

American Century Championship

Thursday, July 12, 2018

Brian Urlacher
Thomas Pagel
Charlie Rymer
John Smoltz

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We've got our Golf Rules Modernization Panel. Today's symposium is to discuss the evolution of the game through golf's new rules modernized by the USGA and R&A to make them easier to understand and apply for all golfers. Today's golf rules modernization symposium features Mr. Thomas Pagel, John Smoltz, Charlie Rymer and also Brian Urlacher.

This fall, the USGA will be providing a range of learning materials to assist everyone in the game that includes videos, graphic illustrations, in anticipation of the January 1st, 2019 effective date. There will be new rules of golf books, including new players edition that covers the basic rules, issues every golfer should know and understand.

I'd like to introduce Mr. Thomas Pagel to take us through some of these things. Thomas, tell us about why the USGA has decided to change some of these rules for 2019.

THOMAS PAGEL: This is something we've been talking about just about over a year, this rules modernization process that we've gone through with our partners at the R&A. We're excited that we're six months out. This process, it's seven years in the making, believe it or not.

It really came out of a realization that as golfers the rules have just become too complicated. And everything was well-intentioned, but as you go through a rules process over the course of 30, 40 years, the desire to make the rules extremely precise and fair brings in subjectivity.

And when you have subjectivity it brings in complications. We ended up with a rule book that was thick and complex, and a decision's book which is, like, 1200 mini case studies, many of which introduce rules



that aren't in the rule book themselves.

So we had just created this massive document on how to play a game. And the challenge is unlike, other sports, unlike baseball and football, we have a single set of rules that apply worldwide.

So the millions of golfers that play around the world on the thousands of golfers are playing by a single code. That doesn't happen in other sports. So it was our obligation as the governing bodies to go back and really blow it up. Let's start from scratch. Let's adhere to the principles of the playing of the game. But how can we write the rules so they're easier to understand, easier to apply? How can we deliver them written in plain English so it's not necessarily in the legalistic terms that you might think of with past rule books.

It's been a long time coming. We're excited what it means for the game. A couple of the examples that were mentioned there, you know, the dropping procedure, it's funny as I was out on tour talking to players --

CHARLIE RYMER: Can I jump in real quick before you get into the actual mechanics of what you guys are going to do, because I think what you said was so incredibly important that differentiates our game from the game that these two guys played and so many of the other sports is that the idea is that we all play under the same rules.

That doesn't happen in any other sport. And where we got with the USGA rules I thought we were to a point that there's no way you guys, no matter how much you'd been talking about it, no matter how much you've been studying, were going to get us to the point where I think we all actually have a reasonable chance of playing under the same rules.

And you guys will see as it rolls out next year, and I'm fortunate, my work at Golf Channel, that we'll be on front lines of trying to explain it to the golf fans and average golfers out there, that that's something that -- that's why I jumped in. That's really, really significant.

Because where we were going, you were going to have the professional game in one area and then the amateur game in another area.



So a lot of us were calling for bifurcation because we just couldn't see how those two could work. Now with the amazing work that these guys have done, I think we've got a really good chance of pulling this off for the future and keeping all of us playing under the same rules.

That's why I wanted to jump in, get in there, because I think that's really, really important.

THOMAS PAGEL: Thanks, Charlie. I appreciate that. Look, as part of the process, too, to develop the new rules, it was not -- a lot of people think it's the USGA and the RNA and we just go lock ourselves in a boardroom somewhere and we come out and say here's the rule book, guys, go play golf.

We involved everybody in the golf community. The tours are involved in the process. We had a feedback period over, gosh, six or seven months where we had over 30,000 pieces of individual comments from 102 countries throughout the world where golfers that are passionate about the game said, hey, I like this change, have you considered this?

And so it's been a great process, a transparent process. I think it's what we needed to all really level set to get back to the point you just talked about.

CHARLIE RYMER: Do you have a specific example of where you took some feedback and made an adjustment?

THOMAS PAGEL: I'll give you a great example. So the original proposals that we announced, we went to fixed measures.

