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MEN & WOMEN PLAYING IN THE SAME COMPETITIONS, AND SAME-GENDER COMPETITIONS USING DIFFERENT TEES – Golf Australia Advice

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At various times Golf Australia is asked whether men and women may play in the same competition and whether women may play in men's competitions. As the Rules of Golf permit a Committee to specify that a certain group of players in a competition may start a hole from a different teeing ground than other players in the same competition, the answer to both of the above questions is YES. This includes for Singles, Four-Ball, and Foursomes Competitions.

Where men and women have access to the course on the same day, Committees may wish to consider the following options:

A. MEDLEY COMPETITIONS OR MIXED COMPETITIONS

A medley competition is a competition in which both men and women may compete and is usually played as a Stableford or Par competition. A four-ball medley competition advocates that teams may consist of male/male, male/female, or female/female, as opposed to a mixed four-ball competition where teams are required to be male/female.

When determining whether women should play from the same tees as the men, the specific type of event should be taken into account. If women wished to compete in men's events such as the Australian Open or Australian Men's Amateur Championship, they would play from the same tees as the men as that is in keeping with the stature of the event. There may also be a situation where a club allows women to play in the men's club championship (perhaps prompted by there being a talented girl at the club) – in such a circumstance it would also be perfectly reasonable for the women to have to play from the men's tees. However, for a less elite event, it would not seem realistic to have women playing from the same set of tees as the men, irrespective of whether it is match play or stroke play.

In medley or mixed singles or four-ball competitions, additional handicap allowances may be applied for competition result purposes only. The handicaps of the players on the higher rated course (more likely the women's course) should be adjusted to take into account the difference between the Australian Women's Course Rating (AWCR) and the Australian Men's Course Rating (AMCR).

The concept of adjusting handicaps is inherent in components of the USGA Handicap System and the CONGU (Council of National Golf Unions) Handicapping System.

The adjustment formula is as follows: Women's Competition Handicap = Women's Australian Handicap + (AWCR – AMCR)

MATCH PLAY

The above formula applies equally to match play as well as stroke play competitions.

For match play it is recommended that the Match Index appropriate to either the men's course or women's course is used for both genders. This should have minimal overall effect for two reasons:

1. Players rarely play their best (or worst) golf on the holes where they get a shot.
2. When players don't get a shot where they should it means they do get a shot where they shouldn't.

NB If the pars of a hole are different for men and women (eg one hole is par 4 for men and par 5 for women), in a scratch competition, the player who completes the hole in fewer strokes wins the hole. In handicap competitions, the player who completes the hole in fewer **net** strokes wins the hole. As Par is irrelevant in scratch competitions, a Committee should take this into consideration when setting up the course for match play. For example, players would tee off their respective tees, however if there was a hole where the men's and women's tees were positioned in a similar position, and the hole was a par 4 for men and par 5 for

women, it would be reasonable for the Committee to move the women's tees forward and for it to be played as a par 4.

MEDAL COMPETITIONS

For medal competitions it is recommended that each player uses the Stroke Index that is appropriate to them.

In Medal Competitions, scores are returned normally with the women's handicap re-calculated using the above formula and subtracted from the net scores as returned to obtain the converted women's net scores for result purposes only. For example:

<i>Courses: AMCR = 72; AWCR = 74. Male off 18 plays to Handicap. Female off 18 plays 1 under Handicap</i>					
	Male		Female		
	Gross	Nett	Gross	Net	
Scores as returned	90	72	91	73	Left unadjusted the male has the low net score
Adjust Female's H/cap	90	72	91	71	Female's COMPETITION Handicap now 20 (18+(74-72))
<i>The female, with the adjusted handicap, now has the lower net score</i>					

STABLEFORD OR PAR COMPETITIONS

For Par and Stableford competitions, it is recommended that each player uses the Stroke Index that is appropriate to them.

Again, for results purposes only, the women's handicaps should be adjusted as above (with the Course Rating adjustment being added as points to the female's returned points). Then an additional adjustment has to be made for the difference in the Pars (as points are scored against Par not Course Rating) of the two courses.

$$\text{Additional Par Adjustment} = \text{Par men} - \text{Par women (NB reversal of Man/Woman is correct)}$$

This should be added to (if the result is minus it is subtracted from) the female's points as modified by the Handicap Adjustment. For example:

<i>Courses: AMCR = 72, AWCR = 74. Male off 18 plays to Handicap. Female off 18 plays 1 over handicap</i>				
	Male	Female		
	Points	Points		
Par men = 69				
Par women = 74				
Scores as returned	33	35	Left unadjusted female has most points	
Adjust the female points for Course Rating difference	33	35+2=37	Female's COMPETITION Handicap now 20 (18+(74-72))	
Adjust the female for Par difference	33	37-5=32	Par adjust = (69-74) = -5 (so subtracted)	
<i>In this case, the male has the better score after the female's score is adjusted.</i>				

Clearly if the AWCR and Par (eg AWCR = 73, Par = 72) have the same relationship as the Men's Par and AMCR (AMCR = 71, Par = 70) then the handicap and par adjustments will cancel each other out (Course Rating = 73-71 (+2) and Par = 70-72 (-2)). When the relationships are the same, the women's values will almost always be higher but this does not matter, as points are scored relative to handicap and par so the two adjustments will result in zero overall.

Note: the converting of scores must only be for assessing scores from a competition perspective. From a handicapping perspective, if two sets of teeing areas are being used (even if only on one hole), the two sets of scores must be processed separately (irrespective of whether the different teeing areas result in different AWCRs/AMCRs). The handicaps to be used when processing competitions from a handicapping perspective must be the official handicaps (ie the un-adjusted handicaps).

B. MEN'S COMPETITIONS AND WOMEN'S COMPETITIONS

Clubs may wish to program separate competitions for men and women. If clubs do not wish for women to play in men's competitions (or vice versa), the *conditions should state this*.

There are times where a club has very limited women players and the women may wish to play in men's competitions and have a men's handicap. Whilst it is not possible for a woman to hold an Australian Men's Handicap it would be perfectly permissible for her to hold a men's Club Handicap provided her club gives its

approval (and so long as she plays from the men's tees when returning scores for this purpose). A men's Club Handicap should be administered by the men's handicapper. Similarly a man would be permitted to hold a women's Club Handicap.

Note: A competition need only comprise one woman or two men to be processed from a handicapping perspective.

Where a competition has a very small number of players, another option the club may consider is to issue prizes to players who return a good enough score in relation to the Course Rating, rather than in relation to the other players in the competition.

C. SAME-GENDER COMPETITIONS FROM DIFFERENT TEES

Clubs may wish to program men's or women's competitions, but permit the use of different teeing grounds (ie some older players may be regulated to play a shorter course). As explained above, unless some adjustment were made to take into account the Course Rating difference, the Net winner is always likely to be a competitor playing from the shorter course. Hence when these competitions are played, the same scoring procedures as above (ie adjustment of scores in the case of the courses having different ratings) may be used.

NOTE – COMMITTEE DISCRETION

In all cases outlined above, the adjusting of handicaps is at the Club Committee's discretion and these arrangements should be stated in the conditions of the competition.

We hope that this document assists in the management of your golf competitions. Please feel free to contact your state association if you have any queries or if you would like any further information.

Kind regards,

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