

Golf Australia Handicap System Report

2011

FINAL REPORT



Background & Introduction

Introduction

Golf Australia (“GA”) is to soon confirm the new components of the Australian Handicap System (“the System”). There are however a few areas where a diverse range of views still exist across member clubs throughout the country. As it seeks to finalise the new components of the System, GA sought to ensure that it had consulted as widely as possible with the industry in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the differing viewpoints, particularly with regard to social scores for handicap purposes, and daily and intra-daily rating.

With a view to benefiting from JBAS’s market knowledge, industry trust and expertise in survey delivery and report preparation, GA requested that JBAS administer an industry survey and deliver a report that provided it with all the information necessary to make an informed decision about the make-up of the final points of the System.

Industry Survey and Response

In order to deliver on this requirement, JBAS and GA developed a 10 question survey (“the Survey”) that allowed clubs the opportunity to share their formal views on the key points still to be determined.

The Survey was subsequently made available on-line to all member clubs across Australia. The Survey was open for a six week period, closing on 9th June 2011. A total of 389 clubs submitted fully complete survey responses, representing approximately 173,000 or 40% of all registered club golfers in Australia. Club sizes ranged from less than 10 members to over 2,000 members, averaging 445 members per club. 16 clubs did not provide any state or regional identification.

In terms of mix, the response rate was reasonably consistent with the total national club mix when measured by state, with the eastern seaboard states accounting for 74% of responses. Approximately two thirds of responses came from regional based clubs. Golf Australia databases note that the average size golf club in Australia is 278 members, indicating that the response profile was made up of slightly larger golf clubs.

The response rate by state is outlined in the following table.

State	Regional Clubs	Metro Clubs	Total Clubs	% State Mix of Respondents	% State mix GA Database*
NSW	76	46	122	33%	26%
NT	1		1	0%	1%
QLD	32	7	39	10%	17%
SA	17	13	30	8%	13%
TAS	13	1	14	4%	4%
VIC	66	48	114	31%	26%
WA	30	23	53	14%	13%
Total	235	138	373	100%	100%

Note: * Golf Australia database

Response Rate by Club Members

Given the large breadth of club sizes in Australia, the club mix will not equal the mix when measured by club numbers. Given the topic of this report and the fact that its outcomes will be directly applied to individuals rather than clubs, JBAS felt it important to also identify the response rate by members.

In terms of mix, the response rate was slightly stronger for membership held in the eastern seaboard states, accounting for 87% of responses.

These findings are outlined in the following table.

State	Regional Members	Metro Members	Total Members	% State Mix of Total	National Member Mix by State*
NSW	43,900	34,222	78,122	47%	39%
NT	120		120	0%	1%
QLD	11,266	5,307	16,573	10%	17%
SA	2,215	5,001	7,216	4%	6%
TAS	1,930	1,075	3,005	2%	3%
VIC	20,750	28,984	49,734	30%	27%
WA	2,732	8,170	10,902	7%	7%
Total	78,123	87,549	165,672	100%	100%

Note: * Golf Australia database

Survey Results

Introduction

JBAS analysed the survey responses and outlined below is the relevant analysis for each question that was asked in the Survey. In some cases the view across the country was consistent and clear. In these cases, and given the goal of the project, limited deeper analysis was undertaken as there was no sub theme to be found within the responses provided.

Where is your club located?

Golf Australia databases note that the mix of clubs when measured on a regional/metropolitan basis is 77% - 23%.

The survey had a stronger response from metropolitan based clubs, outlined in the following table.

Area	%
In the capital city of my State/Territory	37%
In a country/regional area of my State/Territory	63%
Total	100%

How big is your playing membership base (men and women combined)?

As reported, the average size club of the survey respondents was 445 members, compared to the wider national average of 278 members. Responses by club size are noted below

Members	%
Less than 100	31%
100 to 350	28%
351 to 650	14%
651 to 900	11%
More than 900	16%
Total	100%

How many competition rounds are played at your club each year?

Many respondents misinterpreted the question and provided the number of competition events, not rounds played. Given the results extracted from the survey and the responses provided to many of the following questions, JBAS excluded this data from analysis.

The following questions make up the investigative section of the survey. Commentary is provided on each question with the dominant response highlighted.

Cards for Handicapping

In your club's opinion, how many cards should a new player have to return before they can be allocated an official Australian Handicap?

The survey found by a clear majority, when measured by both club numbers and member numbers, that three 18 hole cards should be required.

Option	% of clubs	% of members
3 x 9-hole cards	9%	6%
3 x 18-hole cards	65%	65%
5 x 18-hole cards, but with a Club Handicap issued after 3 rounds	15%	15%
5 x 18-hole cards, and no Club Handicaps	5%	18%
It should be at a club's discretion	6%	6%

Handicapping of Non-Competition Rounds

GA has ruled out handicapping ALL non-competition rounds. However, GA is looking at handicapping some non-competition rounds. What is your club's opinion of the following statements?

