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Memo

To: Member Associations & Clubs
c.c.: GA Board, GA Handicapping & Rules Committee, GOLF *Link*, Tier 3 Providers
From: Simon Magdulski
Date: 19 April 2011
Subject: Handicapping Update & Upcoming Announcements

Dear All,

This communication provides an update on various handicapping developments.

USGA Visit and Handicapping Focus Groups & Forums – March 2011

In March 2011, Golf Australia convened a series of handicapping focus groups and forums for clubs, and representative associations. These sessions were attended by senior officials from GA, the USGA, clubs, Member Associations, and District Associations.

In the vast majority of individual cases, attendees were very positive about the various focus group sessions. **A summary of the sessions is currently available on the GA website (go to “Rules & Handicapping”, then “Handicapping & Course Rating”, then “News & Communications”).**

After hearing the various commentary from Australian club officials, the USGA has committed to assisting GA wherever desired with a view to developing the best handicap system for the Australian culture.

It is now clear we will be developing a new handicap system to reflect the Australian environment, rather than adopting the USGA system. The new Australian Handicap System will include Slope Indexing. It will also include the regulation which requires the conversion of Stroke rounds into Stableford scores for the purposes of entry into a player's handicap record. The USGA has expressed its willingness to be involved in the development of components that will not be used in the USA. Being able to tap into their resources and experience will be of real value to GA as we go about this process.

Statistical Analysis

GA recently commissioned a statistical analysis of handicap and competition trends under both the Old Handicap System and the New Handicap System.

The key findings of the statistical analysis are:

- The scores required to win competitions, or to win prizes (eg balls) in competitions, vary depending on the field size.
- Under the New System, the low marker finds it harder to compete as the field size increases. Under the New System, the field size value at which a low marker is disadvantaged is about 50 for men, and 100 for women. Low markers do still compete and are winning competitions in very high field sizes, but as the field size increases the bias becomes more and more unfavourable for the low markers and favourable for the high markers.
- Under the New System the most frequent winning score for field sizes of between 6 and 10 is 37 points. As the field size increases this steadily rises to 43 points.

- Under the Old System, there was a significant advantage to the low markers, which actually grew with field size.
- Under the Old System, the high markers were disadvantaged so they won far fewer competitions than their representation in the field. Many of them were chronically playing at handicap levels far in excess of their playing handicaps. Essentially this was due to the uneven way that differentials were applied. Handicaps for high markers only eased out by 0.1 stroke for a poor round, no matter how poor, but they were tightened far more quickly if the player had the occasional good round.
- Has there been any settling down in the period since the New System was introduced on 9 April 2010? No, there is no significant variation between the month-on-month distribution of handicaps in the months following the introduction of the New System.

Further work is still being performed on the report. **The completed report and an executive summary will be posted on the GA website on Thursday 19 May (go to “Rules & Handicapping”, then “Handicapping & Course Rating”, then “News & Communications”).**

Fine-tuning of Best 10 of 20 Handicap Calculation Method

The feedback GA has generally received on the New Handicap System is that whilst the rolling sample method for calculating handicaps is well accepted, there is a strong desire from some clubs for some fine-tuning. This feedback is primarily from clubs with large fields.

The statistical analysis does confirm that fine-tuning is required and that it will be of benefit to clubs with large fields. The statistical analysis also allows us to identify changes that will achieve actual net improvements, and to identify those changes that would have significant unintended side effects.

The implementation of an upgraded calculation formula is the immediate priority for GA.

GA is currently having detailed analysis and modelling performed on a variety of options. We will start work on implementing the upgraded formula as soon as we are satisfied we have the best solution. The expert advice we have received is there is no catch-all fix that does not have an accompanying downside; either under the New System or the Old System. What we are seeking is the best balance.

The next GA Board meeting will take place on 5 May. The GA Board will consider the proposed best solution at this meeting. GA will communicate to all Australian clubs the final decision on a revised handicap calculation method on Thursday 19 May.

Any club with queries should feel free to contact Simon Magdulski at GA.

Upcoming Survey of All Clubs and Final Australian Handicap System

As advised above, the next GA Board meeting will take place on 5 May. At this meeting the Board will consider a proposal to sign off on the bulk of the components to be included in the completed new handicap system. Advice of the decisions taken by the GA Board at this meeting will be included in the communication to all Australian clubs scheduled for Thursday 19 May.

The experience of the focus group and forum sessions underlined the diverse range of views that exist in a couple of areas. As a result, GA is keen to collect further feedback on these specific areas so as to ensure we are fully across all viewpoints. GA is not looking to hold a vote on these items. We are however aware that there exists a great diversity of Australian clubs, club environments, and competition and administrative challenges and we are keen to ensure significant factors are not overlooked in our decision-making process.

Details of how to participate in the survey (which should only take approximately ten minutes) will be communicated to all clubs on Wednesday 27 April.

Timeline for Completion of Roll-out of Final Australian Handicap System

GA initially envisaged completion by early 2012 of the roll-out of a new handicap system for Australia. This allowed for the time it would take to re-rate all Australian golf courses. Importantly, it also allowed for the time required to work through all the necessary changes to GOLF *Link* and each Tier 3 provider's software, and the on-the-ground computer system and administrative changes in each club.

The original implementation schedule has been delayed for well-documented reasons. Further to various feedback, and statistical modelling, a system designed specifically for the Australian golf culture is now being constructed.

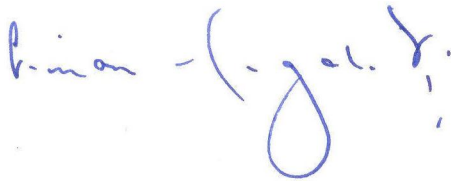
From completion of the design of the new handicapping regulations, to the time all Tier 3 and GOLF *Link* changes can be made, it is unrealistic to expect this to occur within a period of less than 15 months. As a result, final roll-out of the new Australian Handicap System is unlikely to occur before the end of 2012. (Further details are provided on the GA website for those interested in seeing an outline of the tasks and timelines GOLF *Link* will follow in order to bring a new handicap system into effect. Go to [Rules & Handicapping](#), then [Handicapping & Course Rating](#), then [News & Communications](#).)

GA will not start to implement these changes until we have completed the design of the total handicap system, and engaged and communicated to our constituents a proper timeline for implementation of all changes. Whilst this delay is regretted, GA considers the prime objective is to develop the best solution for Australian golf and to ensure a co-ordinated and properly-communicated roll-out.

We will provide another update in this regard when further important details arise.

We hope this helps. Please contact me if you have any queries.

Kind regards,



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