

Handicap System Revised

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When the USGA Golf Handicap System was issued, in December, 1947, it was believed to include all the basic principles necessary to establish it as a satisfactory standard for nationwide handicapping of men golfers. At the same time it was anticipated that some refinements and changes in the procedure eventually would be necessary.

The experience of USGA member clubs and associations during the last two playing seasons has proved the validity of these thoughts. Accordingly, the USGA has adopted a number of changes which should make the USGA Golf Handicap System a more nearly accurate and much better handicapping system.

These changes are incorporated in a revised booklet which has been forwarded to member clubs and sectional associations. It can be purchased, for 25 cents, by writing to the USGA.

The USGA system still pertains primarily to Basic Handicaps (designed to establish a player's inherent ability to play the game). It does not as yet include computation methods for Current Handicaps (designed to reflect the prevalent, or at-the-moment, state of a player's game).

Due to the popularity of Current Handicaps in certain sections of the country, the Handicap Committee is working on a standard procedure to recommend to clubs and associations desiring to operate under a Current Handicap system. It is hoped that handicaps so produced will be tied in so closely with our existing Basic Handicaps that there will be a minimum of confusion and inequity whenever players handicapped under each system meet competitively on a neutral course. When adopted, Current Handicap recommendations will be published in a supplementary leaflet and explained in the USGA JOURNAL.

Major changes in our Basic Handicap

System are outlined below, together with, in most instances, the reasons why they are believed to be necessary. Many of the changes will be recognized as suggestions appearing in previous issues of the USGA JOURNAL, so that our earlier attempts to clarify and standardize procedure are now official.

Number of Scores

Basic Handicaps now are computed from the lowest 10 of a player's last 50 scores, instead of from the lowest 10 of an indefinite number of 50 or more scores. This change should place handicaps on a more nearly accurate and equitable basis since every handicap will be figured from the same number of rounds played.

Provisional Handicaps

Provisional Handicaps are now available for players with fewer than 50 posted scores. These handicaps are computed from the lowest 20 per cent of all posted scores, as from the lowest 6 of 30 scores. Provisional Handicaps are intended primarily for beginners or for new members with no previous scoring records. They also can be used while the USGA Golf Handicap System is being installed to handicap players until such time as the required 50 scores can be obtained.

Scoring Records

A new section on the collection and maintenance of scoring records has been added. Due to the variety of conditions prevailing at different clubs, no one method can be recommended for all. However, the importance of obtaining a score from each player every time he completes an 18-hole round is so great that the subject cannot be overemphasized.

Text Rearranged

The order of the previous text has been rearranged in an effort to make it more understandable. Handicap computation methods and matters pertaining thereto have been grouped near the front

of the new booklet to be more accessible to handicappers. The details of our course-rating methods have been shifted to the back of the booklet because they are of importance only to individuals assigned the task of rating courses. Once courses have been rated, there is less need to refer to these particulars.

Chart Renamed

Handicap Table A has been renamed USGA Handicap Chart in order to establish it more firmly as the only handicap table that can be used with the USGA Golf Handicap System and to place more emphasis on the fact that it is a USGA creation.

Table B Eliminated

Handicap Table B has been eliminated because its use has been negligible, it has caused confusion and it has been used incorrectly. Its removal emphasizes USGA Handicap Chart as the only table for use with our Basic Handicap System.

Four-Ball Allowances Cut

Handicap allowances in four-ball play have been reduced. In stroke play, each player is now granted 75 per cent of his individual stroke play handicap, rather than his full handicap as in the past. In match play, each player is given two-thirds of the difference between his stroke play handicap and that of the low handicap player in the match, the low handicap player to play from scratch. Previously, this differential was 85 per cent. Handicap strokes in four-ball play, either stroke or match, are to be taken as they come on the card.

Heretofore, handicap allowances for four-ball play have been in the nature of suggestions. The increase of four-ball play in certain sections of the country and the experience gained therefrom have caused the USGA to change these suggestions to recommendations and to reduce the allowances for reasons fully explained in the new text.

Stroke Allocation

Recommendations for the allocation of handicap strokes to the holes of a course have been changed drastically. Heretofore, the recommendations have implied that the lower-numbered strokes should be assigned to the hard par 4

holes in preference to the long par 5 holes or par 3 holes. The new recommendations give greater consideration to the comparative playing ability of the contestants in matches where handicap strokes are given and received.

For example, when allocating the first handicap stroke, consideration is given to matches between players of practically equal ability, such as those involving scratch and 1-handicap players or 8- and 9-handicap players. In such matches, the location of the first handicap stroke will be of the greatest importance to the player receiving it. As a handicap stroke is in the nature of an equalizer, it should be available on a hole where it most likely will be needed. The law of averages indicates that the more strokes played by competitors on any one hole, the greater will be the probability of the higher handicapped player making an error that will require the use of an equalizing, or handicap, stroke.

In allocating the second handicap stroke, matches between players having a slightly greater difference in handicaps are given the most consideration, such as those between players handicapped at 8 and 10 or 15 and 17. This process is continued until all strokes have been assigned.

Therefore, the over-all theory is that the allocation of handicap strokes should start on the longest and most difficult hole to score on — not the most difficult hole to play in par — and end on the shortest and easiest hole.

The plan of allocating the odd-numbered strokes to the holes of the first nine and the even-numbered strokes to the holes of the second nine and the desirability of avoiding as far as possible the allocating of lower-numbered strokes to holes near the end of each nine remain unchanged.

Aids to Installation

Recommendations designed to help clubs and associations install the USGA course rating methods have been added because experience with these methods has been limited in the past to a

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