So we went away from measuring with club length. If you're taking relief from a cart path or water hazard, rather than using clubs, we said let's use 20 inches and 80 inches. Let's just say if you're taking free relief from a cart path, you drop it within a 20-inch area; you take relief from a water hazard, you drop within an 80-inch area. Philosophically, it makes perfect sense. Because what we were intending to do was to keep the player close to the condition from which they were taking relief and making sure that we all had this standardized measure. Brian's driver might be longer than mine.

We said let's just give everybody 80 inches and it's a level playing field. One thing we heard loud and clear from golfers at all levels was we sort of understand that, but we really don't like it: I happen to carry 14 pretty easy measuring sticks in my bag right now, can we just go back to those. And we took that advice.

We said philosophically we understood where we were going, but let's go back to club lengths. I don't think we've lost anything as a result. It's a great example of how we engaged the golf tournament and ended up in a better position.

Q. Thomas, could you take us through some of the rules we mentioned earlier like dropping procedure? What I want to do is I want to have you say what the change is and I want all the three panelists to weigh in on it and get their opinions as well.

THOMAS PAGEL: The dropping procedure, we're moving from shoulder height down to knee height. And to understand this change, you have to understand the evolution of the rule. Pre-1984 we were dropping over our shoulder, behind our back.

Then we went to stand erect, drop from shoulder height. And that's all fairly simple. Where the complications are created is when that ball hits the ground. The balls can go anywhere. And there are nine different times in the current rules where we say if your ball does one of these nine things you have to redrop. We wanted to eliminate as a complication.

We said let's focus on the relief area, let's give you that one-club length area, that two-club length area, your job is to get the ball in that area, get it to stay in that area and play from there.

In order to accomplish that, we wanted to lower the height of drop. We wanted to get the ball as close to the ground as possible so the ball is not going to bounce around and you can effectively just get the ball in that relief area pretty quick and play on.

The original proposal we actually had from any height, which we were recommending one or two inches above the ground. One of the other pieces that we heard, Charlie, was people saying that's too low.

How do I know, if Brian's across the fairway, how do I know he's not placing it instead of dropping it? As golfers we still want to hold each other in check. We raised it up to knee level. You get that randomness that people like with the drop but the hope would be that the ball could still come to rest fairly easily.

CHARLIE RYMER: Urlacher, you drop as much as anybody I've ever seen. What do you think about that? (Laughter).

BRIAN URLACHER: I like the rule. I think it's a good change. Because, like you said, so many variables that come in. When you drop it up here, did it go closer? Did it go further? If you get another bad lie,

dropping from a sprinkler head or something, there's so many variables that come in.

I think closer to the ground is better -- I do drop a lot, a lot of cart paths I'm around for some reason, not hazards, but cart paths.

JOHN SMOLTZ: Maybe because I play with too many degenerates, is it a straight knee or bent knee?

THOMAS PAGEL: Straight knee. (Laughter).

JOHN SMOLTZ: I could see a lot of my buddies bending down with a bent knee, dropping it as low as they can.

CHARLIE RYMER: One of the things that's always bothered me is if you're in a situation where you're dropping inside a hazard, dropping -- you wouldn't be dropping, but you're dropping in a sandy area, when you drop from shoulder height, that ball plugs.

Okay. So I've hit the ball in the hazard, Medalist in Jupiter, the 17th hole down there, hit it in the green, rolls over through this bunker and there's a hazard line there. So you're dropping out of the hazard and you're dropping a bunker and it's plugging.

I hate that. Now dropping from knee height to me seems a little more equitable. It's almost like you get double penalized because you have to drop from so high.

THOMAS PAGEL: Yeah, I think that's exactly right. That was one of the things we considered. That's one of the reasons we really like that lower height. But I still think you get a lot of that benefit with knee height as well.

And to John's point, the bent knee versus straight knee, this is another shameless plug for the new rules in the player's edition. They'll have diagrams. We have a diagram that shows somebody squatting and we say, sorry, that's not knee height.

JOHN SMOLTZ: We need that. (Laughter).

Q. As far as measurement and taking relief, Thomas, tell us, give a little history and then what we're doing now.

THOMAS PAGEL: I sort of hit on that before, right, the original proposals we had this fixed measure, 20, 80 inches. Sounded really good from a philosophical perspective.

We went out and tested it. It worked well. We were notching golf clubs to find the 20 inches, putting a piece of paper, or Sharpie mark on.

