/37), as this would improve their line of play, which extends vertically upwards.