

## **HANDICAP INFORMATION 7 - GENERAL PLAY**

### **What is the purpose of the CONGU® Unified Handicapping System?**

The intent of the CONGU® Unified Handicapping System is to enable golfers of differing abilities - ladies and men - to compete on a fair and equitable basis. This is done by:

- Course Rating golf courses to establish the standard scratch score (SSS) based on length and playing difficulty. The SSS is the cornerstone of the handicapping system.
- Initially allotting a handicap based on a player's best score of a specified number.
- Adjusting handicaps on completion of a qualifying competition in relation to players' nett differentials with respect to handicap category.
- Taking account of course and weather conditions through the calculation of the competition scratch score (CSS).
- Applying adjustments to Handicaps related to tees used, and respective SSS and the course par to enable ladies and men to compete on an equitable basis.

Provided all parties – players and Handicap Committees – fulfil their obligations to the System a high degree of uniformity in handicapping can be achieved.

### **My Home Club allotted me an initial handicap lower than that calculated from the adjusted best score. Did the Club have the authority to do this?**

Yes. the handicap committee may allot a player an initial whole number exact handicap less than the best score if it has reason to consider that a lower handicap is more appropriate to the player's ability. Factors to be considered would include:

- Time of year and prevailing weather conditions when cards submitted.
- Previous playing history and any handicap previously held at home club or elsewhere.
- Information from peers.

### **Why does Golf have a Handicap System?**

In amateur golf, unlike many sports, the majority of competitions cater for players who have a wide range of golfing ability. If no allowance was made for this variation then the relatively small number of high-ability players would be successful in all competitions.

The dictionary definition of a handicap in a sport is "the advantage, or disadvantage, given to competitors in an attempt to equalise their chances".

Throughout the world a golf handicap is recognised as representing the number of strokes that need to be deducted from the player's actual (gross) score so that, when he plays to his average ability, his nett score equals a "standard score". The amount deducted (the players "handicap") is calculated so as to be related to the player's ability at the time he plays in the competition.

**The new Annual Review program seems to suggest players for adjustment that the Committee wouldn't have considered. Could the process be explained?**

The Annual Review program is merely a tool to assist handicap committees to identify players who may be considered for handicap adjustment. It is not intended that it be used as a substitute for the knowledge of the committee but should compliment it. It is important that committees read the first page of the report printout and are familiar with Clause 23 of the UHS.

***The Median Gross Differential (MGD) and the Target***

The program itself is based on a mathematical model that determines the "ideal handicap" for the statistically perfect golfer based on their Median Gross Differential (MGD) - the median is used as, where a player has no-returns, it would be impossible to calculate an average. So a "Target" MGD is determined for each handicap.

"Target" MGD = MGD that applies to the statistically perfect golfer of a given handicap.

The Actual MGD of the player's scores for the year is then found and this is related to their Finish Handicap (which should represent their current paying ability). This Actual MGD is compared to the Target for that handicap.

Target - Actual = Difference = Performance Indicator of each player

***The Effect of the Number of Scores***

The statistical analysis suggests that if the Actual is more than 3 shots away from the Target then the player may be over (if Difference is -3 or lower) or under handicapped (+3 or higher). The analysis showed that a minimum of seven scores is required to establish that an MGD difference of 3 represents approximately one shot in handicap terms. The more scores above 7 the player has returned the more confidence can be placed on the Difference indicating the player should be considered for adjustment.

Clearly the nearer the Difference is to 3 the case for adjustment is not so clear-cut, and the same applies the fewer scores on the record. It should be emphasised that the process effectively examines the consistency of a player compared to how consistent a player of their handicap should be. A "wild" player who either scores well under their handicap (but not very often) but mainly well over it might be "flagged" for increase so the system should not allow a player who has a Finish Handicap lower than their handicap at the start of the period to be flagged. However a very steady player who does not play below his handicap very often but is near to it more often than he should be may well be flagged for a decrease even though he has returned a score that reduced his handicap.

Whatever the result of the analysis the final judgement should be that of the Committee. It should also be remembered that the analysis can only take into account qualifying scores, the Committee should also consider 4-ball results, foursomes results, match play performance, i.e. all the information available for each player. It cannot be over-stressed that the Annual Review Report should not be used to make automatic adjustments solely based on the print-out.