



Golf's New World Handicap System Designed to Welcome More Golfers

USGA and The R&A Release Key Features

Golf Canada to adopt all features of the proposed new World Handicap System

20 February 2018, Liberty Corner, N.J., USA and St Andrews, Scotland: The R&A and the USGA announce key features of the proposed new World Handicap System (WHS), designed to provide all golfers with a consistent measure of playing ability globally.

The idea for a new, unified system was conceived by the USGA and The R&A and developed following an extensive review of systems administered by six existing handicapping authorities - Golf Australia, the Council of National Golf Unions (CONGU) in Great Britain and Ireland, the European Golf Association (EGA), the South African Golf Association (SAGA), the Argentine Golf Association (AAG) and the United States Golf Association (USGA).

The new system will feature the following:

- Flexibility in formats of play, allowing both competitive and recreational rounds to count for handicap purposes and ensuring a golfer's handicap is more reflective of potential ability.
- A minimal number of scores needed to obtain a new handicap; a recommendation that the number of scores needed to obtain a new handicap be 54 holes from any combination of 18-hole and 9-hole rounds, but with some discretion available for handicapping authorities or National Associations to set a different minimum within their own jurisdiction.
- A consistent handicap that is portable from course to course and country to country through worldwide use of the USGA Course and Slope Rating System, already successfully used in more than 80 countries.
- An average-based calculation of a handicap, taken from the best eight out of the last 20 scores and factoring in memory of previous demonstrated ability for better responsiveness and control.
- A calculation that considers the impact that abnormal course and weather conditions might have on a player's performance each day.
- Daily handicap revisions, taking account of the course and weather conditions calculation.
- A limit of Net Double Bogey on the maximum hole score (for handicapping purposes only).
- A maximum handicap limit of 54.0, regardless of gender, to encourage more golfers to measure and track their performance to increase their enjoyment of the game.

Quantitative research was conducted in 15 countries around the world, through which 76 percent of the 52,000 respondents voiced their support for a World Handicap System, 22 percent were willing to consider its benefits, and only 2% were opposed. This was followed by a series of focus groups, in which more than 300 golf administrators and golfers from different regions around the world offered extensive feedback on the features of the proposed new system.

This feedback has helped shape the WHS, which has been developed by the USGA and The R&A with support from each handicapping authority as well as the Japan Golf Association and Golf Canada.

Mike Davis, CEO of the USGA, commented, “For some time, we’ve heard golfers say ‘I’m not good enough to have a handicap,” or ‘I don’t play enough to have a handicap.’ We want to make the right decisions now to encourage a more welcoming and social game. We’re excited to be taking another important step – along with modernizing Golf’s Rules – to provide a pathway into the sport, making golf easier to understand and more approachable and enjoyable for everyone to play.”

Martin Slumbers, Chief Executive of The R&A, said, “We are working with our partners and National Associations to make golf more modern, more accessible and more enjoyable as a sport and the new World Handicap System represents a huge opportunity in this regard.

“We want to make it more attractive to golfers to obtain a handicap and strip away some of the complexity and variation which can be off-putting for newcomers. Having a handicap, which is easier to understand and is truly portable around the world, can make golf much more enjoyable and is one of the unique selling points of our sport.”

Laurence Applebaum, Golf Canada Chief Executive Officer added, “We are proud to have worked collaboratively with our partners at the R&A, USGA and other golf federations throughout the research process and development of a World Handicap System. We are fully committed to adopting the system and believe it will have a meaningful impact on the Canadian golf experience.”

The tenets of the new system focus on three main objectives: to encourage as many golfers as possible to obtain and maintain a handicap; to enable golfers of differing abilities, genders and nationalities to transport their handicap to any course globally and compete on a fair and equitable basis; and to indicate with sufficient accuracy the score a golfer is reasonably capable of achieving on any course around the world, playing under normal conditions.

Given worldwide alignment towards a single system, all parties will now embark on a two-year transition period targeting implementation in 2020. When adopted, the World Handicap System will be governed by the USGA and The R&A and administered locally by the six existing authorities and National Associations around the world, with safeguards included to ensure consistency as well as adaptability to differing golf cultures.

The six handicapping authorities represent approximately 15 million golfers in 80 countries who currently maintain a golf handicap.

The announcement is the latest step in a multi-year collaboration between The R&A and the USGA, handicap authorities and national and regional golf associations around the world to introduce one set of Rules for handicapping, aimed to support modernizing, growing and supporting accessibility of the sport.

As an extension of their support of the Rules of Golf worldwide, Rolex has made a commitment to support The R&A and USGA’s efforts to implement a World Handicap System.

To provide feedback on the new World Handicap System or for more information, visit www.usga.org or www.RandA.org.

About The R&A

Based in St Andrews, The R&A runs The Open, elite amateur events, international matches and rankings. Together The R&A and the USGA govern the sport of golf worldwide, operating in separate jurisdictions but sharing a commitment to a single code for the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status and Equipment Standards. The R&A, through R&A Rules Ltd, governs the sport worldwide, outside of the United States and Mexico, on behalf of over 36 million golfers in 140 countries and with the consent of 153 organisations from amateur and professional golf.

The R&A is committed to working for golf and supports the growth of the sport internationally and the development and management of sustainable golf facilities. For more information, visit www.randa.org.

About the USGA

The USGA conducts the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open, as well as 10 national amateur championships and international matches, attracting players and fans from more than 160 countries. Together with The R&A, the USGA governs the game worldwide, jointly administering the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status, equipment standards and World Amateur Golf Rankings. The USGA's reach is global with a working jurisdiction in the United States, its territories and Mexico.

The USGA is one of the world's foremost authorities on research, development and support of sustainable golf course management practices. Additionally, the USGA's Course Rating and Handicap systems are used on six continents in more than 50 countries. For more information, visit <http://www.usga.org>.

GOLF CANADA

Golf Canada is the National Sports Federation and governing body for golf in Canada representing 319,000 golfers and 1,400 member clubs across the country. A proud member of the Canadian Olympic Committee, Golf Canada's mission is to grow participation, excellence and passion in the sport while upholding the integrity and traditions of the game. By investing in the growth of the sport and introducing more participants of all ages to the game, our goal is to be relevant to and respected by all Canadian golf enthusiasts from coast to coast. For more information about what Golf Canada is doing to support golf in your community, visit www.golfcanada.ca.

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