

What is “reasonable”?

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It was unfortunate what happened with Alison Lee on the 17th green at the Solheim Cup in St. Leon-Rot, Germany today. She thought her putt was conceded and picked up her ball. Team Europe said it was not conceded so she incurred a one stroke penalty and the U.S.A. lost the hole instead of halving it.

Let's take a look at Decision 2-4/3.

2-4/3 Player Lifts Ball in Mistaken Belief That Next Stroke Conceded

Q. In a match between A and B, B made a statement which A interpreted to mean that his (A's) next stroke was conceded. Accordingly, A lifted his ball. B then said that he had not conceded A's next stroke. What is the ruling?

A. If B's statement could reasonably have led A to think his next stroke had been conceded, in equity (Rule 1-4), A should replace his ball as near as possible to where it lay, without penalty.

Otherwise, A would incur a penalty stroke for lifting his ball without marking its position - Rule 20-1 - and he must replace his ball as near as possible to where it lay.

Though this Decision is not exactly the same situation, rules officials use similar Decisions all the time to help us decide certain situations. It says: "could reasonably have led player to think next stroke had been conceded" so it is going to be a subjective decision on what is “reasonable.” The referee interviewed everyone involved and the European team said they did not concede the putt so the loss of hole stood. A valid assessment.

It could be argued that something muttered by the crowd, Charlie Hull and Suzann Pettersen walking off, the shortness of the putt, or behavior on previous holes could all be viewed as "reasonable" which could have led Alison to misunderstand that her putt was conceded. She would then replace it as near as possible to where it lay, without

penalty.

The Solheim Cup is loud with a lot going on to say the least. This could be a lesson for all of us that work match play events that we might treat a misunderstood concession with a broader brush in situations like this. The definition of "reasonable" might have more latitude in these loud, busy events like the Solheim or Ryder Cups. Committees decide how they are going to handle certain situations prior to Championships all the time. This should be one of them.

It may have been a rallying point for the victorious American team but the concept needs to be discussed. Kudos to the U.S.A. on the win and the class with which they handled themselves after this controversy.