

**GOLF AUSTRALIA
RULES, AMATEUR STATUS, HANDICAPPING
& COURSE RATING COMMITTEE – MEETING
THURSDAY 11 MAY 2006
AT GOLF AUSTRALIA HOUSE**

SUMMARY

Present from the Committee: John Buckley (Chairman), Joan Coles, Frank Gal, John Hopkins, Val Oswald, Barry Shepherd.

Apologies: Jenny Hoff

In Attendance: Andrew Langford-Jones (PGA Tour of Australasia), Joy Drew, Trevor Herden, Simon Magdulski

1. Committee Terms of Reference

It was recommended these be adopted by the Board. (As attached)

2. Matters for Urgent Attention of the Committee

2.1 Unified women's and men's Australian Handicapping System and Course Rating System

Across the whole range of sports, only golf allows players of all abilities to compete on an equal footing in an all-inclusive environment. With a view to further enhancing golf's leadership and appeal in this regard, a unified and rationalised women's and men's Australian Handicapping System and Course Rating System is to be created.

One of the primary aims of the new system will be to remove any unnecessary gender differences. This will allow gender-neutral competitions to be conducted on an even fairer footing, which in turn will encourage greater participation. It is also a key component of Golf Australia's vision to make any person feel as encouraged as possible to play golf, regardless of their ability, age, or gender.

The Secretariat will design a new system for consideration which will take into account all other major systems currently operating around the world, as well as various Australian discussion papers.

3. Minutes of last meetings of relevant Australian Golf Union and Women's Golf Australia committees

These were noted.

4. Rules of Golf

4.1 Query regarding the playing of mixed singles match play in Tasmania (forwarded by R&A)

The R&A has confirmed females and males may play against each other in singles match play – it was noted this is contrary to previous unofficial advice provided by the AGU. The query forwarded by The R&A is to be forwarded on to the respective state association to be actioned.

4.2 R&A working papers regarding changes to the Rules

These were noted. Confirmed R&A releases relating to Rules changes will be forwarded to state associations and clubs when received by Golf Australia so as to provide for greater awareness of developments.

5. Rules of Amateur Status

5.1 Query raised by NSWGA – Golf Australia definition of Golf Skill or Reputation

Following the 2006 change to The R&A's guidelines regarding the definition of Golf Skill and Reputation, Golf Australia was required to design an interpretation to apply in Australia.

One of the major considerations in the design of this condition was to limit the potential for arbitrary decision making. This will enable Golf Australia to clearly explain to a player exactly where they stand in an open and transparent manner.

The interpretation is as follows:

An Amateur Golfer is generally only considered to have golf skill if they;

- (a) in the past five years have been at any age level a national representative; or*
 - (b) in the past three years have been at any age level a state representative; or*
 - (c) in the past three years have been a member of a Golf Australia national squad, or the Golf Australia Elite Golf Program or similar state-based program; or*
 - (d) in the past five years have won a state or national gross event; or*
 - (e) in the past three years have finished in the top 10 of a Von Nida Tour event or national gross championship for individual competitors (including the stroke play qualifying section of an event determined by match play), other than a senior championship; or*
 - (f) in the past three years have finished, other than in a senior championship, in the top 5 (including the stroke play qualifying section of an event determined by match play) of a state gross championship for individual competitors or gross national selection trial event for individual competitors; or*
 - (g) in the past three years have finished as the Leading Amateur in a state Open championship; or*
 - (h) in the past three years have competed in the Championship Proper section of the women's or men's Australian Open, or have made the cut in a different Australasian PGA Tour or women's equivalent-level event.*
- Golf Reputation can only be gained through having, or having had, Golf Skill, and does not include prominence for service to the game of golf as an administrator. Exceptions may be made should special individual circumstances warrant the modification of this definition (NB such modification is sanctioned by The R&A).*

5.2 “Golf Australia Guidelines for Approval of Events Under Amateur Status Rule 4-2g – Sponsored Handicap Competitions”

The current regulations were noted and are attached for information.

5.3 “Regulations Governing the Issue of Prizes – Under the Rules of Amateur Status”

The current public reference item was noted and is attached for information.

5.4 “Regulations Governing Funding Schemes for Amateur Golfers in Australia (includes via Elite Golfer Programs) – in relation to the Rules of Amateur Status”

Golf Australia was requested to produce a set of uniform regulations and a public reference item to assist those organisations and individuals who wish to provide funding for amateur golfers. As a result, the attached regulations have been designed and will now apply in Australia.

