

Newsletter 1: 5 things to know

The World Handicap System (WHS) will bring major changes to the fabric of our handicap system. This new World Handicap System aims to bring the game of golf under a single set of handicapping rules and provide a more consistent measure of players' ability between different regions of the world.

5 things you need to know!

1. Your Handicap Index may change.

But that's okay! Finally, players around the world will have an apples-to-apples handicap. Your new Handicap Index will be more responsive to good scores by averaging your eight best scores out of your most recent 20. In short, your Handicap Index will be determined by your demonstrated ability and consistency of scores. In most cases for golfers in Canada, it will change less than one stroke.

2. You need to know your Course Handicap.

In the new system, your Course Handicap will be the number of strokes needed to play to par. This will result in greater variance in the Course Handicap per tee and presents a change, as historically it has represented the number of strokes needed to play to the Course Rating. This is a good change, as par is an easy number to remember and was generally referenced by the golfing public anyway. The Target score for the day is now calculated as par plus your Course Handicap. The Course Rating will now be inherent within the calculation to be more intuitive and account for competing from different tees.

3. Net Double Bogey.

The maximum hole score for each player will be limited to a Net Double Bogey. This adjustment is more consistent from hole to hole than compared to our previous procedure. Net Double Bogey is already used in many other parts of the world and the calculation is simple: Par + 2 + any handicap strokes you are to receive on that hole.

4. Playing Condition Calculation (PCC).

The playing conditions calculation is a calculation that determines if conditions day to day differ from normal playing conditions that impacts player performance based those course conditions, weather conditions, and course setup. The good news is all this will be calculated behind the scenes on the Golf Canada Score Centre. If PCC shows players have performed significantly better/worse than expected, it will adjust score differentials accordingly.

5. Safeguards in the new system.

The new system will limit extreme upward movement of a Handicap Index, automatically and immediately reduce a Handicap Index when an exceptional score of at least 7 strokes better is posted, and account for abnormal course or weather conditions to ensure that scores reflect when a course plays significantly different than its established Course Rating and Slope Rating.

Video

For more information, please check out our [World Handicap Resource Page](#) or contact Duncan Chau dchau@gao.ca

Newsletter 2: Course and Slope Rating

The USGA Course Rating System is the foundation of the World Handicap System (no change for us in Canada) and allows each player's Handicap Index to be transported from one course to another, and now across the globe.

In 2020 The USGA Course Rating System will be referred to as "The Course Rating System" and will join "The Rules of Handicapping" to form the World Handicap System. The Course Rating System will be implemented by National Associations and allow a player's Handicap Index to be from course to course and country to country. In addition, it will allow acceptable scores made at any rated golf course in the world to be submitted for handicap purposes.

- For those who travel internationally, this will be a welcomed change as scores made outside the U.S. will easily be factored into their Handicap Index calculation.
- To provide an accurate and consistent measure of the difficulty of a golf course by ensuring that playing length and obstacle factors are evaluated the same way worldwide.
- Since golf courses are rated by qualified teams trained by Authorized Golf Associations, the integrity of the World Handicap System will be maintained.

Video

For more information, please check out our [World Handicap Resource Page](#) or contact Duncan Chau dchau@gao.ca

Newsletter 3 No. of scores for Handicap

Under the previous Golf Canada Handicap Manual, a Handicap Factor is issued to a player after **five** 18-hole scores (or equivalent 9 hole combination) are submitted.

In 2020 A Handicap Index will be issued to a player after **three** 18-hole scores (or equivalent 9-hole combination) are submitted and a revision takes place. And in Canada, the term Handicap Factor will be changed to Handicap Index (for uniformity across the globe)

- Scores can be made up of any combination of 9-hole and 18-hole scores.
- Revisions will be daily, so a player's Handicap Index will become official the day after their third 18-hole score is submitted.

One of the key principles of the World Handicap System is to enable as many golfers as possible the opportunity to establish and maintain a Handicap Index. By requiring fewer scores, players who only play sporadically may be more likely to obtain a Handicap Index. Statistics show that players with a Handicap Index play more rounds of golf, so making it easier to get a Handicap Index can help increase participation.