Again, given where we are and given the feedback we decided to go back to club lengths. The most important thing, I just hit on, is now you measure your relief area; you drop the ball in the relief area and play from there. If it bounces out for any reason, you'll end up redropping, which we think is a major simplification to the relief process.

CHARLIE RYMER: Is there a stipulation on shortest club in the bag, longest club in the bag, or is it still sort of a gentleman's agreement, you use whatever plug you want?

THOMAS PAGEL: We actually say it's the longest club.

Q. Except the putter?

THOMAS PAGEL: Longest club except the putter. Because long putters are still part of the game they'll continue to be part of the game.

Q. In the past a lot of people have said if you're going to have to hit an 8-iron from there that's the club you should drop or club you should lay down so you can see?

THOMAS PAGEL: Under the current rules, they'll say that's the club you should use to measure your nearest point of relief. But you could still pull out your driver. But certainly there were a lot of questions about there are guys carrying long putters, they're getting an eight-, nine-inch advantage over my driver, why are they able to do that? In the future it will be longest club in your bag minus the putter.

Q. And then we see that you're removing the penalty for a double hit. Where is that coming from?

CHARLIE RYMER: Again, Urlacher can talk to that.

BRIAN URLACHER: I don't do that. That's one thing I don't do.

THOMAS PAGEL: It's funny, this is one of those areas where you look at -- we pulled apart the entire rule book. You have 34 rules, all these decisions, seven-year process.

But one of the most extensive conversations we've had was actually around a double hit, which is something you don't see a great deal of. But there was a strong-held view by many from a traditional sense that, well, you've actually struck the ball twice so you need to count a stroke plus a penalty.

And, finally, I would say at the 11th hour, calmer heads prevailed and we were able to eliminate that penalty. So it's just the one stroke. As we said, it's not often a

good result. Right? If you're hitting that ball a second time, who knows where it's going. So there's no need to penalize the player a second time.

Q. Let's talk a little bit about balls lost or out of bounds.

THOMAS PAGEL: So there are a few changes here. First, time of search goes down to three minutes. Again, talking about pace of play. I know that's important in a lot of sports.

So five minutes to three minutes. Couple that with the fact that as you're searching for your own ball, there's no longer a penalty if you happen to move it.

Just a quick story, I was refereeing last year at the British Open. I had a fairly well-known PGA TOUR player in my group. He hits the ball into a bush.

We all know it's right in the bush. The camera guy is right there: I saw it go in that bush. The player and caddie start to search a little bit. They couldn't find it. I just said, you know, be careful, if you move your ball, you're penalized. He said, What about my caddie? I said, Same thing.

He said, What about all these people outside the ropes. Well, they're not you or your caddie, outside agencies, there would be no penalty.

He stepped back: \$20 to the first person that finds my ball. At four minutes and 55 seconds we find his ball. He throws \$20 in a glove and hands it over. I thought, okay, I'm not sure what rule that breaks.

Look, there's no reason for the player to be treated different than somebody else. In the future we're talking you have three minutes. We want you to find that golf ball. That's the primary objective. If you move it, no big deal, just put it back.

Then one of the biggest changes, as it relates to the recreational game as a local rule for stroke and distance, for a ball that's out of bounds or lost. You're not going to see this take effect at the TOUR or elite level.

The local rule will actually say if your ball goes out of bounds, you estimate where it went out of bounds and you take a line and estimate a spot in the fairway the same distance plus two club lengths in the fairway, you can drop anywhere behind there for a two-stroke penalty. Essentially you're replicating a decently-played ball under stroke and distance.

The thought there is same penalty, but guess what, you're not going backwards anymore. You're going forward. And frankly we know a lot of players are doing

this at the club level on Saturdays. It was important to us to make sure we're validating those golfers and really bringing them into the mix.

CHARLIE RYMER: I can tell you that's the way we've been doing it at Fort Mill Golf Course in Fort Mill, South Carolina over 100 years now.

THOMAS PAGEL: You're progressing.

Q. For the lawyers in the group, when do you start counting the time?

THOMAS PAGEL: Time of search, it's when you or your caddie gets up to the area. So, you know, an event like this, you have marshals. If it's off to the side, the marshals start looking for the golf ball, the clock doesn't start. It's when the player or caddie shows up and initiates that search.

