

### 34-3/10 Limitations on Use of Video Evidence

It is appropriate for a Committee to use video evidence in resolving questions of fact when applying the Rules (see Decision 34-3/9). Such evidence may lead to the conclusion that a player breached the Rules or to the conclusion that there was no breach. Video evidence may also help players and the Committee in determining other factual questions such as the location of a player's ball when it has not been found or where a ball last crossed the margin of a water hazard.

However, video evidence can sometimes present complications because of its potential to reveal factual information that was not known and could not reasonably have been known to players and others on the course. Golf is a game of integrity in which the Rules are applied primarily by the players themselves. Players are expected to be honest in all aspects of their play, including in trying to follow the procedures required under the Rules, in calling penalties on themselves and in raising questions with other players or with the Committee when they are unsure whether they might have breached the Rules.

Video technology, especially the use of methods such as high resolution or close-up camera shots that can be replayed in slow motion, has the potential to undermine this essential characteristic of the game by identifying the existence of facts that could not reasonably be identified in any other way. Such evidence should not be used to hold players to a higher standard than human beings can reasonably be expected to meet. For this reason, there are two situations in which the use of video evidence is limited:

1. When Video Evidence Reveals Things that Could Not Reasonably be Seen with the Naked Eye. The use of video technology can make it possible to identify things that could not reasonably be seen with the naked eye. Examples of this include:
  - When a player unknowingly touches a few grains of sand in a backswing with a club in making a stroke from a bunker.
  - When a player is unaware that the club struck the ball more than once in the course of making a single stroke.

In such situations, if the Committee concludes that such facts could not reasonably have been seen with the naked eye and the player was not otherwise aware of a potential breach of the Rules, the player will be deemed not to have breached the Rules, even when video technology shows otherwise. See also Decision 18/4. In applying this "naked eye" standard, the issue is whether the facts could have been seen by the player or someone else close by who was looking at the situation, not whether the player or anyone else actually saw it happen.

2. When a Player has Made a Reasonable Judgment. Players are often required to determine a spot, point, position, line, area, distance or other location on the course to use in applying the Rules. Examples of this include:
  - Estimating where a ball last crossed the margin of a water hazard (see Decision 26-1/17).
  - Estimating or measuring where to drop or place a ball when taking relief, such as by reference to the nearest point of relief, to a line from the hole through a point or to the spot from which the previous stroke was made.

- Estimating or measuring whether a ball that was dropped in taking relief was dropped in the correct location and whether it has come to rest in a position where a re-drop is required.
- Replacing a lifted ball in relation to a ball-marker or replacing a ball on the spot from which it was accidentally moved.

Such determinations need to be made promptly and with care but often cannot be precise, and players should not be held to the degree of precision that can sometimes be provided by video technology. A “reasonable judgment” standard is applied in evaluating the player’s actions in these situations: so long as the player does what can reasonably be expected under the circumstances to make an accurate determination, the player’s reasonable judgment will be accepted even if later shown to be wrong by the use of video evidence.

The relevant circumstances to be considered by the Committee when applying this standard include:

- The particular actions taken by the player and the context in which they were taken;
- The player’s explanation of the reasons for those actions;
- Information from other players or persons who were there; and
- The amount by which the location was wrong in relation to the type of determination made, recognizing that certain actions (such as replacing a marked ball on the putting green) can be taken with greater accuracy than other actions that may involve more inherent uncertainty (such as estimating where a ball last crossed the margin of a water hazard at a point well ahead of the player).

This “reasonable judgment” standard also applies to any other type of later information, such as testimony from other persons, that shows that the player made a mistake in determining a spot, point, position, line, area, distance or other location.

These “naked eye” and “reasonable judgment” limitations on the use of video and other evidence are not intended in any way to change or reduce each player’s obligation to be honest in applying the Rules and to raise questions when they are uncertain whether they have breached a Rule. When applying this Decision in any particular case, it is the Committee’s responsibility to assess all the circumstances in determining whether these standards have been met.