

Playing from the Rocks - Rules Clarification

From Jimmy Pullano

Gentlemen,

The MGC board has asked that the rules when playing out of the rocks be clarified to ensure that all golfers understand their options and take appropriate action. Before getting into the different scenarios and options afforded to golfers, it is important to define the four different rock types you will encounter:

- **Decomposed Granite (DG)** - This is the very small crushed gravel that is usually found just off the fairway or rough.
- **3/4"-1" Rock** - This makes up the bulk of the rock found on the course. It is the medium sized rock found in most areas between the house lots and DG areas. For reference, this is the rock that you will find on either side of the driving range.
- **Large River-Rock or Rip-Rap** - This is rock used in some of the washes and drainage areas that is typically over 4 inches in size. The mixed rock areas over the green on Mountain #7 and to the right of the fairway on Mountain #9 also fall into this category.

Now let's address the options golfers have when they encounter each of these areas:

Decomposed Granite

When your ball lies in these areas you must play it as it lies. There are no additional relief options given to players outside of the normal rules of golf.

- **3/4"-1" Rock**
 - You may play it as it lies -OR- under our local rules you are afforded a fourth option under the Unplayable Ball rule:
 - For the penalty of one stroke, you may take complete relief from the 3/4"-1" rock. You will drop your ball at the **nearest point of relief**. The nearest point of relief is one specific place. It is the closest spot to the original lie that is both no nearer to the hole and where the 3/4"-1" rock no longer interferes with your stance, swing, or lie. **It is important to note that in the vast majority of cases, the nearest point of relief will be the DG and not any turf areas.**
- **Large River-Rock or Rip-Rap**
 - Free relief may be taken from these areas, including the mixed rock areas on Mountain #7 and #9. Just like the 3/4"-1" rock, the relief to be take is the nearest point. **In most cases the nearest point of relief will be in the DG or 3/4"-1" rock.**
- **If a player wishes to reject all of these options and take the ball completely out of the rocks and into the fairway, they may do so by deeming the ball lost and taking a two-stroke penalty. They would then follow the new alternative to stroke and distance rule.**

In addition to discussing these options, I wanted to clarify two very common situations that occur while playing:

- **Ball in a Bush in the 3/4"-1" Rock**
 - In this case a very important determination must be made, "Is the ball playable?"
 - If it is determined that the ball could be played, then the golfer may follow the procedures for a ball lying in the 3/4"-1" rock under penalty of just one stroke.
 - If the ball is deemed unplayable, then relief must be take from the bush first for a one stroke penalty. The standard unplayable lie options will likely leave you still in the 3/4"-1" rock in which case an additional penalty stroke must be taken to get relief from that.
- **Ball Lost in the Large River-Rock or Rip-Rap**
 - If the ball is truly lost, it must be played as such. However, in the case that either the player does not wish to walk into the large rocks to retrieve their ball -OR- if the golfer and his playing competitors are all **VIRTUALLY CERTAIN** that the ball is in those rocks but cannot locate it, then the player can take free relief from the spot that the ball most likely lies. Again this would follow the same nearest point of relief guidelines as before.

Hopefully this will help define the different rock areas and help to better understand the options you have in these areas. Please feel free to ask our professional staff or a member of the rules committee any questions you may have or help to make determinations when you encounter these situations.

Thank you!