Video

For more information, please check out our [World Handicap Resource Page](#) or contact Duncan Chau dchau@gao.ca

Newsletter 4 Limit of upward movement (CAP system)

Under the previous Golf Canada Handicap System, there is no restriction on the upward movement of a Handicap Index built into the calculation. The Handicap Committee at a golf club is responsible for monitoring extreme upward movement of any members' Handicap Index and make modifications where appropriate.

In 2020, a "soft cap" and "hard cap" will be included within the Handicap Index calculation as part of the World Handicap System .

- The soft cap will suppress the upward movement of a Handicap Index by 50 percent if a 3.0 stroke increase takes place within 12 months.
- The hard cap will restrict upward movement if, after the application of the soft cap, a 5.0 stroke increase takes place within 12 months.

In addition, a "Low Handicap Index" will be included within the *Rules of Handicapping* and will be made visible to players. This value will serve as the baseline for the soft cap and hard cap procedures.

- A Low Handicap Index will be established once a player has at least 20 acceptable scores in their scoring record. At this point, the soft cap and hard cap procedures will begin taking effect.
- A newly determined Low Handicap Index will be considered each time an acceptable score is submitted and a Handicap Index is updated.
- There is no limit on the amount by which a player's Handicap Index can decrease, but the soft cap and hard cap will ensure that a temporary loss of form does not cause a player's Handicap Index to increase to a level inconsistent with their demonstrated ability.
- The automatic calculation will prevent extreme upward movement of a Handicap Index, as well as assist Handicap Committees as an anti-abuse safeguard.
- When special circumstances exist, such as injury, the Handicap Committee will have the ability to override the soft cap or hard cap.
- This procedure will favor the consistent player, as players who have significant volatility in their scoring history over a 365 day period will be impacted by it more often.

Video

For more information, please check out our [World Handicap Resource Page](#) or contact Duncan Chau
dchau@gao.ca

Newsletter 5: Exceptional Score

Under the previous Handicap System, when a player submits two or more Tournament Scores (T-scores) within a 12-month period that are at least 3.0 strokes better than their Handicap Index, they are eligible for an automatic Handicap Index reduction. The amount of the reduction is determined by the number of T-scores submitted by a player within the last 12-months, as well as the difference between the Handicap Index and the average of the two best T-score Handicap Differentials. Under this system there has been confusion as to which competitions should receive the T-score designation, and as a result it has been applied inconsistently.

Under the new World Handicap System in 2020, When a player submits a score that produces a Score Differential of 7.0 strokes or more below their Handicap Index, they will be subject to an **Exceptional Score Reduction**.

- When the Score Differential is between 7.0 and 9.9 strokes below their current Handicap Index, a -1.0 reduction is applied to the most recent 20 score differentials. When the Score Differential is 10.0 strokes or more below their Handicap Index, a -2.0 reduction is applied to the most recent 20 score differentials.
- Scores submitted after the exceptional score will not contain the -1.0 or -2.0 adjustment (unless they are also exceptional), which will allow reduction to gradually work itself out of a Scoring Record.

The reason for this change is to simplify the automatic reduction process. This new procedure will be straightforward and intuitive. When a player submits an exceptional score, they will receive an automatic adjustment of -1.0 or -2.0. And by considering all scores in the Exceptional Score Reduction procedure (not just T scores), a player's Handicap Index will be more responsive to exceptional performances in competitive and recreational play.

Video

For more information, please check out our [World Handicap Resource Page](#) or contact Duncan Chau dchau@gao.ca

Newsletter 5: Playing Conditions Calculation (PCC)

Prior to 2020, there was no calculation or adjustment to account for abnormal course or weather conditions.

With the World Handicap System, when abnormal course or weather conditions cause scores to be unusually high or low on a given day, a “Playing Conditions Calculation” will adjust Score Differentials to better reflect a player’s actual performance. The “PCC” is:

- An automatic procedure by the computation service that compares the scores submitted on the day against expected scoring patterns,
- Conservative in nature and applied in integer values, and
- Applied in the Score Differential calculation of all players – even those who submit their score(s) on a later date.

