



Memo

To: Member States, Clubs
c.c.: GA Handicapping & Course Rating Committee
From: Simon Magdulski
Date: 22 July 2009
Subject: USGA Course Rating System in Australia – Course Set-up Regulations & Guidelines:

- ◆ Quantity of Ratings to be Assessed for Each Course & Rating Titles
- ◆ Placement of Daily Tee Markers
- ◆ Placement of Permanent Plates

Dear All,

As you may be aware, the Board of Golf Australia is engaged in a wide-ranging review of GA activities. This review is geared not only towards attracting more people to golf, but also to ensuring that the game and its support structures are improved wherever human resources and financial constraints allow. It is the Board's view that in a world which provides so much competition to golf, we need to be providing best-practice operating frameworks if we are to maintain and then improve our levels of engagement in the game.

The GA-facilitated frameworks which are perhaps of greatest immediate relevance to all Australian golfers are the Rules of Golf and our handicap & course rating systems. These provide the structure within which all golfers operate every time they walk on to a golf course.

Whilst Australia has long since operated within the framework of the international Rules of Golf, it is only very recently that GA has committed to move to an international handicap & course rating code (ie the United States Golf Association Handicap & Course Rating Systems). This will provide not only a far more efficient and consistent allocation of resources, but will connect us to systems that are the outcome of an ongoing sophisticated and comprehensive research and development program. Additionally, the USGA systems are subjected to far greater checks and balances than is possible with a code which is operated in isolation to the rest of the world.

To build on this significant move forward, the Board is further resolved to identify any factors which serve as impediments to the proper and consistent functioning of handicapping in Australia. In short, we need to take this opportunity to re-shape any practices that compromise the capacity of a handicap system to calculate meaningful handicaps. The recent review of our existing handicap and course rating systems identified a number of current practices that are relevant to this concern.

One such area relates to the following long-standing GA recommendation:

"For clubs that have large or alternative tees, it is strongly recommended that multiple course ratings be determined. A rating from back medal tees may have little significance to regular competitions played from forward daily markers. The different rating markers should be distinguished by different colours."

In developing a forward policy, we have noted that a significant proportion of clubs either do not follow this recommendation or have regularly situated tee markers in positions that have little significance to a rated course. Without a concrete regulation to provide guidance, this is understandable.

In consultation with the USGA, GA has formulated the policies and procedures set-out within this memo with a view to addressing these deficiencies. Specifically:

- ◆ GA is moving to ensure that scores may only be used for handicap purposes if the players have played from a rated set of tees.
- ◆ It goes without saying that where a score is returned from an unrated set of tees, there is no meaningful way of comparing it to scores returned from a rated set of tees.
- ◆ Use of a score returned from an unrated set of tees will distort a player's handicap.
- ◆ The material distortion of handicaps as a result of players returning scores from unrated tees is common in Australia.

Moving forward, it is also critical to many clubs/facilities that they explore ways in which they may be able to extract increased flexibility from their courses so as to enhance the experience of the golfer. GA has resolved to play a leadership role in this regard.)

(Note – The regulations regarding the positioning of daily markers will come into effect from the time a course's USGA Course Ratings come into effect.)

Quantity of Ratings to be Assessed for Each Course and Rating Titles

1. All courses will be eligible to have up to three men's ratings and two women's ratings assessed by the State Association officials who visit to assess new ratings in accordance with the USGA Course Rating System. (Note – An exception may be made for a specific facility if the State Association considers that it exhibits characteristics which warrant a quantity other than five being appropriate to achieve proper handicapping. The State Association may determine that a quantity either fewer or greater than five is more appropriate.)

In the event of a club/facility desiring an additional rating which is not considered warranted by the State Association, the committee of a club/facility may still have more than five ratings assessed upon payment of a fee. There will be a separate fee for each additional rating. Golf Australia recommends that State Associations charge a fee of \$500 per additional rating (with the club/facility to also cover all reasonable expenses associated with providing additional ratings).

It is recommended that club/facility committees assign names for their different ratings in accordance with the following terminology:

- Championship Men's
- Intermediate Men's
- Standard Men's
- Championship Women's
- Intermediate Women's
- Standard Women's

Each course must have at least three different sets of permanent plates on each hole unless the State Association considers proper handicapping can be achieved with a lesser quantity. (Note – Club/facility committees should be mindful that the Championship Women's Plates, for example, should be able to serve as the plates for one of the forward men's courses (ie the Intermediate Men's Course or the Standard Men's Course).) If three sets of permanent plates are used, the following colours are strongly recommended:

- Blue
- White
- Red

A recommended fourth colour option is Black. A recommended fifth colour option is Yellow.

- Note i – Once the State Association has assessed a women's and men's USGA scratch rating for a course, those ratings will immediately replace the AWCR and AMCR that previously applied to that course. The State Association will amend the record of the AWCR and AMCR on Golf Link accordingly.
- Note ii – State Associations will begin to conduct official USGA Course Ratings from 1 September 2009. It is envisaged that the rating of all metropolitan courses will be completed by the end of 2010; and that all Australian courses will be rated by the end of 2011.

Placement of Daily Tee Markers – General Guidelines & Regulations

- 2.1 Scores must not be handicapped when the length of the course played varies from the actual measured length of the rated course by more than 100 metres for an 18-hole round. Note: For a round of less than 18 holes, a pro rata length must be calculated; eg for a 9-hole round, the distance is 50 metres.
- 2.2 In order to maintain the playing characteristics of the course, and subject to the provisions of clause 2.1, the movable tee markers used to designate the Teeing Ground should not be placed more than 20 metres in front or 20 metres behind the relevant set of Permanent Plates.

