

Peace on the First Tee

By C. P. BURGESS

CHAIRMAN, GOLF COMMITTEE
BALTUSROL GOLF CLUB, SPRINGFIELD, N. J.

Baltusrol, now in its 54th year, has survived the temptation to adopt a "current"-type handicap system. It adhered to the Calkins system from the day it was conceived. Prior to that, the Club suffered from the arbitrary dictatorship of the Chairman of the Handicap Committee. If a member won a handicap event, it was a foregone conclusion that his handicap would be cut so drastically he could never win again—unless he could persuade the chairman to raise it eventually.

Over the years we found the five-score Calkins system realistic for our club of about 500 male golfers (175 women run their own department). So, when the USGA published recommendations for rating courses and applying the 10 best of 50 scores, we considered it an amplified and improved version of the Calkins system and proceeded to follow the suggestions of our national Association.

We have two 18-hole courses. Each has a par of 72, and they are equally difficult. Our Golf Committee, augmented by Johnny Farrell, our professional, rated these courses at 73.4 and 73 and received confirmation of 73 for each course from the Metropolitan Golf Association.

Members Circularized

In proceeding to set up the new system entailing collection of 50 scores from each golfer, we realized the necessity of overcoming the reluctance or carelessness on the part of some of our golfers to turn in scores.

To encourage their cooperation, we circularized the membership, explaining in detail the new system.

We then designed a new score card with four coupons which would be easy to tear off. This coupon score card, incidentally, is not original with us. The scorekeeper of any four-ball can in a

moment's time enter the date, name, gross score and handicap of each player and drop the coupons into a box conveniently located in the locker room. It is important to include handicap as it saves time in locating the handicap card for posting purposes; at Baltusrol, players' handicap cards are filed in the rack according to handicap, rather than alphabetically. The score card proper can then be used for the tournament record or any other purpose.

We also required every player to enter his name on an entry sheet on an easel at the first tee for every competition. When we found a member played in competitions and did not turn in coupons, we requested his cooperation and usually he complied. Incidentally, thanks to the coupons and the entry sheet, we had a good check on who played and accordingly got a much better return of scores.

Our next step was to design a new handicap card. On the face of this card there is space for the player's name, individual spaces for 10 scores, their total and his handicap. On the back there are spaces for 50 scores.

We faced a problem in attempting to discard the old handicap system, install the new and carry on our tournament schedule with temporary, equitable handicaps, all at the same time. Baltusrol holds an individual medal sweepstakes and an additional competition each Saturday, Sunday and holiday from May 1 to November 1, and this made matters no simpler. We had to improvise until the 50-score system was sufficiently in play to call it a fixture. The answer we worked out caused a minimum of confusion and dissatisfaction, and we think perhaps our experience would be helpful to other clubs. [Editor's Note: This method of changing to the USGA handicap system is not necessarily the method

recommended by the USGA; it is published merely as one club's solution to the problem.]

Mythical Scores

To start the season, we built up 10 mythical scores in lieu of the five actual scores on each player's old handicap card. We found that, had we attempted to blow up any or all of the five actual scores to the required 10, there would have been a variation in the new handicaps of certain players who had been handicapped alike under the old system. Therefore, to treat alike all holders of equal handicaps and to standardize the application to 500 golfers, we deemed it advisable to eliminate the actual five scores, and as indicated above, to substitute 10 mythical scores for each handicap bracket.

We found the range of each handicap on a course rated 73 in Table A. We divided the middle figure of that range by 10. Then we entered two or three such scores on the card. For the additional seven or eight scores, to complete the 10, we put down scores not more than two above or two below this figure. The total of these 10 scores had to equal the middle figure in the Table A range. We admit it took a little juggling to make the total come out right. Note examples:

Handicaps	5	10	16
Range (Table A)			
	760-770	815-825	881-891
Middle Figure	765	820	886
Middle Figure			
divided by 10	76.5	82	88.6
<i>Mythical Scores:</i>			<i>Total</i>
Handicap 5			
	75 75 76 76 76 77 77 77 78 78	-	765
Handicap 10			
	81 81 81 81 82 82 82 83 83 84	-	820
Handicap 16			
	87 87 88 88 88 89 89 90 90 90	-	886

As actual scores were turned in, we posted them once a week on the back of the player's handicap card. If any score appeared that was lower than any of the 10 mythical scores on the face of the card, that score replaced the highest score on the face of the card and the

player's handicap was lowered according to Table A.