Q. Any particular stories you would like to talk about as far as lost balls or alternate stroke and distance and some of your experiences? And I'm going to leave Urlacher alone. He's bigger than I am.

BRIAN URLACHER: The hazard rule, you can drop on both sides of the hazards? I was playing with a TOUR player a couple of years ago. They said bilateral or something. I don't understand that rule.

THOMAS PAGEL: So under the current rules, for lateral, if it's marked red, you can go to the other side of the red hazard for a one-stroke penalty. Just the same distance.

It's a very complicated rule. Frankly, Brian, you're not alone there. There's a lot of people that don't know about it or don't understand it. So moving forward that actually is not in the rules. It will be a local rule.

So what we're suggesting is, just like drop zones, right, golf course operators know where they need a drop zone for a water hazard. We're saying consider this local rule, too.

If you think on the 17th hole you need it, put it in there. Because like with a drop zone, you play closer attention to that as a player. We're hoping as a local rule you say, okay, I know on this one I can actually go to the other side if I have to.

JOHN SMOLTZ: I have a question. I know he doesn't like flags in his sport. Rightfully so. If I'm fortunate to play in another Senior event, can I stop getting flags in the rough? Every time I hit a ball I hit it in the rough, there was a flag next to my ball.

BRIAN URLACHER: The marshals put a flag in there?

JOHN SMOLTZ: Can we do something happier than a flag when you can't see your ball in the rough five inches deep?

THOMAS PAGEL: I'm open to suggestions.
(Laughter).

JOHN SMOLTZ: I said I got more flags in two days than you want to get in a week. But the rough was unbelievable.

CHARLIE RYMER: You said at the U.S. Senior Open you were playing with the legendary Bob Ford and he freaked you out. Tell us about the situation.

JOHN SMOLTZ: I've known Bob for a long time. Of course Seminole and Oakmont. And we played in our first round. And him and Jim McGovern.

About the second hole, I think it was the second hole, after he made bogey, tapped in for bogey, he dropped about ten feet back and started practice putting. I started dry heaving, it was like what is he doing, he's lost his mind.

Obviously, as the round went on and he kept on doing it, I said he must really know the rule. And I asked about six or seven TOUR guys, and I would say every one but one didn't know the rule. Or at least they said it's illegal, you can't practice putt. Match play you can. But in USGA you, if you're not holding anybody up, you can practice putt or chip. That was a learning experience. I would have had a lot of time then to practice putt because I wasn't making anything.

CHARLIE RYMER: But that's a great illustration of how complicated the rules of golf can be from a player's standpoint. And I'm not going to pick on you on this, but also how lazy the players can be, because these conditions of competition are publicized in the locker room.

Players get them when they check in. If it's going to be something that is way out of the ordinary, ahead of time, the PGA TOUR players will actually get notified.

Nobody reads their e-mails. Nobody reads the notifications in their locker room. Another situation, the PGA Championship, you can actually use different types of golf ball within a stipulated round, which as far as I know the highest level that's the only place where the one-ball rule is not in effect.

So you could tee off with a Titleist, play the first hole with a Titleist, play the second hole with a TaylorMade and the third hole with a different brand.

No player has taken advantage of that, but it's there and available to them. And I would say if you ask the players, if they knew that opportunity existed, probably 90 percent of them or 95 percent of them would have no idea.

So while the rules are complicated, no doubt about that, they're getting a lot simpler, players need to do a little bit better work understanding the game as well, too, I believe.

Q. I'd like to ask the three of you, Charlie, we'll start with you, as far as what rule wasn't changed that you wish that the USGA would consider changing?

CHARLIE RYMER: Well, I am all for -- any group of rules -- I think people that follow golf closely will see that a lot of the intent of what's going on with the new rules is to increase the pace of play. We've got to play a little bit faster.

And one of the things that I love -- I don't know if the PGA TOUR is going to implement this or not -- Thomas, if you and I are playing, as I understand it and I hit a long putt and it's a flag stick, it's no longer going to be a penalty. That really hasn't created an advantage for me. That's just something that speeds things up.

