



## Rule of the Month

September 1, 2016

### Water, Water, Everywhere.

#### Parts of the Course: Water Hazards

##### Answers:

1. **True.** The line itself is considered to be in the water hazard. And the definition of a water hazard states that a ball that touches a water hazard is in the hazard. Additionally, the margins extend both upwards and downwards. Therefore, a ball stuck in a tree planted outside the hazard but overhanging the hazard would be considered in the hazard if the ball is within the extended margin lines.
2. **False.** The definition of a water hazard is any sea, lake, river, ditch, surface drainage ditch or other open water course and anything of a similar nature on the course. While virtually every ditch is, in fact, man-made, that fact does not transform it into an immovable obstruction. A ditch on the course should be marked as a water or lateral water hazard and relief is available under Rule 26.
3. **False.** Only areas of the course that meet the definition of a water or lateral water hazard may be marked as such. Additionally, a Local Rule declaring rough as a hazard is not allowed. See Decision 33-8/35 for further clarity.
4. **True.** Provided the ground is not touched with the club and the player is not testing the condition of the hazard, practice swings are allowed in the hazard. However, the player must not move or touch a loose impediment or improve the area of his intended stance or swing, the lie of the ball or the direction of play (Rules 13-2 and -4). Caution should be used as an excessive number of practice swings may constitute testing the condition of the hazard in breach of Rule 13-4.
5. **False.** Rule 13-4 only prohibits grounding the club inside the hazard when the ball lies in the hazard. Therefore, the player may ground his club outside the hazard being careful not to touch the margin line with the club.
6. **True.** When both lines and stakes are used to mark a hazard, the stakes serve only to identify it as either a water or lateral water hazard. The margin is defined by the line on the ground.
7. **True.** While the ball may be played as it lies, there are only two options for the player when he is unable to find or play the ball. The relief options carry a one-stroke penalty and the player may play again from the previous spot, i.e., stroke and distance, or a ball may be dropped behind the hazard keeping where the ball last crossed the margin between the hole and the spot of the drop. (Rule 26-1)
8. **False.** Under Note 1 of Rule 24 the player is prohibited from taking relief without penalty from an immovable obstruction when her ball lies in a water hazard. She may play the ball as it lies or proceed under any of the options for a ball in a lateral water hazard (Rule 26-1), incurring a one stroke penalty for the relief. Additionally, Rule 25-1 Note 1 prohibits a player from taking relief without penalty from an abnormal ground condition when her ball lies in a water hazard.
9. **True.** Water and lateral water hazard stakes are treated differently than out of bounds stakes. While out of bounds stakes are considered to be fixed and must not be moved, water hazard stakes are obstructions and may be moved provided they are easily removed. A water hazard stake that is permanent and not designed to be removed (e.g. buried 4x4 post) must not be moved to avoid interference.
10. **False.** When a ball that has been struck towards a water hazard is not found, the player must have knowledge or virtual certainty that his ball is in the hazard before proceeding under Rule 26 for relief. He may not simply assume the ball is in the hazard. While knowledge of that fact may be gained through observation of the ball entering the hazard, virtual certainty leaves room for a small amount of doubt. A good question to ask yourself is, "could the ball be lost anywhere else?" If the answer is "yes" (it may be in the deep grass preceding the hazard) then the player will have a more difficult time establishing virtual certainty and must proceed under Rule 27 for a lost ball. However, if the answer is that the only place the ball could be lost is in the hazard then virtual certainty exists and relief is available under Rule 26.