

# KNOW YOUR RULES

By: Mark Harman  
USGTF National Course Director

It's an unfortunate fact that many professional tour players don't know the Rules of Golf all that well. Unfortunately, it's also a fact that many teaching professionals aren't up to speed on them, either. Many times at our certification courses, we hear of bad rulings made by the host professionals.

Why are bad rulings commonplace among individuals who should know better? Most professionals, growing up, were more interested in playing the game than learning the intricacies of the rules. Sure, they know the basic rules regarding out of bounds, lost balls, and water hazards, but beyond that, there is some questionable knowledge out there.

One of the responsibilities of being a golf teaching professional is in having a good working knowledge of the Rules of Golf. It doesn't mean you have to score 100 on a rules test, but every professional should know the following in-depth, in addition to the items mentioned above: loose impediments, obstructions, unplayable lies, playing a wrong ball, abnormal ground conditions, rules regarding the teeing ground, and rules regarding the putting green and flagstick. These cover about 95% of all rules situations that will occur. For the other 5%, handy reference to a Decisions book or a phone call to a qualified rules official should suffice.

We encourage all golf professionals to attend a USGA rules seminar at least once. Information on them can be found at [www.USGA.org](http://www.USGA.org). The Rules of Golf and the Decisions book are also online at the same site. Believe it or not, it can make for some interesting reading.



**Copyright© 2012 United States Golf Teachers Federation, All Rights Reserved.  
Reproduction of this article in any kind is strictly prohibited.**