

Those Dumb Rules Again

By Missy Jones • @missyjonjones April 15, 2015



Virtually Certain Missy is getting lots of tweets about those "stupid rules" again following the DQ of Edoardo Molinari. His caddy jumped on the back of a cart between the 9th and 10th holes, which is a two-stroke penalty. Because Molinari didn't see it or know of the infraction, he signed a wrong scorecard and was disqualified. For one thing, I cannot believe that a professional caddy would not know that there is no transportation allowed during professional competitions. And another thing I wonder is why nobody said anything until after Molinari signed his card. But I digress. This isn't a Rules of Golf thing (i.e. Rules 1-34), this is a condition of competition adopted by the various Tours and most USGA and NCAA championships. Appendix I gives us the option: "If it is desired to require players to walk in a competition, the following condition is recommended. 'Players must not ride on any form of transportation during a stipulated round unless authorized by the Committee.'" Stamina is part of the game. We want everyone to play and walk the same course. We can't subjectively "decide" if there is an advantage or not, nor is that our goal to decide. We need some absolutes. Did you ride or not ride? It's a yes or no question.

Some tweeted that since the player didn't do it then we should just let it go. I'm always amazed at that argument as if we pick and choose which rules we should

enforce. That's like saying, "Let's not have out of bounds today." It's an all or nothing deal folks. We don't let a foul ball count as a home run in a blowout game because it doesn't affect the outcome and if a player used a corked bat altered by the equipment manager without the player's knowledge it would still be an illegal bat. Rules have a purpose. Rule 6-1 tells us that the player and his caddie are required to know the rules and that any breach by a caddie is the same as if the player had done it. We have to make them one and the same so that we don't have a caddie who is moving loose impediments in hazards or holding back tree branches for players to get a better swing. Make sense? A caddie is a player's assistant and his behavior is on the player. Hire wisely.

Some argued that officials take players back when it is discovered their ball is lost or out of bounds but that is a completely different situation. The player has already walked that part of the course and we don't require him to "re-walk" it. We help the pace of play and the efficient application of the rules by giving them a ride back in this instance of a stroke and distance penalty.

I know it is in vogue to bash the Rules and people get clicks and visits to their websites when they do, but the basic principles of the Rules protect and help the player and the field. To do this, everyone must play by the same rules. We assume honesty and integrity and do everything possible to apply the Rules of Golf fairly. Our job as officials is to know and apply the Rules. Knowing the Rules should also be part of the job of the player -- and of his/her caddie.