The searching for three minutes for a golf ball. Some of the other things in there, I think overall simplification that ultimately, once everyone understands it, will help move the game along a little bit quicker. Not talking about at tour level or an event like this, but where people play golf every day. That's what my hope is. I'm all for anything that comes out of this group of rules that's going to let us play golf a little quicker, on a recreational level.

THOMAS PAGEL: If the primary objective of the initiative was to make the rules easier to understand and apply, there were some secondary objectives. Pace of play was at the top of the list.

If somebody asked, well, what's the one change that's going to speed up play, you can reference five minutes to three minutes, but how many ball searches do you have in a round. Really, it's a number that changes and you take them together in the aggregate, but you know what, you're going to shave off some meaningful time. That's a good thing for our game.

JOHN SMOLTZ: I'm part of obviously the baseball committee and some changes are coming to baseball and people will freak out, but it's one sport that's refusing -- or has refused to change. Every other sport has looked at their sport to change it because baseball is getting too long. It's getting boring.

So they've got to find ways to change it. I've always been an advocate, that's probably why I'm not a great tournament player, because I like to play fast. I think there should be a shot clock on each player. I know it's hard to arbitrate and hard to do, but I think you can get closer to eliminating some of the slowest players in the world that are great; but on an average day, when a guy's watching TV, the average golfer is starting to do it.

And it shouldn't take the average golf club, it should not take more than four hours to play golf in an average round.

Now, professionals, I get it. They should be given more lead time because it's their profession. But the two rules I'd love to see changed or at least added to would be a shot clock. And I've never understood why you hit a ball in the fairway and you should play it out of a divot. I think that's the number one thing -- they rake a bunker, and it's manmade. And they come in and fill the divots after the round. I just don't think that's one of the things you should be punished for if you hit it in the fairway.

BRIAN URLACHER: Just stole my thunder right there, man. I hate that rule. You're supposed to hit the ball in the fairway. Why do you get punished if you land in a divot or whatever it may be? If it's a question, move it. You're in the fairway, it shouldn't matter. Another one is range finders. Is that ever going to be changed? You guys talk about it all the time.

THOMAS PAGEL: As far as what?

BRIAN URLACHER: Professionals using range finders.

THOMAS PAGEL: I'll address all three points. I'll randomly address them. I'll take that one first. You can use range finders currently by local rule. In 2019 that actually reverses. Range finders will be allowed by rule.

If a tournament organization doesn't want to allow range finders, then they'll write a local rule saying that they're prohibited. I can't speak for the PGA TOUR. They make their own hard cards and conditions. But certainly from a rules perspective, at the club level, they'll be allowed on a daily basis.

I'm going to come back to divots because I think that's the most enjoyable.

CHARLIE RYMER: Before you go to divots. Here's what's interesting: College golf allows range finders. You have range finders and yardage books, hole location charts.

The PGA TOUR also now has pin charts where that day you can -- it's pretty expensive, but you can subscribe to a service that gives you a topo map of where the hole is that day and you can read the greens looking at that map.

So now what happens is, in college golf, when they added the range finder, it increased the time to play rounds.

It hurt pace of play, because it's another tool that the players have that they're using and their head down, it's very counterintuitive.

The point I was going to get to was is some of the things that are going to happen with these new rules, it's going to be on TV, is, as hard as you guys have worked on it -- this is the foremost authority in the world on the rules of golf and taking input from everywhere -- there's going to be situations that pop up that you guys didn't account for because you don't have a crystal ball.

And that's going to be interesting. It's obviously going to open you up to criticism. But it's going to happen. There's things that we're going to do this or not do this. And something good's going to happen and it doesn't work out that way.

I just applaud -- there's no reason to not try anything. We've got to try something. I'm excited about trying. But there's going to be some unintended consequences come down at some point.

THOMAS PAGEL: Charlie and I were talking about this in the back. I think a lot of people would expect us to say, well, we got it right and it's going to be perfect and we'll update the rules again in four, five, six, years, we'll go back in a regular cycle.

Reality is we know we probably missed a couple things. We did our best. We were very thoughtful in the process. But when balls are in the air come January, we're certainly going to understand a few things.

I think it's important that both the USGA and the RNA be open to making amendments as necessary. You know, we've shown the ability to perhaps act a bit more swiftly in recent years with the local rule for accidental movement of a ball on a putting green. Some of the stuff we've done with the scorecard penalty and video review.

