



Golf Australia Announces Decision to Replace Australian Men's Course Rating System (AMCR System) & Australian Women's Course Rating System (AWCR System) with the USGA Course Rating System

Q&A re USGA Course Rating System in Australia

Why is it crucial to have a robust and effective course rating system?

Every score returned for handicapping purposes can only be quantified by comparing it to the respective course rating. As a result, if course ratings are inconsistent or inaccurate, handicaps will also be widely inaccurate.

What systems are changing?

The existing Australian Women's Course Rating System (AWCR System) and Australian Men's Course Rating System (AMCR System) are to be replaced by the USGA Course Rating System.

What actual ratings are going to change?

All AWCRs and AMCRs will be replaced by ratings determined in accordance with the Scratch Rating component of the USGA Course Rating System.

What handicap range of golfer is taken into consideration when determining USGA Course Ratings (NB 'USGA Course Rating' is a defined term – it means the Scratch Course Rating)?

Only scratch handicappers (ie players with a handicap of 0).

What is the definition of USGA Course Rating?

A "USGA Course Rating" is the USGA's mark that indicates the evaluation of the playing difficulty of a course for a scratch golfer under normal course and weather conditions. It is expressed as strokes taken to one decimal place, and is based on yardage and other obstacles to the extent that they affect the scoring ability of a scratch golfer.

Why are we changing these systems?

It was a strong and uniform request of the states that the AWCR and AMCR systems be intensively reviewed so as to address a range of concerns. These concerns primarily revolved around an over-reliance on measured length and were accompanied by a specific direction to investigate the USGA Course Rating System. In the course of the investigation, the superior capacity of the USGA system to consistently assess the effect of obstacle factors was also highlighted and admired. GA has responded to the advice of the states and adopted what it believes to be the best course rating system available. It is a system in place in virtually every other major golf-playing nation in the world, bar England, Argentina, and South Africa.

What is the definition of Bogey Rating?

A "Bogey Rating" is the USGA's mark of the evaluation of the playing difficulty of a course for the bogey golfer under normal course and weather conditions. It is based on yardage, effective playing length, and other obstacles to the extent that they affect the scoring ability of the bogey golfer. (NB A male "bogey golfer" is a player who has a Course Handicap of approximately 20 on a course of standard difficulty. A female bogey golfer is a player who has a Course Handicap of approximately 24 on a course of standard difficulty.)

Has the Board committed to providing Bogey Ratings for all Australian courses?

Yes. Bogey Ratings are an essential component of the USGA Handicap System.

Are we going to use Bogey Ratings?

Yes. Bogey Ratings are an essential component of the USGA Handicap System. (NB The Slope Rating is computed from the difference between the Bogey Rating and the USGA Course Rating.)

What is a Slope Rating?

A "Slope Rating" is the USGA's mark that indicates the relative difficulty of a course for players who are not scratch golfers compared to the difficulty of a course for scratch golfers. A Slope Rating is computed from the difference between the Bogey Rating and the USGA Course Rating (NB USGA Course Rating is a defined term – it means the Scratch Course Rating). The lowest Slope Rating is 55 and the highest is 155. A golf course of standard playing difficulty has a Slope Rating of 113.

What training of raters will GA provide?

GA has arranged for the USGA to conduct National Course Rating Accreditation seminars in two Australian capital cities in June 2009. Each state will be invited to have representatives attend. This will provide for international-level training and calibration but also a chance for state personnel to share their experiences with the personnel of other states and for all to hear the solution of the international body. The state representatives attending these National Course Rating Accreditation seminars will then be responsible for leading and organising the training of raters in their own states. To ensure adequate training is received in each state, all state associations will need to have at least one of the people who will be involved in their intra-state training attend the National Course Rating Accreditation seminars.

What presentation resources will GA provide to states for the purpose of intra-state training of raters?

The same USGA resources as will be used at the National Course Rating Accreditation seminars.

Will GA construct the training schedule each state is to use to ensure they have an adequate number of properly-trained raters?

No. GA will invite each state to construct its own training schedule. The requirements will likely differ from state to state given differences in distance to be covered, number of courses to be rated, available personnel, and other characteristics peculiar to each state. GA will offer its services to each state to assist in the construction of their own schedule. The content of intra-state training programs must directly reflect the content presented at the National Course Rating Accreditation seminars.

How many raters will each state need to train?

GA estimates that a total number of 120 raters will need to be trained Australia-wide. However this is just an approximate figure. The number of raters a state will need to train will be determined by the course rating schedule it adopts so as to meet the completion timeframe. Each state will have different issues to accommodate in constructing their schedule – these include distance to be covered, number of courses to be rated, available personnel, and other characteristics peculiar to each state.

How many raters are required on each rating team?

A rating team must be comprised of at least three trained and experienced raters. (NB Initially, effective training and quality-control will need to compensate for a lack of experience in operating under the USGA Course Rating System.)

Will GA provide ongoing National Course Rating Accreditation seminars?

Yes. The question of frequency will be assessed by the GA Handicapping & Course Rating Committee after consideration of initial experiences but they will be held at least every 2 years.

What is the national implementation timeframe?

- Approximately 120 personnel to be trained throughout Australia between June and October 2009. This will include the USGA conducting National Course Rating Accreditation seminars in Australia in June.
- September 2009, begin widespread rating of courses with an initial concentration on new and changed courses.
- By the end of 2011 we expect that all courses will have been completed, with most metropolitan courses to be finished by the end of 2010.

Who is responsible for training costs?

GA will cover all travel and accommodation costs attached to the National Course Rating Accreditation seminars. The states/districts will cover the costs of state/district seminars.

May state associations charge attendees at intra-state rating seminars?

This is a matter for each state association to determine. GA will not be charging attendees at National Course Rating Accreditation seminars.

What are the real training costs attached to adopting the USGA Course Rating System?

It was a strong and uniform request of the states that a national training program be implemented by GA to address genuine concerns about the consistency of rating across Australia. The handicapping and course rating review has confirmed this to be a genuine problem with the existing processes. Irrespective of the course rating system in place moving forward, a major overhaul of training processes was required. Hence, real costs in this respect are minimal.

What are the real costs of rating all Australian courses under the USGA Course Rating System?

It was a strong and uniform request of the states that the AWCR and AMCR systems be intensively reviewed so as to address a range of concerns. GA has reacted to these suggestions and comments and has adopted what it believes to be the best course rating system available. It is a system in place in virtually every other major golf-playing nation in the world, bar England, South Africa, and Argentina. If consistency and integrity of handicaps is to be protected, any significant changes to the AWCR/AMCR systems would always have required an expedited re-rating of all Australian golf courses. Hence real costs in this respect are minimal.

Who is responsible for meeting the costs of rating Australian golf courses?

As has always been the case, it is the states and districts.

What are the major differences between the AWCR/AMCR systems and the USGA Course Rating System?

- ◆ Fundamentally the adoption of the USGA system will see the 'actual measured length' of a course being replaced by 'effective playing length', and that's important because the course rating will now reflect what it is that the golfer encounters. This means giving much greater consideration to the following factors that we all know make such a difference:
 - roll
 - elevation
 - prevailing wind
 - altitude
 - forced lay-ups caused by dog-legs and dams or streams, etc.
- ◆ Relative to the AWCR/AMCR systems, the USGA system is very definitive, highly regulated, clearly detailed, and has excellent support manuals. This clearly reduces the scope for subjectivity to influence ratings.