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**GOLF AUSTRALIA  
HANDICAPPING & COURSE RATING COMMITTEE  
MEETING – WEDNESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2008  
AT NEW SOUTH WALES GOLF ASSOCIATION OFFICE, SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES**

**SUMMARY**

**Present from the Committee:** Ian Read (Chairman), John Buckley, Murray Cropley, Abby Driver, Sue Fabian, Di Monk, Lynne Ritchie

**In Attendance:** Joan Coles (Ex-Committee Member – term expired 6/11/2008), Simon Magdulski (Manager – Rules & Handicapping), Therese Ritter (Manager – Championships)

**1. Previous Meeting Summary**

This was agreed.

**2. Changes to Committee Membership**

The Chairman welcomed Abby Driver, Sue Fabian, and Di Monk to their first meeting as members of the Committee and looked forward to their contributions to Australian handicapping and course rating throughout the period of their respective terms. The retiring Committee members are Joan Coles and Barry Shepherd.

**3. Amended Committee Charter**

The current version of the Committee Charter, as recently amended by the Board, is posted at [www.golfaustralia.org.au](http://www.golfaustralia.org.au).

**4. Reassessment/Suspension of Australian Handicap**

The Committee recognised the following:

- ◆ The expressed general desire of State Associations for GA to develop a set of national guidelines to cater for the application of sanctions re Australian Handicaps.
- ◆ The excellent resources and documents already produced by some State Associations to assist clubs through the process of reassessing a player's Australian Handicap or applying sanctions re Australian Handicaps.
- ◆ That major international systems contain processes for handling like issues.
- ◆ Suspension of a player's handicap is tantamount to disaffiliation.
- ◆ Other GA departments employ procedures re sanctioning players.

Given these factors, it was decided to refer this matter in the first instance to the Board in order that these issues are considered in the broader context of Constitutional review. This should ensure any procedural changes are:

- ◆ Fully permissible within GA's Constitutional parameters.
- ◆ Formulated as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- ◆ Consistent across the full scope of GA's operations.

**5. Quantity of Score Cards to be submitted to Gain and Retain an Australian Handicap**

The Committee discussed the regulations governing the number of cards required to gain and retain an Australian Handicap. This discussion was held with a view to

achieving both uniformity between the women's and men's systems, and to have in place systems which provide an effective and efficient pathway to handicap golf.

With these considerations in mind, the Committee determined to propose the following amended regulations to the Board (NB with the same regulations to apply to both genders):

- ◆ Once a player has returned 3 eligible score cards, they will be allocated an Australian Handicap. NB Any stipulated Extra Day or competition round of between 9 and 18 holes inclusive returned on ANY course with an Australian Course Rating will be acceptable for this purpose (subject to the normal additional conditions a club may place on Extra Day Scores).
- ◆ All handicap records will be examined at 1 January each year, at which time all scores more than a year old will be disregarded, being no longer valid. The remaining scores will be considered "live scores". For a player to retain an Australian Handicap they must have at least 3 "live scores" in their handicap record. NB An eligible score returned from a stipulated round of 9-17 holes inclusive will have the same status as an eligible score returned from a stipulated round of 18 holes.
- ◆ For an Extra Day Score to be considered eligible it must be marked by a female or male member of any golf club or golf association recognised by Golf Australia, or by a person otherwise approved by the Committee.

## 6. Club Handicaps

The Committee discussed the current regulations relating to Club Handicaps and resolved to recommend to the Board that the women's and men's Australian handicapping systems be amended to reflect the following principles:

- ◆ The maximum Australian Men's Handicap is 36.4. If a male with an exact handicap of 36.4 returns a net score which is worse than the course rating, the handicap on their official handicap record will remain at 36.4. Official Club Handicaps beyond 36.4 will not be permitted.
- ◆ The maximum Australian Women's Handicap is 45.4. If a female with an exact handicap of 45.4 returns a net score which is worse than the course rating, the handicap on their official handicap record will remain at 45.4. Official Club Handicaps beyond 45.4 will not be permitted.
- ◆ Should a committee consider it appropriate, it may allocate selected members with 'Club' handicaps. 'Club' handicaps must be recorded separately to Australian Handicaps (ie there must be separate record sheets). It will be solely for the respective committee to determine how it calculates the 'club' handicaps of its members.