We need to be mindful of that. And we're certainly open to acting a bit more quickly where we need to because, you're right, we haven't anticipated everything.

JOHN SMOLTZ: What about the divots?

THOMAS PAGEL: So back to the divots. Again, I've got my kevlar here, fellas. Let's have at it.

But, look, it's an outdoor game. When we went through this process, one of the principles we wanted to adhere to is you find your ball, you play the ball as it lies on the course as you find it.

These days we are so accustomed to pristine course conditions that we assume every time we hit the fairway we're going to have a perfect lie.

That's not always the case, especially when you go play in different parts of the world. As I joked with Brian earlier, I said, okay, if you get a good lie in the rough, does that mean you should have to step on your ball so you get a bad lie? It's an outdoor game. You take the good with the bad.

I always joke with people, too, and say the philosopher comes out. You can say: When is a divot no longer a divot? If it's been sanded, is it a divot so I get relief? If it starts to sprig a little bit of grass, do I no longer get relief? If Charlie wants relief and I'm his fellow competitor and I disagree, we're now going to have to call in a rules official, have a five-minute debate?

It's one of those things where sometimes there's bad luck, bad lies, but other times you get lucky and there's good lies as well. It's a pretty important principle of playing the game.

CHARLIE RYMER: That's from a man who's never missed a house payment because his ball landed in a divot on the PGA TOUR. (Laughter)

THOMAS PAGEL: Very true.

CHARLIE RYMER: One of the things you said there was fair. That's fair in golf -- that's an interesting concept. Because inherently it's not a fair game.

But PGA TOUR players, they want it to be fair. But there's no way -- grass grows during the day, unless you guys are taking care of the course. (Laughter).

THOMAS PAGEL: Hey now. Hey now.

JOHN SMOLTZ: Because the bunkers are supposed to be raked. It should be a lesser of two evils. That's not supposed to be a perfect lie like the fairway is. And yet it gets raked and you're going to have a perfect lie in a bunker but you may not have a perfect lie in the fairway. So I understand.

THOMAS PAGEL: We'll continue the feedback period

and all your comments have been noted.

Q. Charlie and Thomas, I'm curious how this is going to manifest itself for people who watch the PGA TOUR. Because most people are just recreational golfers. At the highest level, what are we going to see that's different, maybe other than pace of play?

CHARLIE RYMER: Let me answer that with a question. Okay. Currently, when you're taking relief or a drop, how many situations are there where you use two club lengths?

THOMAS PAGEL: It's unplayable and water hazard.

CHARLIE RYMER: How many are one?

THOMAS PAGEL: The free relief.

CHARLIE RYMER: So what happens is, if you're trying to play by the rules that you see PGA TOUR players play by, right now it's incredibly difficult. Like I recently, within a few years, went back and took a rules test.

I didn't ace it like -- this is the guy who writes the test -- but I made an A. It was a low A. But when I go out and play on PGA TOUR Champions and I get a little rule situation, I completely panic.

I had a buddy of mine caddie for my teacher, PGA master professional, taught rules clinics for years and years, Dean Alexander.

I'm in a bunker, my ball hit the lip of the bunker, didn't get out of the bunker. And he starts raking and two other guys are playing, whoa, whoa, you can't rake. He's like, no, I can rake it. He's raking, and I'm like: Stop raking the bunker! And he's a rule expert. We're sitting there arguing over the situation.

I think overall the simplification is just going to help the average golfer. They're going to see what's going on when there's a rule situation, especially where I have great audio, and they're going to be able to understand and relate to what's going on on television, relate that to when they go play with their buddies on Saturday.

I think it's going to be easier. It's not going to be easy, but it's going to be a lot easier.

THOMAS PAGEL: Yeah, I think, look, as we head towards January, it's important that we start educating. What I mean, I don't mean attending workshops, sitting in a chair for four days taking an exam. Just making materials available, whether it be short videos or pieces on social media, just to help prepare people.

And I can tell you that I know it's a tough job. I'm actually going to be with the TOUR the first two weeks of their calendar year, which happen to be in Hawaii, not too bad, to help as things arise.

I think during those telecasts it's going to be great opportunities as the lights turn on, so to speak, to really share with the world and say this is the first time you're seeing players drop from knee height. And here's why.

