

## **HANDICAP INFORMATION 3 - WHAT AFFECTS YOUR HANDICAP?**

### **Why is a separate CSS not calculated for each handicap category?**

Low handicap players frequently pose this question on occasions when the CSS is SSS –1. A statistical analysis of a wide range of CSS's calculated separately for each handicap category and compared to the overall CSS has shown that the system does not favour or discriminate against any of the handicap categories.

Although there are occasions when one or other of the handicap categories, if calculated separately, would result in a CSS that differed from the overall CSS, on average there is very close agreement between the overall CSS and the separate CSS's calculated for each handicap category.

An additional problem in calculating a separate CSS for the Category 1 golfer is that he represents, on average, less than 10% of the field in a typical club competition. This is often a statistically meaningful figure and could result in erratic CSS values. The larger sample provides a more balanced determination of the CSS.

### **The Par of our golf course is two strokes higher than the SSS. Members experience difficulty in playing to the SSS. The Professionals use Par to measure comparative performance. Why is the CONGU® Handicapping system not based on Par?**

CONGU® does not consider that Par provides a suitable basis for a reliable and robust handicap system. Par is a very crude measure of the playing difficulty of a golf course. Two courses having the same Par may vary in length by many hundred yards. To illustrate how great this difference can be, consider two courses laid out in similar terrain:

Course A – Four Par 3 holes each 140 yards in length and Fourteen Par 4 holes each 300 yards in length. Total course length 4760 yards. Par 68.

Course B – Four Par 3 holes each 220 yards in length and Fourteen Par 4 holes each 400 yards in length. Total course length 6480 yards. Par 68.

Assuming similar relative playing difficulties on each course, the scoring potential of a scratch golfer on the shorter course A would be quite different from that expected on the longer Course B. Although each has a Par of 68 the respective Standard Scratch Scores would be of the order of 63 and 71 respectively. It is obvious therefore, that Par does not provide a viable basis for handicapping.

### **There are organisations offering Golf Handicaps that are calculated in accordance with CONGU® requirements. Are these official CONGU® Handicaps?**

No, not in the generally accepted understanding of the term "official handicaps". A CONGU® handicap, awarded by a club affiliated to an Association that administers amateur golf in a country, is recognised by national golfing authorities and clubs throughout the world as reflecting the current golfing ability of the holder. The system is the result of many years' development and refinement, relying on stringent checks and balances which enable scores obtained from quite widely differing courses and playing conditions to be compared on a like-for-like basis. The detail of the CONGU® System is copyrighted and the acronym CONGU is a registered Trademark. Only clubs affiliated to one of the seven National Unions or Associations that govern amateur golf in Great Britain and

Ireland (and other approved overseas Organisations) are allowed to issue and maintain CONGU® Handicaps. All this ensures that CONGU® Handicaps reflect, as accurately as possible, the playing standard of the individual golfer at any one time.

**As a category 1 golfer, if I return a nett differential of SSS +2 that score, on occasions, contributes to the resulting CSS being one stroke below the SSS. My buffer zone for handicap alteration purposes, however, is SSS +1. Can CONGU® explain this anomaly?**

The CSS calculation is based on the percentage of returns to the SSS +2. The reasons for this are historical. Following the introduction of the 1983 Standard Scratch Score and Handicapping Scheme, a buffer zone of two strokes for all handicap categories was introduced the next year. The 1989 Revision brought in the CSS to take account of weather and course conditions. The CSS Tables were based on the two-stroke buffer zone. The variable buffer zone of one, two, three and four strokes for handicap categories 1-4 was incorporated in the 1993 Revision. At that time CONGU® investigated the need to modify the CSS Tables to reflect the changed buffer zones. It was concluded that although the tables could have been amended, the resulting CSS would have been the same irrespective of method used.

**A player should know before he competes what is required of him to play to, or better, his handicap. How can, for example, CONGU® justify a situation in which the CSS reduces to one stroke less than the SSS of the course? This can result in a player being denied a reduction in handicap or scoring outside the relevant buffer zone**

The Course Rating system from which the SSS is derived is based on normal midseason playing conditions and includes an allowance for average wind speeds at the various golfing locations. When course or weather conditions are more or less difficult than 'average' the expectation is that scoring will be affected. Scoring conditions more favourable than 'average' include little or no wind, favourable pin positions and additional roll. In such circumstances the CSS can be one stroke less than the SSS. Conversely in unfavourable weather and course conditions the CSS can increase by up to three strokes above the SSS. In extreme circumstances the competition can become 'SSS + 3 Reduction Only'. The intent of the CSS system is to standardise the 'reward' for equal performance in different playing circumstances. For example, by applying the CSS system the performance of a player who returns a nett score 2 strokes below the SSS on a day of high wind when the CSS is calculated to be SSS +3 (Nett Differential -5) equates to that of another player returning a nett score 6 strokes below the SSS on a day when the CSS is calculated to be SSS-1 (Nett Differential -5).