



KEY OPERATING POINTS OF THE U.S.G.A. HANDICAP SYSTEM IN AN AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

What Does ‘Slope Rating’ Mean?

- **The Slope Rating for a course is the indicator of how much harder a bogey marker is expected to find the course than a scratch marker would.**
- It is a course’s Slope Rating that the player needs to refer to in order to ascertain the handicap they will actually play off on that course (ie their Course Handicap).
- Slope Ratings range from 55 to 155 – the neutral Slope Rating is 113 (the player’s Course Handicap will be lower than their Handicap Index when the Slope Rating of the course they intend playing is below 113; the player’s Course Handicap will be higher than their Handicap Index when the Slope Rating of the course they intend playing is above 113. See *Example Table* below. (NB this process is reversed for players with plus Handicap Indexes.)
- The more the player’s Handicap Index differs from 0.0, the greater will be the difference between their Handicap Index and their Course Handicap.

Example Table:

Handicap Index of Player	Slope Rating of Course the Player Intends Playing	Handicap to be used at Course the Player Intends Playing
28.6	86	22
28.6	113	29
28.6	135	34
9.2	86	7
9.2	113	9
9.2	135	11

Type of Scores Used for Handicapping

- The scores to be used in Australia under the USGA Handicap System will be attested stroke play scores only. This includes par and Stableford, competition and non-competition rounds. This will make official handicap golf far more accessible to the non-competition golfer. [NB This is in line with variation advice received by New Zealand from the USGA]
- The calculation of a player’s handicap index will be drawn from a broader range of scores than is currently used in Australia. This will result in a handicap more reflective of a player’s current scoring ability.

Sample of Scores Used for Handicapping

- The USGA Handicap Index is calculated from a rolling sample of the player’s previous 20 scores. The calculation process involves averaging the best 10 of these 20 scores.
- The floating sample process (used in the USGA model) is better-geared to producing a more contemporary handicap and one that better indicates a player’s potential than is achieved by the incremental adjustment method currently used in the Australian systems.

- The USGA process allows for smoother downward adjustments and more rapid outward movement than is afforded in Australia (where an outward increase can only occur in increments of 0.1). (NB It takes 30 consecutive bad rounds in Australia for a player's handicap to reflect an outward correction of 3 strokes – this is patently unfair on a player who has one lucky round, an occurrence more prevalent in the higher handicap golfer.)

Portability of Handicaps

- Under the Slope system, a player has what is called a Handicap Index (which is similar to the exact Australian Handicap a player in Australia would currently hold). A player's Handicap Index will serve as their official handicap reference point at every course at which they play. However the handicap figure a player actually plays off will be known as their Course Handicap. (NB The player will access their Course Handicap from an easily understood table that all clubs will be provided with after their course has been rated. These tables are in poster format which will be in a prominent position.)
- Even though each course has an accurate Course Rating, non-expert players will naturally develop higher handicaps at difficult courses than they will develop at easier courses. This fact creates a fundamental problem with respect to the "portability" of handicaps. The Slope System provides a solution to this problem. A golfer using the USGA 'Slope' System converts their Handicap Index to a Course Handicap that is higher on more difficult courses (that is, on a higher than average Slope-rated course), and lower on easier courses (that is, lower Slope-rated courses).
- For example, a player may play off 16 on an easy course and 21 on a difficult course. See *Example Table*.
- The current Australian model assumes a course will present an equal challenge to all skill levels, the US model assumes the degree of challenge is not fixed but rather is dependent on the level of a player's skill.

Daily Rating Component of USGA Course Rating System

- The US system has no daily rating component.

NOTES RE A DAILY RATING COMPONENT (such as CCR)

- We know that the difficulty of a specific golf course may vary due to changes in weather, climate, and course set-up. The problem is arriving at a system which enjoys golf community-wide confidence and that will reliably produce ratings that are reflective of the actual difficulty of a golf course. By its nature, there will always be anomalies associated with using a statistical method to quantify course difficulty. The following make these anomalies unavoidable:
 - Statistical daily rating models assume all fields of the same handicap mix will react in the same manner – we know this doesn't always happen.
 - The larger the competition field size, the more likely the result is to be 'accurate'. The smaller the field size, the more prone the result is to be 'inaccurate'. This means that producing ratings for small fields will always be a more challenging exercise and the problems are likely unavoidable – which particularly affects women's and country fields.
 - The greater the spread of handicaps in the field, the more likely it is that a smallish field size will not produce an 'accurate' rating. This is of particular relevance to women's fields.
 - The question to be answered in assessing the true value of our unique daily rating model is whether the benefits outweigh the inherent deficiencies and the substantial benefits that would be gained from adopting a well researched international approach that has the capacity to be applied uniformly across all our handicap regime.

The average golfer is still prone to lack faith in the concept of the daily course rating being determined by the performance of the field.