

Water Hazards – Rule 26



It is important to understand what constitutes a WH. Look on **Page 42** of your Rule book and you will see that there doesn't have to be water in evidence to be a WH. **“Any sea, lake, pond, river, ditch, surface drainage ditch or other open water course *whether or not containing water*”**

There are **TWO** types of WH, a **straightforward W.H** denoted by **yellow** stakes or lines and is usually a lake or ditch bisecting the fairway, or a pond somewhere en route to the green, and a **lateral W.H** which is denoted by **red** stakes and by virtue of its' name, is usually a stream or ditch running parallel to the fairway.

A ball is in a WH when **any part of the ball** lies in it or touches the **margin** (unlike Out Of Bounds where **ALL** of the ball has to be OOB) If there is a line marking the WH, that becomes the margin of the hazard, the stakes, are then considered **INSIDE** the hazard and are only identifying the hazard. However, if there is no line, the **outside of the stakes** then define the margin. (Outside being the side furthest away from the hazard – inside to the course!))

The options available, should your ball land in a WH, are as follows – **all under penalty of ONE stroke**:

1. R 26-1a - Play a ball as nearly as possible from the spot from where your original was last played
2. R 26-1b – Drop a ball behind the WH keeping the point at which your original ball **LAST** crossed the margin of the WH directly between the hole and the spot at which you drop the ball, with no limit as to how far behind the WH the ball may be dropped.

In addition to those two options, you have a third option only if your ball last crossed the margin of a **lateral WH (Red stakes)**

3. R26-1c -You may drop a ball within **TWO** club lengths of and not nearer the hole than i) the point where the original ball last crossed the margin of the WH, OR ii) a point on the opposite side of the WH equidistant from the hole.



There is a lot of confusion over whether or not a Provisional ball may be played if it is **uncertain** as to whether or not your original ball **MAY** be in a WH. The answer is **NO**. Conversely however, if you think your ball may be lost **OUTSIDE** a WH, or may be OOB, then you may play a Provisional. Some WH's are surrounded by reeds and if you don't see a splash or think your ball may not have reached the WH, then there is reasonable evidence that the ball may not be in the hazard and you may play a Provisional. If the margin of the hazard is quite clear and defined, no reeds, long grass or anything in which your ball may be lost, then it is almost certainly in the hazard and you **may not** play a provisional ball.

You may not declare your ball unplayable in a WH, nor may you, if you chose to play out of a WH, touch the water or ground with your hand or club or on your backswing. You **MUST NOT** move a loose impediment lying in or touching the hazard, (unless it is to prevent you falling, in marking, measuring or removing an obstruction) However, you may touch at address, or in your backswing, any obstruction, or any grass, bush, tree or other growing thing. (Note to R13-4)