

Advanced Rule of the Month - February

You tee off on hole 1 with a bullet ball which skirts the dang tree on the right and looks like it disappeared into the wild area further up the cart path. This is not a penalty area so you hit a provisional ball. Driving down the cart path you don't see your original ball in view and don't spend any time looking for it. You move to your provisional ball. You hit your provisional ball with a duff shot and it doesn't go very far. You move up further toward this ball when you spot your original ball further down the fairway. Alas, it must have hit a rock or something and ricocheted onto the fairway.

Should this original ball be considered a wrong ball at this point since you have started hitting the provisional ball?

Answer: You can continue hitting your provisional ball and keep its status as a provisional ball up until your provisional ball becomes closer to the hole than the original ball or where you estimate the original ball to be located. At this point the provisional ball becomes your ball in play and your original ball is a wrong ball. In the scenario above, when you see your original ball ahead of where your provisional ball lies, you can abandon your provisional ball and continue playing your original ball. You will be hitting your second stroke.

Additionally, if you initially spent the allowable three minutes looking for your original ball along the cart path to no avail before moving to the provisional ball, your allotted time is considered lapsed and the original ball is now a wrong ball. You must use the provisional ball (which becomes your ball in play) even if you later find your original ball further down the course.

A player may ask others not to look for their original ball when the player would prefer to play the provisional ball. Is this allowable?

Answer: The request can be made, but there is no obligation for others to comply. In competition, you will likely want to be the "helpful" opponent by looking for their ball in the junk.