



## UNDERCOVER TOUR PRO

# WHAT THE LOCKER ROOM IS SAYING ABOUT THE RULES CHANGES

impler is better. It's a truth that pertains to everything in life. That's why I'm in favour of the proposed 'modernisation' that will cut The Rules of Golf from 34 to 24. I don't agree with all the changes, but I like the spirit of the undertaking.

Many of my fellow players are not as open-minded.

Among us, there exists a strong bias against the USGA.

When Far Hills made the announcement, the vibe on the range was a caustic, "What the heck do those guys know about golf?"

It's unfair, but that's the perception pros have. We interact with the USGA once a year at the US Open, which from our view is usually a debacle.

Five or six things that feel ridiculously unfair are guaranteed to happen to you that week, like losing a ball in the rough one yard off the fairway, or seeing your stopped ball suddenly roll 30 feet off a green.

Unless you're the guy holding the trophy at the end, you leave bitter.

Even though the R&A is equally involved in the changes, American players don't have the same antipathy towards that organisation. If the proposal had come from the International Golf Federation, it'd have been better received.

The USGA didn't help relations by having a guy going around at Riviera this year, ostensibly asking our opinions on the rules.

The press release that landed two

weeks later was clearly pretty much already written.

I was aware of the project, but I had no idea how drastic the changes would be. I'm not sure people appreciate yet just how much this will change the game.

I won't submit written feedback to the USGA, but here's what I'll tell Mike Davis (with whom I have good rapport) the next time I see him.

### LETTING GOLFERS FIX SPIKE MARKS IS GOING TO BE A DISASTER FOR SLOW PLAY.

**Letting golfers fix spike marks is going to be a disaster for slow play.**

We've all missed and made putts because of spike marks. A lot of pros are obsessives, and they're going to be tamp, tamp, tamping all day.

### Dropping a ball from any height baffles me.

It's the most talked-about change on Tour, and none of us can work out what's wrong with the current method.

Are we going to have officials lying on their stomachs to ensure balls are in fact dropped, not placed? Seems like an opportunity for cheating.

Don't get me wrong: That golf is a game of honour is alive and well in the pro ranks. There's way more scrutiny from media and fans trying to catch us doing things wrong than actually goes on.

But dropping from an inch is going to foster suspicion.

### The rest of the changes seem great.

Whenever someone is penalised for a technicality, be it Dustin Johnson possibly (theoretically?) bumping his ball on the green at Oakmont, or Carl Pettersson ticking a leaf in his backswing at Kiawah, the reaction in the locker room is always unanimous: "What bull----."

If a player isn't intending to get an advantage, there should be no penalty. The USGA and R&A are trying to get rid of these situations.

I think casual golfers could go back to a close form of the original 13 rules written in Scotland in 1744.

For tournament golf, where big money is on the line, the rules should be constantly evolving.

Instead of every four years, every three months or so the major Tours should gather – maybe by conference call – and discuss odd circumstances and come up with common-sense solutions.

For example, at Riviera, a guy in our threesome got totally hosed after a rain delay. He'd had a clean lie in the bunker when the horn sounded, but when we came back, his spot had been washed out and he had to drop into a muddy plugged lie.

Is that fair? It's not for me to decide. Point is, these situations should be evaluated on a more frequent basis than they are now.

Pros know the rules, but we're conditioned to call officials even for matters as simple as relief from a sprinkler head.

It's just not worth the stress of doing it on your own. Even if the rules get simpler, it'll be a long time before we're playing faster.

— with Max Adler