



GOLF AUSTRALIA  
Level 3, 95 Coventry Street  
South Melbourne Victoria 3205  
Australia  
Reg No: A0048256Z  
ARBN: 118 151 894  
ABN: 54 118 151 894  
Telephone: 61 3 9626 5050  
Facsimile: 61 3 9626 5095

## Memo

**To:** Member States, Member Clubs, GMA  
**c.c.:** Golf Australia Rules, Amateur Status, Handicapping & Course Rating Committee, Golf Link  
**From:** Simon Magdulski  
**Date:** 5 December 2006  
**Subject:** Handicapping & Course Rating in Australia

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Dear All,

As you may be aware, Golf Australia has been in the process of putting together a single Australian Handicapping and Course Rating System. This will allow us to remove all of the un-necessary inconsistencies that currently exist between women's and men's handicapping in Australia. In addition, it will also allow us to provide a product that takes into account the feedback on handicapping and course rating that has been provided by all of our various stakeholders over a long period of time. (Whilst there will be a single system, golfers should be aware that a woman's scores will continue to be handicapped solely against other women's scores & standards, whilst a man's scores will be handicapped predominantly against other men's scores & standards.)

The following information is provided to update you on developments relating to the new handicapping and course rating systems.

### **HANDICAPPING**

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Following on from the highly-successful MFS Australian Open, Golf Australia last week signed-off on the new Australian Handicapping System. This is a single and uniform system for both men and women and is the end result of a consultative process that involved all women's and men's state associations together with many clubs and individuals. It also involved investigation and consideration of the major international systems operating around the world which is reflected in the framing of some regulations (whilst costs attached to implementation of a system such as the US Slope System are prohibitive at this stage, such an option will continue to be monitored).

This new system is an improved version of the existing women's and men's systems. It upholds the integrity of Australian handicapping and also builds on the following key objectives:

- Accessibility
- Opportunity
- Flexibility
- Equality

It additionally provides greater guidance for clubs and is more user-friendly.

Encouraging participation in the game of golf and fostering golf as a game for life is integral to every function of Golf Australia and it is critical that handicapping be a leader in this regard.

More information on the new handicapping system will be released in the near future together with details of the implementation timeline once this has been agreed with Golf Link. Stay tuned.

## **COURSE RATING**

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Whilst we would like more feedback from clubs before reaching the decision-making stage in the area of course rating, our investigations and consultations have highlighted the following concerns and comments associated with the existing men's and women's systems:

### **Women's Calculated Course Rating / Men's Calculated Course Rating**

- We are operating two distinct systems – a variable statistical rating for large fields, and a set rating for small fields. This is clearly not uniform and needs attention.
- The original designers of the CCR system were aware of this issue however it was assumed that a solution would eventually be identified. This hasn't happened.
- We need to be mindful that we are operating a system for all golfers, not just city golfers, or not just large-field golfers.
- Even within a single club there can be small-field days and large-field days – this leads to two course rating systems operating even on an intra-club level.
- Even amongst large fields, there is the constant suggestion that the composition of a field on any given day will influence the CCR and hence that the CCR is not necessarily a true indicator of the difficulty of the course. For example there is the perception that a midweek veterans field will typically generate a higher CCR than a weekend competition field.
- In significantly large fields there is the opportunity to generate both a morning CCR and an afternoon CCR to account for changes in conditions throughout the day. This opportunity does not exist where fields are only moderately large. Hence another tier is added to the structure and yet again the CCR in practice is not necessarily a true indication of the difficulty of the course.
- The average golfer is still prone to struggle with the concept that their handicap is calculated against the course rating and not against par. This problem is probably exacerbated by the fact that a player in a large field will never know what the CCR is when they are playing – the only concrete figure they CAN play against is par.

### **Australian Men's Course Rating / Australian Women's Course Rating**

- This system is reliant on the subjective judgement of a series of difficulty factors. It is difficult to achieve consistency between different rating teams in this respect, and also across state boundaries.
- The assessment value placed on the potential effect of each individual difficulty factor is purely an artificial construct. No-one can legitimately assess the effect a specific bunker or mound will have on the actual difficulty of a hole when all other factors on the hole are taken into account.
- The existing systems do not take account of the typical strength of prevailing winds (unless the severe weather allowance of the men's system applies) – this would be difficult to place an effective value on in any case.
- The existing systems do not take into account the effect on the length rating of hilly terrain on a golf course, or of grass types and textures.
- Existing ratings can be rendered meaningless as a result of changes in climatic conditions – eg hard fairways caused by drought, sparser fairways caused by drought, heavy fairways caused by rain. It is also difficult to place a specific effective value on each of such changes.

After taking these comments into account, we have put together the attached proposal as an additional option to consider in moving forward.

If you wish to provide feedback, please feel free to address each of the following points:

1. ***Do you favour retention of the existing MCCR/WCCR systems (possibly with minor modifications – please provide suggestions if you wish)?***
2. ***Do you favour retention of the existing AWCR/AMCR systems (possibly with minor modifications – please provide suggestions if you wish)?***
3. ***Do you favour using the AWCR/AMCR as the daily rating in all instances – ie would you like to do away with the CCR system and have a permanent rating which applies in all situations?***
4. ***Do you favour adoption of the attached proposed Course Rating System?***

**Any feedback will need to be provided by 5 March 2007** – for clubs, this should be copied to both your state association and Golf Australia (please be aware that state associations may request their clubs to respond by an earlier date).

In coming up with your feedback, please remember that owing to the great variety of golf courses and golfers, there is no perfect course rating system. What Golf Australia is endeavouring to do is to find the best possible system for the industry. It may be that at the end of the day, minor modification of the existing course rating system will be the most effective pathway to achieving this goal.

We look forward to hearing your comments on course rating and also to providing more details soon on the new Golf Australia Handicapping System.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries at all.

Kind regards,



Simon Magdulski  
**Manager – Rules & Handicapping**

*Email – [simonm@golfaustralia.org.au](mailto:simonm@golfaustralia.org.au)*

*Direct phone – (03) 9626 5023*