Note – Handicap Conditions do not prevail when the tee markers, under normal circumstances, are placed outside the above area on more than three holes for rounds of 14-18 holes, or on more than two holes for rounds of 9-13 holes. (Note: For courses with permanent cyclical plates, see the accompanying Q&A document.)

Permanent Plates – General Guidelines & Regulations (including placement & the starting point for measuring)

Accurate permanent plate placement is an imperative component of the rating process. Incorrectly placed plates will make it difficult for the golf course staff to keep the length of the course relevant to the measurement contained within the official course rating.

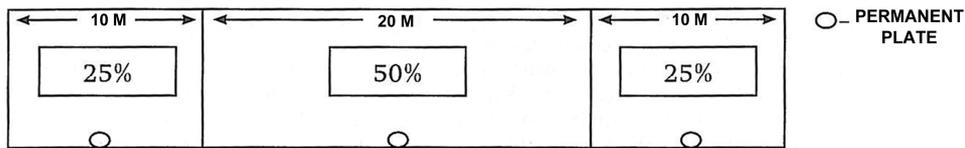
A permanent plate must be placed on one side (or both sides) of each tee at the position which reflects the average placement of the movable tee markers over time. (Note: For courses with permanent cyclical plates, see the accompanying Q&A document.) Concrete set flush with the ground is recommended.

Permanent plate placement is more likely to have a greater impact on ratings than green speed, height of rough, and other course maintenance practices. Courses and clubs should pay particular attention to this issue and are encouraged to consult their State Association in determining accurate placement.

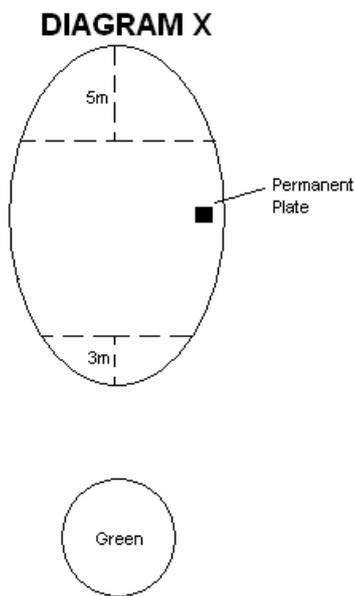
When a single tee pad is designated for one set of tees, placement of the permanent plate at a point opposite the middle of the teeing area is appropriate. This maximises the ability of the golf course to use the entire teeing area and gives the best chance of reflecting an average of movable marker placement over time.

When more than one set of tees uses a single tee pad, consider the percentage of a club's existing or anticipated play from each set of tees when determining permanent plate placement. Allocate the percentage of play to the teeing area and place each permanent plate at a point opposite the mid-point of each of the allocated areas.

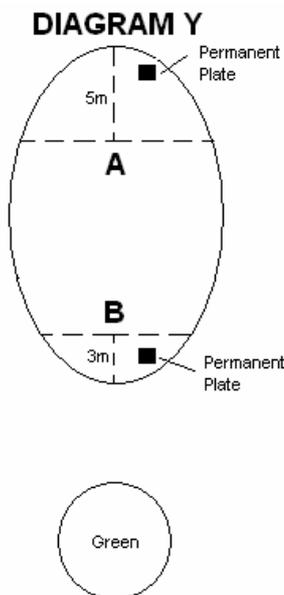
For example – the club determines that 25% of play will be from the forward tees, 50% from the middle tees, and 25% from the back tees. Allocation would then have the first ten metres of the teeing area dedicated to the forward tees, the middle twenty metres to the middle tees, and the final ten metres to the back tee. The permanent plate placement would be at the mid-point of each one of these areas.



Golf Australia strongly recommends using percentages and mid-points to determine plate placement and stresses that at no time should a permanent plate be less than three metres from the centre-point of the front of a teeing area or less than five metres from the centre-point of the rear of a teeing area. If plates are situated otherwise, the plates will NOT be used as the starting point for measuring purposes. The starting point for measuring purposes will be the point that is five metres from the centre-point of the rear of a teeing area (or, for forward tee plates, the point that is three metres from the centre-point of the front of the teeing area).



In Diagram X, the permanent plate is positioned at a point on the tee pad which falls within the designated measuring limits. As a result, the course rating measurement is taken adjacent to the permanent plate.



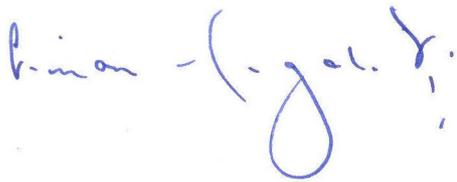
In Diagram Y, both permanent plates are positioned at points on the tee pad which fall outside the designated measuring limits. As a result, the course rating measurements are not taken from the permanent plates. The measuring point for the upper plate will be at the intersection of the two lines at point A. The measuring point for the lower plate will be at the intersection of the two lines at point B.

On a nine-hole course, if separate tees or tee markers are used for each nine of an 18-hole round, separate measurements and permanent plates must be established for each nine. The permanent plates (and their respective tee markers) for each nine should be uniquely identifiable.

We have also produced the accompanying Q&A document to assist with the interpretation and implementation of these regulations.

Please contact either your State Association or myself if you have any queries regarding the above regulations or the Q&A document.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Simon Magdulski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Simon Magdulski
Manager – Rules & Handicapping

*Email – simonm@golfaustralia.org.au
Direct phone – (03) 9626 5023*