

Clarifications of the 2019 Rules of Golf

Rule 10: Rule 10.2b(4):

1. Meaning of “Begins Taking a Stance for the Stroke”:

Rule 10.2b(4) does not allow a player to have his or her caddie deliberately stand on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball for any reason when the player begins taking a stance for the stroke. Reference to “the stroke” means the stroke that is actually made.

The player begins to take the stance for the stroke that is actually made when he or she has at least one foot in position for that stance. If a player backs away from the stance, he or she has not taken a stance for the stroke that is actually made, and the second bullet point in Rule 10.2b(4) does not apply.

Therefore, if a player takes a stance when the caddie is deliberately standing on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball, there is no penalty under Rule 10.2b(4) if the player backs away from the stance and does not begin to take a stance for the stroke that is actually made until after the caddie has moved out of that location. This applies anywhere on the course. Backing away means that the player’s feet or body are no longer in a position where helpful guidance on aiming at the intended target line could be given. (**Added 2/2019**)

2. Examples of Caddie Not Deliberately Standing Behind Ball When Player Begins Taking Stance for Stroke

Rule 10.2b(4) does not allow a player to have his or her caddie deliberately stand on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball for any reason when the player begins taking a stance for the stroke.

The use of the term “deliberately” requires the caddie to be aware that (1) the player is beginning to take a stance for the stroke to be played, and (2) he or she is standing on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball.

If the caddie is unaware of either of these two things, the caddie’s action is not deliberate and Rule 10.2b(4) does not apply.

Examples of when a caddie’s action is not considered to be deliberate include when:

- The caddie is raking a bunker or taking some similar action to care for the course and is not aware that he or she is doing so on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball.
- The player makes a stroke and the ball comes to rest near the hole and the player walks up and taps the ball into the hole while the caddie is unaware he or she is standing on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball.
- The caddie is standing on an extension of the line of play behind the ball but, when the player moves in to begin taking a stance, the caddie is facing away from the player or looking in a different direction and is unaware the player has begun to take his or her stance.
- The caddie is engaged in a task (such as obtaining a yardage) and is unaware that the player has begun to take the stance.

But, in the examples given above, when the caddie becomes aware that the player has already begun to take a stance for the stroke to be played and he or she is standing on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball, the caddie needs to make every effort to move out of the way.

Common acts that caddies take unrelated to the player setting up to the ball, such as checking to see if a player’s club will hit a tree, whether the player has interference from a cart path or holding an umbrella over a player’s head before the stroke, are not treated as deliberate actions under Rule 10.2b(4). After helping the player with such an act, there is no penalty so long as the caddie moves away before the stroke is made.

If either the player or caddie is attempting to circumvent the primary purpose of Rule 10.2b(4), which is to ensure that aiming at the intended target is a challenge that the player must overcome alone, the caddie's actions are treated as being deliberate. (Added 2/2019)

3. Alignment Help Before Player Has Begun Taking Stance for Stroke:

Interpretation 10.2b(4)/1 explains that the primary purpose of Rule 10.2b(4) is to ensure that aiming at the intended target is a challenge that the player must overcome alone.

In a situation where a player has not yet begun to take his or her stance for the stroke but:

- the player's feet or body are close to a position where useful guidance on aiming could be given and
- the caddie is deliberately standing on or close to an extension of the line of play behind the ball,

the player is treated as having begun to take a stance for the stroke (even though his or her feet are not in that position) only if the caddie gives the player help with alignment.

If alignment help is given but the player backs away before making the stroke and the caddie moves out from behind the line of play, there is no breach of the Rule. This applies anywhere on the course.

Alignment help includes when the caddie gives help by standing behind the player and moving away without saying anything but, by doing so, is giving a signal to the player that he or she is correctly aimed at the intended target. (Added 2/2019)