

Dear Golf Granny,

This last weekend my boyfriend, Bobby Ray and I played a round at La Casa Dolor. The starter paired us up with a couple of ladies, one of whom was a real know-it-all and was constantly spouting rules at us. Don't tee the ball out of the teeing area, make a drop with the ball held shoulder high, don't move anything in the bunker, don't putt until the flag has been removed, on and on and on. Well, I reached my limit on the 12th hole. It turns out that Bobby Ray and I were playing the same brand of ball with the same number. On that hole, our drives landed in same area. When we got there, we couldn't tell which ball was which. Well, Miss Rules Cop tells us that this means that both of our balls are "lost" and that we have to go back to the tee box and hit over again, plus take a one-stroke penalty. Granny, please tell me how both balls could possibly be lost when they were sitting right there in front of us?

Frustrated in Festus

Dear Frustrated,

Isn't golf an amazing game? For instance, consider the similarities between playing golf and a college education. While four years of college is less expensive than four years of playing golf once a week, you will learn more on the golf course than you can in the classroom. Golf will teach you finance, economics, horticulture, meteorology, mathematics (as in how to calculate your Course Handicap*), biology, geology, psychology and sociology. Did I mention languages? My, just think of all the new words you learn on the golf course. And in this instance you present such a vivid question of existential philosophy that it could bring Jean-Paul Sartre back from the dead: How can you be looking at a lost ball?

Maybe the question is not philosophical, but one of quantum physics. Stephen Hawking would tell us that a peculiar universe where a ball could be simultaneously lost and found would have to be governed by special rules - rules developed using a type of logic unknown to humans. From this strange logic we would be able to deduce that if only 50% of the players involved had marked their ball, 100% of the players would be certain of which ball was theirs, but if neither had marked their ball, then both balls are indeed lost. I wonder where one could learn about such logic and such rules?

Answer: www.usga.org/playing/rules/rules.html
<<http://www.usga.org/playing/rules/rules.html>>. Here you will learn that if you cannot definitely identify a ball as being yours, then it must be considered lost, which means you must take a one stroke penalty then return to the spot from which you hit the lost ball and try again. This is the dreaded "stroke and distance" penalty. Sorry to tell you, but in this case, the Rules Cop was correct. It also points out the importance of marking your ball in a manner that will allow you to identify it as yours.

Love,

Granny

* Course Handicap = (Handicap Index x Slope) / 113