The survey found, by clear majorities from the measures used, that:

- clubs are not in favour of being obligated to allow players to return non competition cards for handicapping; and
- A player should not be able to decide whether or not to submit a score for handicapping after having played the round.

Further detail is provided in the following tables.

All clubs should be required to allow players to return non-competition cards if the player wants.	% of Clubs	% of Members
Strongly Agree	3%	3%
Agree	7%	5%
No Opinion	3%	3%
Disagree	20%	13%
Strongly disagree	67%	76%

A player should be able to decide whether or not to submit a score for handicapping after having played the round.	% of Clubs	% of Members
Strongly Agree	6%	4%
Agree	18%	11%
No Opinion	4%	2%
Disagree	26%	27%
Strongly disagree	46%	56%

With regard to each club being able to determine whether or not they want to allow their members to return non-competition cards for handicapping, the survey results indicate that the majority of clubs are not supportive of self-determination on this issue. Whilst the minority, support for self-determination on this issue was more commonly held by the smaller clubs.

It should be up to each club to determine whether or not they want to allow their members to return non-competition cards for handicapping.	% of Clubs	% of Members
Strongly Agree	16%	10%
Agree	27%	22%
No Opinion	5%	3%
Disagree	20%	23%
Strongly disagree	33%	41%

Golfing Conditions

Golf is played in many varying conditions. Do you think a handicap system should allow the course rating to vary to account for changes in conditions from day-to-day or from morning-to-afternoon?

The survey found that there is an equally balanced view on whether there should be adaptability in the handicap system with regard to changes in daily course ratings due to changing conditions, as summarised in the table below.

Option	% of Clubs	% of Members
No, that's golf. It all averages out in the long run. The rating should not change as a result of daily conditions.	59%	53%
Yes, we need to have a system that adjusts the course rating to reflect the changes in daily conditions.	41%	47%

In order to further understand the view of the market and in order to determine if there was a pattern to this view, further analysis was undertaken on the answers provided, looking at club size.

It was found that as club size becomes larger, so too does the view that there needs to be a system that adjusts the course rating to reflect the changes in daily conditions, as outlined in the following table.

Members	No, that's golf	Yes, we need to have a system that adjusts
Less than 100	64%	36%
100 to 350	60%	40%
351 to 650	65%	35%
651 to 900	59%	41%
More than 900	44%	56%
Grand Total	59%	41%

Calculated Course Rating (CCR) & Gender Views

With regard to changing conditions, the old handicap system had Calculated Course Rating (CCR). CCR allowed the course rating to vary from day-to-day or from morning-to-afternoon, depending on the playing conditions encountered (eg. wind, rain, heat, green firmness and speed, hole placements etc.) The new handicap system does not have CCR. What is your club's view of CCR?

Despite the answers provided above, in this question it was found that there is clear support for the concept of a CCR. It is concept only however, not specifically the old system. Further, respondents felt that they should have a say in the daily assessment of conditions, guided by GA. Given also that one third of respondents have no concern one way or the other for a CCR, it would appear that GA needs to consider the creation of a CCR concept that overlays course rating.

Option	% of Clubs	% of Members
CCR was very relevant to us. GA should reintroduce it as it was.	7%	16%
My Club liked the principle of the old CCR system and thinks daily rating is important. However GA needs to develop a better methodology than the old CCR.	16%	11%
We think we should be able to make our own individual assessment of daily conditions, and alter the course rating accordingly (aided by GA guidelines).	33%	28%
CCR didn't really impact us. We are not concerned if the new rating system stays the same from day-to-day or has built in allowances.	33%	31%
We don't think any allowances at all for a daily course rating should be made.	11%	14%

Are there different views held towards daily course ratings by Men and Women at your club?

The survey found that at over 90% of clubs and across 90% of members that there are no different views held by Men and Women towards daily course ratings.

	% of Clubs	% of Members
No, both Men and Women hold essentially the same view.	93%	91%

System Complexity

Expert statistical analysis indicates that unless the Australian Handicap System is made very complex, it will never be fully 'fair' across all clubs. Acknowledging this, it is Golf Australia's goal to offer a system that is as fair as possible across as many scenarios as possible. Which of the statements below best reflects your club's opinion of this goal?

The survey found that near two thirds of clubs, representing over 70% of the surveyed membership base, acknowledge that a system that is balanced between fairness and ease of administration should be GA's goal.

Option	% of Clubs	% of Members
The Australian Handicap System should be as complex as it needs to be in order to achieve 'fairness'.	12%	15%
We need a balance between 'fairness' and being able to have a system that is easy to administer and understand.	65%	71%
The prime consideration is to have a system that is easy to administer and understand.	23%	14%