

HANDICAP INFORMATION 2 - STANDARD SCRATCH SCORE (SSS)

What is the Standard Scratch Score and how is it determined?

The Standard Scratch Score (SSS) is a measure of the playing difficulty of a golf course for a scratch golfer under normal midseason course and weather conditions. It is determined in accordance with either:

- The Course Rating System of the United States Golf Association or
- The Rating System adopted by the English Golf Union.

The USGA Course Rating System takes account of the measured length of a golf course together with factors that affect both the playing length and the playing difficulty (obstacle factors). The ten obstacle factors that determine the playing difficulty of a golf course are: topography, fairway, green target, recoverability & rough, bunkers, out of bounds/extreme rough, water hazards, trees, green surface and psychological. The factors that affect the course playing length are: roll, wind, forced lay-up/dogleg, elevation. Each hole on the golf course is evaluated on a scale 0-10 for each of the ten obstacles and account taken of the effective length correction factors e.g. the effective playing length of a fast running links course is quite different from that of a moor land course with soft fairways.

It is understood that the Standard Scratch Scores resulting from Course Rating are determined by many different rating teams. What measures are in place to assure uniformity?

It is a requirement of the two Course Rating Systems approved by CONGU® that course rating officials are trained and tested before being qualified to determine Course Ratings. Training materials have been developed to assist uniformity and national associations carry out calibration seminars. In addition the USGA also conduct calibration seminars when it is expected that associations licensed to operate their system will be represented.

As a final step in the assurance and standardisation process, all Course Ratings, prior to release, are vetted by national assessors. To take account of course changes and evolution, established courses are required to be re-rated at least every ten years and new courses every three years until they reach maturity.

The RMGC course was rated in September 2008 by trained assessors from the Cyprus Golf Federation under approval from the USGA.

If it is accepted that Standard Scratch Scores (SSS) are accurately determined, why is it necessary to calculate a Competition Scratch Score (CSS) for each qualifying competition?

Golf is played in a wide range of weather and course conditions – some adverse, some favourable – both of which can impact on the scoring ability of golfers in all handicap categories. Wind strength and direction are the factors that most frequently affect scoring but course conditions can also be influential e.g. bumpy greens, awkward pin positions or soft wet fairways.

The CSS is the mechanism employed on the day of competition to quantify the influence of weather and course conditions on the scoring ability of the field and regulate adjustments to Handicaps accordingly.

The object is to bring the improved pattern of scoring resulting from conditions more favourable than average and the inferior scoring pattern related to conditions more difficult than average, into line with the expected scoring pattern established for golfers in each of the handicap categories in normal midseason playing conditions.