By the way, you realize when that ball just jumped out of the relief area, yeah, didn't roll two club lengths, but it's out of the relief area and he's redropping and here's why. I think there's exciting opportunities there.

Q. Thomas, given that this is all about simplifying the rules, have you ever thought about getting a job with the IRS? (Laughter).

THOMAS PAGEL: I don't know that they'd want to hire me. It's funny, everyone says simplification, and one of the things you quickly learn when you look at the rules, because it's a nonstandardized playing field, it's not all a football field where it's 100 yards long with an end zone on each side. Golf courses all over the world are a little bit different.

You have a little white ball that can and will go anywhere and yet you need to have a single set of rules that can try to accommodate that. There's always going to be this inherent level of complexity. We're trying to work as hard as we can to make them as easy as possible.

Q. Thomas, could you shed a little light on which organization had more input or what do the RNA bring, any reluctance or any volunteer, what kind of data did they have? We're Americans and I know what kind of feedback you were getting.

THOMAS PAGEL: Sure. First, we work closely with the RNA, not just in this process, they're our partners in governance, whether it be the equipment rules, playing rules, soon to be the handicap rules. Our standard process was to work alongside them over a four-year cycle to produce a new set of rules.

It was day one -- I'll never forget -- it was April of 2012, meeting in St. Andrews, Peter Dawson's office, overlooking the first tee of The Old Course, pretty remarkable spot to be. The PGA TOUR and European Tour both were present, said rules have gotten too complicated. It was a pretty short meeting. We said let's do this.

From that point forward the level of collaboration was continuous. To this day, as we prepare the publications and all the supporting materials, we're on daily, weekly

phone calls. And so it really was not just a shared passion but really a shared vision of what was needed for the game.

While you always have healthy debate back and forth on discrete rules issues, man, 100 percent behind it on both sides of the pond that we needed to do something to help improve the rules for the game.

Q. What kind of outreach -- you mentioned some visuals -- outreach are you going to have to educate the golfing public to stop some lengthy debates on the course as the new rules versus the old rules, misunderstandings?

THOMAS PAGEL: What we're going to see later this summer, we've been intentional not releasing new materials as of late. We recognize we're still playing under a championship season now under the current rules.

And so the last thing we want to do is create controversy or confusion. You'd hate for somebody to be penalized, all of a sudden the dialogue turns into, well, six months from now that wouldn't be a penalty.

Later this summer, this fall, you'll see us come out with a big push, especially from a digital perspective. While we'll have some classroom opportunities at the state level and national level, again, millions of golfers, we know where they're interacting, where they want to be interacted with that's through social media and other digital streams.

So you're going to see a lot of videos. You're going to see interactive quizzes. We've teamed up with McGraw Hill to create some online learning modules for collegiate players and competitive players.

So we're really trying to focus on each sort of subset of stakeholders and say, okay, how can we help those group of individuals?

And we're figuring out, frankly, by having those conversations and talking to golfers saying, What would help you learn? Talking to college coaches, What would help you to help your players? And trying to develop products to assist all of them.

Q. John, did you have any rules issues come up for you when you were playing in the Senior Tour earlier?

JOHN SMOLTZ: Major one in the qualifier. Took ten minutes to figure out what to do.

We were down to two people for one spot. And I was in the hazard. And in this particular rule, if I had to hit it to the camera, there was a big oscillating fan in my

way.

So they were trying to figure out where I could get relief in the hazard without a penalty. And my lie was not great at all. I could kind of just chunk it out or I could take the risk of taking the drop and wherever the ball ended up I could have no shot.

So I ended up not taking relief and chunking it out. Now I still have the hazard -- I still have the fan in front of me. So I could go relief either way, but the drop was not going to guarantee me I'd have a backswing because of the hill.

So it was the first time in my life I had zero -- I was trying to ask my caddie, wasn't a caddie, was a member there. I said, You tell me what to do, I'll do. I have no idea what to do. Because it was such a big moment for me that if I drop it at the height and the slope, it could have rolled not in the hazard but up against the hazard where now I've got no swing.

I could have ended up really losing an opportunity by not knowing how to take advantage of the rule. So I decided to play it, tried to flop it over the big fan, because it was one of the big ones, and I didn't do it.