The WHS provides a mechanism that allows a better assessment of the difficulty of a course on a particular day:

- Golf is an outdoor sport with many factors that can impact scoring (weather, rough height, hole locations, etc.).
- A score of 90 made under challenging conditions could be a more impressive performance than an 88 under normal conditions – and incorporating a Playing Conditions Calculation allows this to be represented.
- This is one of the more modern features of the system, but a similar calculation has been used successfully in other parts of the world.
- The PCC is designed to be conservative, so if an adjustment is taking place 4-5 days a week, then the Course Rating may not be accurately representing the difficulty of the golf course.
- The ability to identify such courses will provide enhanced integrity to the system.

Video

For more information, please check out our [World Handicap Resource Page](#) or contact Duncan Chau dchau@gao.ca

Newsletter 6: Handicap Index Update

Under the previous Handicap System, following each score posted the Handicap Factor was updated.

In 2020, A player's Handicap Index will still be updated daily, provided that the player submitted a score the day before. The World Handicap System provides players with a more responsive and up-to-date Handicap Index.

- After a player submits their third acceptable 18-hole score (made up of any combination of 9-hole and 18-hole rounds), they will be issued a Handicap Index the next day.
- All players are encouraged to submit scores as soon as practicable, preferably before midnight on the day of play.
 - Since the Playing Conditions Calculation will use scores submitted at a course each day, it is crucial that scores are posted on the same day of play.

Video

For more information, please check out our [World Handicap Resource Page](#) or contact Duncan Chau dchau@gao.ca

Newsletter 7: Maximum Handicap Index

The previous Handicap System used a maximum Handicap Factor/Index of 36.4 for men and 40.4 for women. In 2020, the maximum Handicap Index for all golfers will be 54.0, regardless of gender.

The World Handicap System is built to make the game more welcoming to new players and incentivize beginners to establish and maintain a Handicap Index. The new rules of handicapping provide all players with a more precise measure of their demonstrated ability and allow players of all skill levels to track their progress in the game.

Although the number of players with a Handicap Index at or above the current maximums of 36.4 and 40.4 is relatively small, many golfers who currently play but do not have a Handicap Index would be above those limits. Statistics show that players with a Handicap Index play more rounds of golf. Therefore, making the system more welcoming can help grow the game and create a more sustainable future. Although the maximum Handicap Index will be 54.0, the Committee in charge of a Competition can set a lower maximum limit for entry or use in competitions. If the desire is to have players with similar abilities competing against each other, the Committee can also divide the competition into flights.

- Although some are concerned that increasing the maximum Handicap Index may lead to handicap manipulation, safeguards exist within the Handicap Index calculation to minimize the potential for it

Video

For more information, please check out our [World Handicap Resource Page](#) or contact Duncan Chau dchau@gao.ca

Newsletter 8: Course Handicap Calculation and Application

Prior to 2020, a Course Handicap represents the number of strokes a player receives in relation to the Course Rating of the tees being played. The formula is:

$$\text{Course Handicap} = \text{Handicap Index} \times (\text{Slope Rating} / 113)$$

With the new World Handicap System, A Course Handicap will represent the number of strokes a player receives in relation to the "Par" of the tees being played. The formula will include a Course Rating minus Par adjustment:

$$\text{Course Handicap} = \text{Handicap Index} \times (\text{Slope Rating}/113) + (\text{Course Rating} - \text{Par})$$

- Starting 2020, Course Handicap values will change more from tee to tee, as they will represent the number of strokes to play to Par.
- Par is a term that resonates with golfers, so setting Par as the benchmark for a Course Handicap adds simplicity to handicapping.
- Players will be able to determine their Target Scores (the score they'll shoot if they play to their handicap) by simply adding their Course Handicap + Par.
- A score of Net Par will be used for holes not played, and the maximum hole score for handicap purposes will be a Net Double Bogey. Having a Course Handicap that is relative to Par will ensure that the correct number of strokes are received and applied for both procedures.

