

Dear Members,

20 February 2018

World Handicap System: new details announced

The R&A and the USGA have today announced details of the new World Handicap System (WHS).

It is designed to welcome more players, to make golf easier to understand and to provide all golfers with a handicap which is portable all around the globe.

The system is expected to be launched in January 2020 and its features will include:

- A minimal number of scores needed to obtain a new handicap
- Allowing both competitive and recreational rounds to count for handicap purposes so a golfer's handicap is more reflective of current ability
- 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. The system will also be able to 'remember' good scores, even when they have dropped out of the last 20.
- A calculation that considers the impact that abnormal course and weather conditions 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 and so increase their enjoyment of the game

England Golf is working closely with The R&A and the USGA to help introduce the new system and is running workshops for golf clubs this spring to outline the proposals and their impact. More detailed workshops will be run in the autumn.

Chief Executive Nick Pink commented: "We're joining golfers around the world to welcome this new system. It shows that golf is modernising and becoming easier to understand and I'm sure it will encourage more people to play, get a handicap and enjoy our sport, which is very good news for the future of the game."

The WHS looks set for a great reception. Research was conducted in 15 countries, involving 52,000 people. Of these, 76% were in support of WHS, 22% percent were willing to consider its benefits and only 2% were opposed. This was followed by focus groups when over than 300 golf administrators and golfers offered extensive feedback on 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."

The full details of the WHS will be released in late 2018.

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

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