## 7. Handicapping of Players Who Play both Right-Handed & Left-Handed

After consideration of feedback from Kingswood Golf Club, the Committee decided to amend the GA policy relating to the handicapping options available to cater for players who wish to play golf both right-handed and left-handed.

Effective immediately, the amended policy is as follows:

- ◆ A player will not be permitted to both have an Australian Handicap (for example for their stronger hand) and a Club Handicap (for example for their weaker hand). They may only have one handicap and this will be their Australian Handicap (provided they are eligible to hold an Australian Handicap).
- ◆ A player may play from their weaker side to return scores for handicapping – such scores must be used for handicapping purposes (provided these scores are otherwise eligible). A score returned as a result of both right-handed shots and left-handed shots must also be used for handicapping purposes (provided this score is otherwise eligible).
- ◆ Any scores returned by a player from their weaker side which are not already a part of the player's single handicap record must be disregarded.

- ◆ Where a player decides to play from their weaker side for the purpose of increasing their handicap (ie where the player's intent is to return a poor score), the player will be considered to be manipulating their handicap and the relevant disciplinary sections of the handicapping system will apply.

## 8. Competitions of Between 9-17 Holes – Golf Australia Q&A for Committees

After consideration of feedback from WGWA, the Committee decided to amend the GA Q&A document regarding procedures for competitions of 9-17 holes. (The amendments reflect a move by the Committee to use the 18-hole stroke index and 18-hole course rating for competitions of this type.)

The amended document is posted at [www.golfaustralia.org.au](http://www.golfaustralia.org.au).

## 9. Guidelines re Determining Handicap for Player Returning to Handicap Golf After Not Submitting Score for Two Years or More

After consideration of feedback from WGNSW, the Committee decided to adopt the following guidelines for determining handicaps of players who are returning to handicap golf after not submitting a score for two years or more:

*If a player returns to playing, having not submitted a score for two years or more, the Handicapping Manager/Committee may allot a new Australian Women's or Men's Handicap under the procedure as described in [insert section number relating to allocation of initial handicap] (in doing so, the State handicap manager must be consulted when allocating a handicap more than two strokes higher than the previous handicap for players whose last recorded handicap was 4.4 or less; a handicap more than 3 strokes higher than the previous handicap for players whose last recorded handicap was 4.5-10.4; and a handicap more than 4 strokes higher than any previous handicap for players whose last recorded handicap was greater than 10.4), or reinstate their previous handicap once the player has returned the requisite number of "live scores".*

## 10. Handicapping of Four-Ball Competitions

The Committee discussed the regulations governing the handicapping of four-ball competitions with a view to achieving uniformity between the women's and men's systems and to have in place effective and efficient systems.

The following amended regulations were adopted with immediate effect:

*Four-ball scores (including mixed events) MUST be used for handicapping an individual player but only if the following requirements are met:*

- ◆ *The pair has a score of at least 42 Stableford points (6 up in Par or net 6 under in Stroke events)*
- ◆ *The individual player's score appears at least 9 times on the four-ball score card*
- ◆ *The adjusted score (after the below method has been followed to create an individual score card) will result in a reduction to the individual player's handicap*

*(GOLF Link clubs will enter these scores as ad-hoc scores, using the AMCR/AWCR as the MCCR/WCCR.)*

*Procedure for completing four-ball score card – When a player has no handicap stroke on a hole and their score is not recorded on the four-ball card, they should be given 1 stroke over the par of the hole. On holes where a player receives 1 handicap stroke but their score is not recorded on the four-ball card, they should be given 1½ strokes over the par of the hole. When a player receives 2 handicap strokes on a hole and their score is not recorded on the four-ball card, they should be given 2½ strokes over the par for the hole. When a player*

*receives 3 handicap strokes on a hole and their score is not recorded on the four-ball card, they should be given 3½ strokes over the par for the hole.*

