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PLAYER COMPETES IN A COMPETITION ROUND BEFORE A PREVIOUS HANDICAP-ALTERING SCORE IS PROCESSED – Golf Australia Q&A for Committees

On 1 January 2008, the Golf Australia Handicapping & Course Rating Committee brought into effect a series of changes to the Australian Handicapping Systems. What is the new regulation covering a player who competes in a competition round before a previous handicap altering score is processed?

In a situation where a player competes in a competition round before a previous handicap-altering score is processed, their correct Australian Men's or Women's Handicap will be that displayed by either GOLF Link or (for clubs not operating within the GOLF Link system) such other display item as designated by their Home Club (even if they are aware of what their new handicap will be).

(NB The handicapping system provisions which enable a Visited Club to temporarily amend a player's handicap will govern in the event of a conflict between those provisions and these provisions regarding a player competing in a competition round before a previous handicap-altering score is processed.)

Additionally, the Committee in charge of a competition may require a player to play off the figure their new handicap will be, even if their handicap is yet to be officially adjusted. A Committee may also adjust a player's handicap and net score after the player has submitted their score card in a stroke play competition – in such an instance, the listing of the incorrect handicap is considered to be a Committee error and consequently the player is not penalised. (In a match play competition, a player's handicap may not be altered after their round has commenced – any queries regarding a player's handicap must be raised with the club handicap manager/committee prior to the commencement of the player's round.)

What are the key points to note in this new regulation?

- ◆ Players are not required to administer their own official Australian Handicap.
- ◆ Committees are able to amend net scores after a competition has closed in order to account for delayed processing of previous handicap-altering scores.

Do club Committees have the flexibility to require their members to carry a handicap card / handicap record sheet?

Yes.

Do club Committees have the flexibility to introduce a condition requiring entrants in a competition to provide a card which contains a listing of all recent competition rounds?

Yes. (Note that whilst entry can be conditional upon a card of this type being presented (ie the player can be prevented from playing), the Rules of Golf do not permit a Committee to impose a penalty of 1 or 2 strokes in the event of a breach.)

What is a player's official Australian Handicap?

It is the handicap displayed by either GOLF Link or (for clubs not operating within the GOLF Link system) such other display item as designated by their Home Club (even if they are aware of what their new handicap will be).

Do club Committees have the flexibility to introduce a condition requiring a player to play off a handicap other than their official Australian Handicap?

Yes. (A Committee can require a player to play off the figure their handicap will be once all of their scores have been processed.)

Is this change partly aimed at forcing clubs to join Golf Link?

No. The new regulation provides women's clubs the flexibility to continue to operate as previously. As always though, competition Committees should ensure their conditions of play reflect their intended operating procedures.

Has The R&A approved the legitimacy of the new regulation?

Yes.

If a player competes in a stroke play competition round before a previous handicap altering score is processed, can a Committee adjust a player's handicap and net score after the player has submitted their score card?

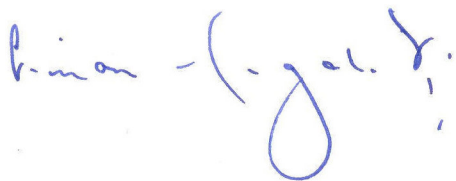
Yes – unless the Committee has introduced a conflicting condition. Provided the Committee hasn't introduced a conflicting condition, the listing of the incorrect handicap is considered to be a Committee error and consequently the player is not penalised.

In a match play competition, why can't the Committee alter a player's handicap after their round has commenced if previous handicap-altering scores haven't been processed?

It is a principle of match play that both sides in a match are entitled to know at the start of a match the number of strokes that are to be given or received. The same principle does not apply to stroke play.

The Golf Australia Handicapping & Course Rating Committee hopes this document will assist in the management of handicapping at your golf club. Please feel free to contact either myself or your state association if you have any queries or if you would like any further information.

Kind regards,



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