5.5 Hole-in-One competitions with excessive prizes

Hole-in-one competitions offering excessive prizes may now be conducted at any Australian facility provided the organiser advises competitors in advance that winners will forfeit their Amateur Status.

5.6 Golf Australia input to R&A debate regarding the evolution of the Rules of Amateur Status

Golf Australia will now take a more active role in lobbying The R&A regarding suggested changes and positive updates.

5.7 Governing Body

Following comment from The R&A, Golf Australia will now ratify all decisions regarding enforcement of the Rules of Amateur Status and reinstatement of Amateur Status in Australia.

6. Handicapping & Course Rating

6.1 Development of unified handicapping and course rating systems

See Item 2 above.

6.2 Australian Plus Handicaps

As at 1 September 2006, men's Australian Plus Handicaps will no longer require approval from a state association and Golf Australia. Also from this date, women will be able to hold an Australian Plus Handicap – the conditions for both women and men will be the same. For example, if either a woman or a man has an exact handicap of +3.2, their playing Australian Handicap will automatically be +3.

This change was made with a view to making the Australian Handicapping Systems fairer.

6.3 Ownership of handicaps

It was clarified that any handicap administered by an affiliated Australian golf club, by itself or Golf Link, and calculated in accordance with a Golf Australia system, is owned by Golf Australia.

6.4 Query regarding upper limits for club handicaps

It was noted that all clubs are unrestricted in their ability to choose their own individual upper limit for club handicaps. This includes being able to choose an upper limit value for men's handicaps, and a different upper limit value for women's handicaps. A club may not though, for example, choose one upper limit value for one category of male members, and a different upper limit value for a different category of male members.

7. Delivery of Refereeing at Golf Australia Events

7.1 Proposal regarding structure of refereeing at Men's Australian Open

With a view to delivering a more consistent and improved product, the refereeing team for the men's Australian Open will now feature a streamlined group of approximately 20 officials. This will include senior state, national, and PGA Tour referees. There will be a similar team in place for the women's Australian Open also.

7.2 Amateur events and referee development programs

In assessing existing referee development programs, the following aims were taken forward:

- That there be a process in place which ensures consistency in development across Australia; and
- That there be a process in place which incorporates a pathway from introductory level right through to PGA Tour event level. This would include developing skills in both knowledge of the Rules, and the delivery of a ruling to a player.

With these goals in mind, Golf Australia will move to standardise the current club and state level Rules accreditation programs. This process will involve the introduction of both a national accreditation program and national referee squad. The national squad will include PGA Tour officials who will be available to officiate at events conducted by state associations.

7.3 National Standardised 'Hard Card'

Golf Australia will move to introduce a standardised set of local rules and tournament conditions which will be recommended for use at all national and state elite level events.

8. Committee Procedural Recommendations for Golf Clubs

8.1 Positioning of bunker rakes

Golf Australia's recommendation to competition committees will now be the same as The R&A's. This is as follows:

There is not a perfect answer for the position of rakes, but on balance it is felt there is less likelihood of an advantage or disadvantage to the player if rakes are placed outside bunkers.

In practice, players who leave rakes in bunkers frequently leave them at the side which tends to stop a ball rolling into the flat part of the bunker, resulting in a much more difficult shot than would otherwise have been the case.

If rakes are left in the middle of the bunker the only way to position them is to throw them into the bunker and this causes damage to the surface. Also, if a rake is in the middle of a large bunker it is either not used or the player is obliged to rake a large area of the bunker resulting in unnecessary delay.

8.2 Colour of flagstick flags when used to indicate position of hole

Due to the wide variety of existing methods with their own local reasons, Golf Australia suggests each individual club is best positioned to produce its own policy.

9. Other Business

9.1 Reference Information

Golf Australia will have available both from its office and for free download on its various websites a series of reference items. These will include the following:

- The Australian Handicapping & Course Rating System (NB the women's and men's documents will be available separately until the single unified system has been created).
- Information on Golf Link.
- Information on Golf Access Australia.
- A Guide to the Making of Local Rules and Other Related Matters.
- Amateur Status Reference Items for the Use of Clubs and Event Organisers.
- Local Rules for Sand Greens.
- Reference Item Detailing the Various Forms of Golf Competition and How They Are Played.
- General Golf Australia Recommendations Regarding Course Management.
- Advice on How to Decide Ties in Events.
- Method for Seeding an Automatic Draw.
- Handicaps in Use for Various Events.
- Match Play Index.
- Duties of a Rules Official.