*(NB If two identical net scores are recorded by partners on a hole, both scores are eligible to be used on an adjusted individual score card. However, if the first player to hole out can be readily established, the second player is deemed to have not recorded a score for that hole.)*

*When all the gaps in the card have been filled in, the scores should be added, and where a half appears in the total, the scores should be taken to the next higher whole number.*

*Except in the most unusual circumstances, the score obtained in this manner will be worse than the score actually recorded by the player and in this way does not attribute the player with a score better than their play reflected.*

*The score obtained is recorded in the player's handicap record sheet and treated in the same way as all singles scores for handicap purposes.*

**11. Golf Australia Document “Men & Women Playing in the Same Competitions & Same-Gender Competitions Using Different Tees – Golf Australia Advice” – Distribution/Communication Strategy**

The Committee determined the following document should be distributed as widely as possible to Member States and Clubs – “Men & Women Playing in the Same Competitions & Same-Gender Competitions Using Different Tees – Golf Australia Advice”.

The distribution of this document will be with a view to promoting to committees the options available under the Rules of Golf re conducting a competition which allows different groups to use different teeing grounds.

**12. Evaluation and Review of Slope-like Systems**

**After discussion and extensive consideration, the Committee resolved to recommend to the Board that GA adopt the United States Golf Association Handicap System to replace the existing Australian systems.**

It was the view of the Committee that whilst the existing unique Golf Australia Handicapping Systems are functional and have served Australia well over many years, it is clear they need attention. It is also clear that the reluctance in women's golf to re-introduce CCR presents a serious issue if GA is to maintain its existing policy of achieving unified handicapping regulations for women and men in Australia.

Despite the past effectiveness of the Australian Systems, it is also clear that the far more globalised and inter-connected society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has significantly shifted the dimensions of the playing field. It is stating the obvious that it is becoming increasingly difficult for administrators to continue to treat international systems and development purely as a curiosity.

If Golf Australia wishes to stay ahead of the curve, and to continue to move forward in the landscape of our rapidly-evolving world, we must now have powerful reasons for operating unique processes when international standards exist. To do otherwise should, and will, be seen by the industry to be dedicating valuable financial and human resources to the task of 're-inventing the wheel', and will likely have prudential ramifications.

A country of Australia's stature should also take a position of leadership and look to assist the development of the international system from within rather than from the sidelines.

The USGA Handicap System has its inherent problems, but that is the nature of a handicapping system. All handicapping codes are a series of balanced compromises, but it is the USGA system that appears to achieve the best outcomes.

Not only is there no compelling reason for Golf Australia to continue to invest in the maintenance and development of its own unique system, rather a superior option is presented by the USGA. For this reason, it is considered that the USGA provides the best option of a unified handicapping system and accompanying support procedures to serve Australia moving forward.

Another key consideration is the likelihood that a move by Golf Australia to the USGA Handicap System is ultimately inevitable. In which case, it could be considered financially imprudent to put off this move if it triggers the outlay of resources on an existing system which is destined to become redundant. (NB It would be critical for Golf Australia to be able to rigorously defend such a position if a decision is ultimately taken to continue to operate and develop a unique Australian system.)

NB The following Handicapping & Course Rating Committee report was presented to the Board – *“Report of an Investigation into the Australian Handicapping Systems (including CCR) and USGA Handicap System with a view to Establishing the Best Handicapping System for Australia Moving Forward”*.

**13. Analysis of Women’s Handicapping & Course Rating Data – Update re Project Status**

The Committee decided to defer further consideration of this project until after a determination has been reached re the USGA Handicap System.

**14. Review of Women’s & Men’s CCR System Regulations & Procedures**

The Committee decided to defer further consideration of this review until after a determination has been reached re the USGA Handicap System.

**15. Retirement of Joan Coles**

In closing the meeting, the Chairman noted the contribution of Joan Coles to Golf Australia over the past 2½ years. Joan was an inaugural member of the GA Rules, Amateur Status, Handicapping & Course Rating Committee before joining the Handicapping & Course Rating Committee when the Board opted to amend the structure and form two separate Committees.

Joan has been a valuable contributor to GA during this time and her reasoned and independent viewpoints will be missed.

**16. Next Meeting**

To be advised.