Incidentally, requests for rises in handicaps were practically nil, apparently in anticipation of automatic adjustment sometime.

Many of our players could not possibly accumulate 50 scores the first year, so, as recommended by Mr. William O. Blaney, Chairman of the USGA Handicap Committee, we checked through all our handicap cards in August and adjusted handicaps of members who had turned in 10 or more scores to date. Mr. Blaney recommends "applying the average of the lowest 20 per cent of a player's total number of scores to Table A".

For example, if a member's card showed he played 30 rounds, we took 20 per cent of 30 and used the average of his six lowest scores as a base. This average was multiplied by 10 and Table A was consulted for the new interim handicap. Twenty per cent of the needed 50 scores is, of course, 10 scores.

Interim Handicaps

We did not raise handicaps figured on this basis more than two strokes, but we put no limit on the number of strokes a handicap could be lowered. Handicaps so arrived at were essentially temporary or interim handicaps and were adjusted more or less frequently on the above basis until a total of 50 scores had been accumulated, according to the USGA plan.

These interim handicaps were, we believe, sufficiently realistic for normal club events, and some will have to serve for an indefinite time because many of our golfers play only intermittently.

When a handicap was changed, we immediately gave the player a printed form telling him of his changed status so he could not possibly play his next game on his old handicap.

In addition to the cards, which are racked under the handicaps, we have a glass-enclosed handicap case with all our players listed alphabetically. Players do not adjust their own cards but simply file their cards and/or coupons in the boxes provided.



C. P. Burgess

Following is a tabulation of our first adjustment of handicaps on the above basis for the period March through August:

Number of cards examined.....	508
Number of cards with 10 to 20 scores.....	124
Number of cards with 21 to 30 scores.....	49
Number of cards with 31 to 40 scores.....	12
Number of cards with 41 to 45 scores.....	4
Number of cards with 46 to 50 scores.....	0
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	189
Number of handicaps reduced by 1.....	44
Number of handicaps reduced by 2.....	25
Number of handicaps reduced by 3.....	2
Number of handicaps reduced by 4.....	1
Number of handicaps raised 1 stroke.....	38
Number of handicaps raised 2 strokes.....	59
Number of handicaps not changed	20
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	189
Balance not yet affected.....	319

The golfers who did not get in 10 or more games continued applying their scores against their 10 mythical scores and will do so until their cards show 10 actual scores, making them available for handicap adjustment on the Blaney formula.

Analysis of the above figures shows that 37 per cent of our golfers returned sufficient scores to be considered for August handicap adjustment. But in our opinion these figures are not a good yardstick to use in estimating what percentage of our 500 golfers will reach the 50-game goal or when we will have an over-all, workable handicap basis.

All of us have found at one time or another in our travels that we of the basic, or potential-game, theory of handicapping have been victims of the so-called "current" systems. Wherever you and I play golf, we should enjoy the privilege of playing on an equitable basis with anyone. That requires a universal method of handicapping which can obtain only through a country-wide standardization of the mechanics of applying it.

The method described in the booklet entitled *Golf Handicap System*, recommended by the USGA in December, 1947, should be generally accepted as the foundation upon which to build a handicapping structure for national golf unity.

Many of us feel that strong hands have at last taken hold to steer United States golf into the long-sought-after channels of uniform equalization of play, which should redound generally to the good of the game and specifically to peace on the first tee.

Statement of Condition

The average club has half a dozen really finished golfers and a good many more in the rough.