

18.3c(2)/2 – Player May Ask Others Not to Search for His or Her Original Ball

If a player does not plan to search for his or her original ball because he or she would prefer to continue play with a *provisional ball*, the player may ask others not to search, but there is no obligation for them to comply.

If a ball is found, the player must make all reasonable efforts to identify the ball, provided he or she has not already played the *provisional ball* from nearer the *hole* than where the original ball was estimated to be, in which case it became the player's ball *in play*. If the *provisional ball* has not yet become the ball *in play* when another ball is found, refusal to make a reasonable effort to identify the found ball may be considered serious misconduct contrary to the spirit of the game (Rule 1.2a).

After the other ball is found, if the *provisional ball* is played from nearer the *hole* than where the other ball was found, and it turns out that the other ball was the player's original ball, the stroke at the *provisional ball* was actually a stroke at a *wrong ball* (Rule 6.3c). The player will get the *general penalty* and, in *stroke play*, must correct the error by continuing play with the original ball.

18.3c(2)/3 – Opponent or Another Player May Search for Player's Ball Despite the Player's Request

Even if a player prefers to continue play of the hole with a *provisional ball* without searching for the original ball, the *opponent* or another player in *stroke play* may search for the player's original ball so long as it does not unreasonably delay play. If the player's original ball is found while it is still *in play*, the player must abandon the *provisional ball* (Rule 18.3c(3)).

For example, at a par-3 hole, a player's tee shot goes into dense woods, and he or she plays a *provisional ball* that comes to rest near the *hole*. Given this outcome, the player does not wish to find the original ball and walks directly towards the *provisional ball* to continue play with it. The player's *opponent* or another player in *stroke play* believes it would be beneficial to him or her if the original ball was found, so he or she begins searching for it.

If he or she finds the original ball before the player makes another stroke with the *provisional ball* the player must abandon the *provisional ball* and continue with the original ball. However, if the player makes another stroke with the *provisional ball* before the original ball is found, it becomes the ball *in play* because it was nearer the *hole* than the estimated spot of the original ball (Rule 18.3c(2)).

In *match play*, if the player's *provisional ball* is nearer the hole than the *opponent's ball*, the *opponent* may cancel the stroke and have the player play in the proper order (Rule 6.4a). However, cancelling the stroke would not change the status of the original ball, which is no longer *in play*.