

Do you know the rule...

...improving the area of intended swing path

Playing in an annual animated celebrity's tournament Fat Albert was playing his second shot that had come to rest under a mature pin oak tree populated with low growth.



(www.ovguide.com)

In taking his 7-iron practice swing Albert knocks loose a small live twig with two green and healthy leaves attached causing it to detach from the tree and fall to the ground.

On the real swing he severs and entire branch from the tree and his shot scuttles onto the green stopping four inches from the cup. His playing companion Weird Harold tells him he faces a two-stroke penalty for dislodging a live piece of tree on his practice shot or for maiming the tree on his real swing. Is he correct?

Rule 13 says a player shall not “improve” is area of intended swing by “moving, bending, or breaking anything growing or fixed”. It would seem that Weird Harold is right about the penalty but in USGA Decision 13-2/0.5 they say this is a judgment call.

Since there are so many leaves and branches remaining after his practice swing Fat Albert's area of intended swing was not materially affected by loss of one small twig and a few leaves, thus he did not improve his area of intended swing. Further Fat Albert knocking loose the branch during his real swing is no penalty under rule 13-2 because the damage occurred during an actual stroke.

THE KEEPERS



(You can find further information on 13 in the USGA Rules Handbook)