Video

For more information, please check out our [World Handicap Resource Page](#) or contact Duncan Chau dchau@gao.ca

Newsletter 9: Playing Handicap Calculation and Application

Prior to 2020, when a player's Course Handicap was adjusted based on the application of a Handicap Allowance or other term(s) of a competition, the resulting value is not defined and is still referred to as a Course Handicap.

With the World Handicap System, the term "Playing Handicap" will be used within the *Rules of Handicapping* and will represent the number of strokes a player receives in a competition. The following formula will be used to determine a Playing Handicap:

$$\textbf{Playing Handicap} = \textbf{Course Handicap} \times \textbf{Handicap Allowance}$$

If players are competing from tees with different Pars, then the player(s) competing from the tees with the higher Par will receive an additional stroke(s) based on the difference.

By introducing the term Playing Handicap, there will be a clear distinction between two key *Rules of Handicapping* definitions, where both serve specific purposes:

- A Course Handicap will be used to adjust individual hole scores (Net Double Bogey and Net Par procedures).
- Playing Handicaps will be used for net competition purposes – including determining the results and winner(s).
- Under the current system, confusion exists because there is only one defined term that often represents two different values.
 - For example – A player with a Course Handicap of 21 participating in a four-ball stroke play competition using the recommended Handicap Allowance of 85% will receive 18 strokes during the round. In 2020, the 18 strokes received will be their Playing Handicap.
- The defined term Playing Handicap will be intuitive and ensure that both terms are applied properly.

Video

For more information, please check out our [World Handicap Resource Page](#) or contact Duncan Chau dchau@gao.ca

Newsletter 10: Maximum Hole Score for Handicap Purposes (Net Double Bogey)

The maximum hole score for handicap purposes in the previous system was based on a player's Course Handicap and the following Equitable Stroke control (ESC) table with the Golf Canada Handicap Manual:

Course Handicap	Maximum Score on any Hole
9 or less	Double Bogey
10 through 19	7
20 through 29	8
30 through 39	9
40 or more	10

With the World Handicap System, the maximum hole score for each player will be limited to a **Net Double Bogey**, calculated as follows:

Double Bogey + handicap strokes a player receives (or gives) based on their Course Handicap
("or gives" only applies to plus handicap players)

The Net Double Bogey adjustment is more consistent from hole to hole than the ESC procedure.

For example – Using the ESC procedure, a player with a Course Handicap of 21 would have the same maximum score (8) on each hole – regardless of the Par or difficulty of the hole.

- By factoring in Par and Stroke Index values under the Net Double Bogey procedure, adjusted hole scores will be more precise and reflective of each player's demonstrated ability.
- This is a more personal assessment compared to the grouping together of Course Handicap ranges.
- While this is a change for all who have used the Golf Canada Handicap System, Net Double Bogey has been used successfully in many parts of the world
 - » The 2019 "Rules of Golf" introduced the maximum score form of stroke play, and Net Double Bogey was included as a recommended maximum score.
 - » When Net Double Bogey is the maximum score set by the Committee, no adjustments are necessary for handicap purposes.

Video

For more information, please check out our [World Handicap Resource Page](#) or contact Duncan Chau dchau@gao.ca

Newsletter 11: Treatment of Nine-Hole Scores

Under the previous Handicap System, to submit a nine-hole score, a player must play 7 to 12 holes under the Rules of Golf. When 13 or more holes are played, the score submitted qualifies as an 18-hole score.

With the World Handicap System in 2020, to submit a nine-hole score, a player must play **7 to 13** holes under the Rules of Golf. When **14 or** more holes are played, the score submitted qualifies as an 18-hole score.

- For players with a Handicap Index, nine-hole scores are combined in the order that they are received and used to produce an 18-hole Score Differential.
- The system ensures that each player has one Handicap Index and one Scoring Record under the World Handicap System.
- The method for calculating a Handicap Index will be the same worldwide, and this applies whether a player submits all 9-hole scores, 18-hole scores, or a combination of both.
- A player's Handicap Index will be interchangeable for both 9-hole and 18-hole play.

For more information, please check out our [World Handicap Resource Page](#) or contact Duncan Chau dchau@gao.ca