

## Teeing Grounds



First, let me clarify the distinction between a teeing area (or tee box), which is the whole area (or areas) that have been prepared by the greens staff for locating various teeing grounds, and the teeing ground itself, which is defined as follows;

*The “teeing ground” is the starting place for the hole to be played. It is a rectangular area two club-lengths in depth, the front and the sides of which are defined by the outside limits of two tee-markers. A ball is outside the teeing ground when all of it lies outside the teeing ground.*

Committees, or those taking responsibility for running a competition, should give careful consideration to the siting of teeing grounds. As I have no expertise in course set-up, I have taken much of the following content from the excellent R&A publication, *'Guidance on Running a Competition'*.

Ideally, teeing grounds should be located in different places for each competition, to ensure that the whole teeing area is worn evenly over the course of a golfing season. Committees should decide on the teeing grounds to be used for each hole in advance of any major competition, to allow the greens staff to protect them from play in the run up to the event.

If players are playing practice rounds before a major event, it is suggested that the Committee places the tee-markers for practice as far back on the teeing areas as possible, while still enabling a stroke to be made. As the teeing ground is an area two club-lengths in depth, when placing the tee-markers for a competition they should never be closer than two club-lengths from the back of the tee. So, if the tee-markers are a club-length from the back for practice rounds, the area that will be used for the competition will be unaffected. This allows the players to play the course at its full length when practicing. Whereas, if the tee-markers are placed well ahead of the competition course length during practice, the players are more likely to go back and play from where they think the tee-markers will be for the competition, potentially causing damage to that area instead of protecting it.

Whether it is the Committee or the greens staff setting the tee-markers on the competition days, it is important that the markers are set pointing towards the ideal hitting line. This can be achieved by eye or, to be absolutely sure, by using something like a T-square. It is also preferable that, where possible, there is consistency in terms of the width of the teeing areas. The R&A

recommends that tee-markers are positioned six or seven yards width apart (seven tends to be for par 3s). If the tee-markers are much farther apart, it increases the area of damage and also increases the likelihood that a player may tee up in front of the tee-markers. If the teeing area is small, and there is, for example, four days of competition, it is necessary to plan out where the tee-markers will be for each day to ensure that there is enough undamaged space remaining for the last day.

The person(s) responsible for running the competition should keep a close eye on the weather forecast. If there is a strong wind forecast, it could mean that players may not be able to reach the fairway from the planned teeing ground, so serious consideration should be given to moving the tee forward for that day's play. Another recommendation is that once the tee-markers are positioned, a mark should be painted beside them, in case they are accidentally moved or go missing. This also provides a useful reference for the following day.

Here are some bullet points from Rule 11, Teeing ground;

- The ball must be played from within the teeing ground and from the surface of the ground, or from a conforming tee in or on the surface of the ground.
- A player may stand outside the teeing ground to play a ball within it.
- If a ball, when not in play, falls off a tee or is knocked off a tee by the player in addressing it, it may be re-teeed, without penalty. However, if a stroke is made at the ball in these circumstances, whether the ball is moving or not, the stroke counts, but there is no penalty.
- In stroke play, if a competitor, when starting a hole, plays a ball from outside the teeing ground, they incur a penalty of two strokes and must then play a ball from within the teeing ground. If the competitor makes a stroke from the next teeing ground without first correcting their mistake or, in the case of the last hole of the round, leaves the putting green without first declaring their intention to correct their mistake, they are disqualified. The stroke from outside the teeing ground and any subsequent strokes by the competitor on the hole prior to his correction of the mistake do not count in their score.

I am aware that many Committees think that they can further protect their teeing areas with a Local Rule that makes it mandatory to take relief when a ball comes to rest on a teeing area other than the one being played. I am strongly against the introduction of such a Local Rule for the reasons that I explained in **this earlier blog**.