



WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM – What it means for Australian clubs and golfers

The R&A and the United States Golf Association (USGA) have been working together with golf's major handicapping authorities to develop a single World Handicap System (WHS) for the game. Golf Australia (GA) is one of the organisations that has been integrally involved. In October 2017 the R&A and USGA issued a formal invitation to GA to adopt the WHS. GA has now accepted this invitation. At this stage it appears very likely that every other major country will also adopt the WHS.

Part A. WHS regulations where the user experience of Australian golfers will be entirely (or almost entirely) UNCHANGED

Note: there may be some minor changes to technical regulations

- Slope will be a part of the WHS.
- A WHS handicap index (ie GA Handicap) will be calculated by averaging the best 8 of the most recent 20 scores (which is what we currently do in Australia). We will continue to use our .93 multiplier.
- The WHS will feature a statistical daily rating system. It will be called PCA (Playing Conditions Adjustment). Whilst the formulas will be different to DSR, the user experience for Australian clubs and golfers will be almost unchanged. The largest change to the user experience is that a PCA will only be calculated once a field size reaches 8 players (the Scratch Rating will be used for fields of less than 8 players).
- Whole number Scratch Ratings will be used (ie no change).
- GA's existing 9-hole regulations will continue.
- Stableford handicapping of all Stroke competitions will continue.
- GA's existing pre-nominated social scores regulation will continue without amendment.
- There will be a Hard Cap of 5 strokes as per GA's current regulation. There will also be a Soft Cap at 3 strokes which will be a new regulation for Australia (see Part B below).
- GA's Manual Bonus Reduction for Exceptional Net Score regulation will be a part of the WHS (perhaps with some minor tweaking). As per GA's regulation, national associations will have the option of leaving it to each club to determine whether they will apply this regulation.
- There will be a maximum GA Handicap under the WHS of 54 for both men and women. However the WHS will specifically provide the flexibility for Australia to build default handicap limits into our software of 36 for men and 45 for women (which is what they currently are).
 - The findings of GA's 2016 national handicapping survey suggest that most Australian clubs wish to retain the status quo on handicap limits. The software solution option described above will be crafted to enable clubs to do this.
 - GA has also received feedback from some clubs indicating they would like to be able to increase competition handicap limits. The software solution option described above will be crafted to provide clubs the flexibility to achieve this outcome. This will allow for better engagement with many new players and with older members as average Australian ages continue to increase.
- Continued use of GA's existing four-ball handicapping regulations without amendment.
- No match play scores.
- The Most Likely Score regulation will NOT be in operation.

Part B. WHS regulations where the user experience of Australian golfers will CHANGE

- **Soft Cap of 3 strokes.** There will be a Soft Cap at 3 strokes which will be a new regulation for Australia (the Soft Cap will work in conjunction with the Hard Cap – see Part A above).
 - A GA Handicap will continue to increase at the current rate of 100% of the '8 of 20' calculation UNTIL it gets to 3 strokes above the best GA Handicap from the previous 12-month period. Above this point the GA Handicap will only be permitted to increase at a rate of 50% of the '8 of 20' calculation.
 - Example: A player's '8 of 20' calculation is 17.2. Their best GA Handicap within the trailing 12-month period is 11.2. Their GA Handicap is 15.7 (ie $11.2 + 3 + (50\% \text{ of } 3)$).
 - Modelling indicates that the Soft Cap will impact up to 20% of the total number of handicap calculations performed by GOLF Link each year. The introduction of the Soft Cap will reduce the percentage of players impacted by the Hard Cap from 5% down to less than 1.5%.
 - GA has been aware for some time that our existing system produces a competitive advantage to the inconsistent player over the consistent player and we have been looking for a way to soften this outcome. The Soft Cap will improve this situation and will improve the equity of Australian handicapping.
- **The Daily Handicap calculation will be changed to incorporate the difference between the Scratch Rating and Par.**
 - To determine a WHS Daily Handicap, GOLF Link will start by performing the exact same calculation as currently occurs under the existing GA Handicap System. And then it will simply adjust this amount by the difference between the Scratch Rating and the Par.
 - **First key benefit.** This is all that needs to happen to enable 36 Stableford points (or net par) to become the equitable measure of whether a player has played to their handicap, irrespective of the course or set of tees.
 - **Second key benefit.** This change will eliminate the significant complexity involved with scoring for multi-tee and mixed gender competitions, and as a result will be beneficial from a game participation and engagement perspective.
 - **Third key benefit.** It will make Daily Handicaps and handicap scores more intuitive – thus eliminating a theme of negative feedback we continually receive on our existing system.