I made six, luckily got a chance to keep going.

CHARLIE RYMER: Was there a flag by your ball?

JOHN SMOLTZ: No, they did not prepare me for all the flags I was going to get.

THOMAS PAGEL: That's a great example of what I always caution players, just because you're entitled to relief -- this will be true in 2019 as well. Think through your options before you ever put the ball in your hand.

Because there's so many times you roll up on a player, ball in hand, you say, okay, what can I help you with? I'd like relief from the cart path. Where was your ball? Here.

Well, your relief is here. Well, I don't like that. That's nearest point of relief. You have to live with it. So know your options first.

Q. Thomas, sounds like the rule changes are going to speed up the pace of play. But I almost feel underneath all of it, it's actually going to lower scores for some of the club players and amateurs and high handicappers, do you think that's a possibility?

THOMAS PAGEL: I don't think that's the case. I don't think we're going to see scores get lower. Certainly you're going to see more opportunities for the player to

perhaps take relief especially as we loosen up water hazard rules and go to this concept of penalty areas where these area of trees can now be marked with a red line instead of being a lost ball. Maybe lower stroke here or there, but I don't think you're going to see anything dramatic.

And we've had conversations with folks on our course rating teams and our handicap teams. And they're not thinking that that will be the case either.

Q. Is there going to be some kind of a grace period -- this is great, I'm getting some great intel from you. But the hacks that I play with next week, they're not here. Is there some kind of a period for this transition at least at the club level?

THOMAS PAGEL: Our normal cycle is for rules to take effect on January 1st. That will be the case here as well. So there won't be any type of grace period. Again, I put this on us. And our partners at the RNA as well as other partners throughout the industry, to really start educating and reaching out. And, again, it's reaching down to the players at the club level all the way up to the elite level.

The good news I'll tell you, though, it's still very much looks and feels and plays like golf. It's still the game with a club and a white ball and you're chasing it around.

I don't think your buddies are going to need a four-hour course on the new rules to be able to go out and play. It could be something as simple as looking at the poster in the golf shop, saying, okay, I understand the basics; I'm off and running.

Again, we're looking to provide as many tools as we can have to make the transition as seamless as possible.

Q. Thomas, two other rules. No good deed goes unpunished and law of unintended consequences to try to avoid any unforeseen possibilities have you and the other rules committee gone out and played under the new rules and said maybe we need to tweak this and have tweaked this, or how has that worked? Have you tried playing under the new rules?

THOMAS PAGEL: I've played many rounds under the new rules. You'll be surprised how many rounds you play without putting the golf in your hand outside of the putting green. We did test them out.

As part of the feedback period I told you about, we actually worked with our state and regional golf associations throughout the country, had test events.

We reached out to several clubs, including Bob at Seminole was great, playing a number of events. And we received feedback on, hey, I know you guys are thinking about playing the rule this way, but my members are telling me it might actually be better if you do it this way.

I feel it's been field tested enough to certainly put out there. And it has support again from all levels including our friends at the TOUR.

To Charlie's point earlier, we probably haven't figured out everything. There's bound to be something that comes up. But we're really confident and really excited about what we're able to offer to the game on January 1.

CHARLIE RYMER: And let me offer what I think will be the first thing that comes up. Players now will be able to repair imperfections in their line on the putting green. Currently you can only repair ball marks or some sort of damage that's unnatural. You'll be able to tap down spike marks and imperfections, and that's going to be something that's going to be very interesting.

Q. How about footprints from heavy football players?

THOMAS PAGEL: Footprints from heavy football players will count.

Look, we said, with this particular change, allowing players to repair any damage caused by an animal or human, whether that be maintenance practices or walking or whatever it might be, the challenge on the putting green is to keep the ball on the ground get it in the hole, not try and navigate a spike mark.

Really, the irony is under the current rules we say you can't fix that spike mark, but, geez, you should probably tidy it up before you walk off the putting green so the guy behind you doesn't have to deal with it.

All we're saying is let's test the skill of the player getting the ball in the hole, not the skill of the player navigating through these footprints.

And, look, there's going to be questions about did the player repair more than he was entitled to. And we'll have to deal with those. But I think that it's a good change.

CHARLIE RYMER: That's going to look very different on TV in January.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.