

WORLD HANDICAP SYSTEM



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

The R&A and the United States Golf Association (USGA) have worked 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 closely involved. **The WHS will take full effect in Australia on 30 January 2020.**

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

- Slope is a part of the WHS.
- A player's handicap will continue to be updated by GOLF Link on the same day a score is processed.
- The WHS will feature a statistical daily rating system – the WHS daily rating formulas and regulations have been in full effect in Australia since May 2019.
- Whole number Scratch Ratings will be used (ie no change).
- GA's existing regulations will continue for the handicapping of 9-hole rounds.
- Stableford handicapping of all Stroke competitions will continue.
- The handicapping of 'pre-nominated social scores' is currently permitted in Australia – this will continue unchanged.
- 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).
- There will be a maximum GA Handicap under the WHS of 54 for both men and women. However, your handicap & competition management software under the WHS will allow you to choose default handicap limits lower than 54 for any (or all) of your competitions. For example, you may choose to set your Daily Handicap limits at 36 for men and 45 for women.
 - The findings of GA's 2016 national handicapping survey suggest that most Australian clubs wish to retain the existing handicap limits of 36 for men and 45 for women. Under the WHS, your software will allow you to choose these Daily Handicap limits if you wish.
 - GA has also received feedback from some clubs indicating they would like to be able to increase their existing competition handicap limits. Your software will allow you to do this. This will provide for better engagement with many new players, and also with older members as average Australian ages continue to increase.
 - Where a club chooses to change its competition handicap limits it should consider the impact this will have on its stroke index and its scorecards.
- GA's existing four-ball handicapping regulations will continue without amendment.
- Handicapping of match play scores will not be permitted.
- The Most Likely Score regulation will NOT be in operation.

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

A. NEW REGULATION | Bonus Reduction for Exceptional Net Score

- GOLF Link will apply an automatic additional reduction to a player's GA Handicap if they have an 'exceptional score'.
- If the player's score is 7.0-10.0 strokes better than what their GA Handicap was at the time the round was played then GOLF Link will apply an automatic additional reduction of 1.0 strokes to their GA Handicap. If the player's score is more than 10.0 strokes better than what their GA Handicap was at the time the round was played, then GOLF Link will apply an automatic additional reduction of 2.0 strokes to their GA Handicap.
- To establish whether a score is exceptional, GOLF Link will compare the player's GA Handicap at the time the round was played with the number in the 'Sloped Played To' column for that round. Note: The 'Sloped Played To' column is one of the columns that is displayed in a player's handicap record on www.golf.org.au.

B. NEW REGULATION | Soft Cap of 3 strokes. (To 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 scores' calculation UNTIL it reaches 3 strokes above its best point from the previous 12 months. Once in this new Soft Cap zone, a player's GA Handicap will only be allowed to increase by 50% of the calculated amount.
- Example: A player's '8 of 20 scores' calculation is 17.2, but their best GA Handicap from the previous 12 months is 11.2, which is 6 strokes less. Their GA Handicap calculation becomes $11.2 + 3 + (50\% \text{ of } 3)$ to equal 15.7.
- 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 current handicap 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.

C. 1ST CHANGE TO DAILY HANDICAP FORMULA | Transfer of 0.93 Multiplier

- The 0.93 Multiplier will be transferred out of the GA Handicap calculation and into the Daily Handicap calculation. (As a result, a GA Handicap will be calculated simply by averaging the best 8 of a player's most recent 20 results.)
- Note: Our statisticians confirm this change will have no overall impact on the handicaps players actually play off (ie Daily Handicaps). This is because the slight increase it will cause to GA Handicaps (by being removed from that formula), will be exactly the same as the decrease it will cause to Daily Handicaps (by being transferred into this formula). As a result there will be no overall impact. [See end of page for the full new Daily Handicap formula.]

D. 2ND CHANGE TO DAILY HANDICAP FORMULA | Adjustment when Scratch Rating is different to Par

- *So what is the actual change?* The Daily Handicap formula will include an adjustment when the Scratch Rating is different to the Par. For example: Scratch Rating 73, Par 70 – Daily Handicaps will increase by 3* (ie $73 - 70 = +3$); Scratch Rating 68, Par 70 – Daily Handicaps will decrease by 2* (ie $68 - 70 = -2$). Note: *the Daily Handicap calculation usually produces a number with multiple decimal places, which is then rounded to a whole number; in some cases the rounding will soften the impact of the adjustment by 1.
- *Why is this change being made?* The constant feedback we receive is that it is challenging to explain to golfers that 36 points or net par is often not the measure of whether they have played to their handicap. It all depends on whether there is a difference between the Scratch Rating and the Par. Where Scratch Ratings are higher than Pars, some players do not get/accept that their handicaps do not increase even though their best scores are no better than about 32 points. Where Scratch Ratings are lower than Pars it can appear odd when regular scores of 37 or 38 points are not reducing handicaps. We appreciate that this appears to be inconsistent and confusing to many people – GA understands the importance of making the game less complex where we can.
- **First key benefit.** This simple change will make 36 Stableford points the universal measure of whether a player has played to their handicap. Regardless of the course or set of tees.
- **Second key benefit.** Comparing results in multi-tee and mixed-gender competitions will be made simple – we've heard the feedback and we know the current complexities are a barrier for many clubs. The change will help to drive game participation and engagement initiatives. It will also make it easier for clubs to manage their legal risk around compliance with the 1984 Federal sex discrimination law (see the Australian Human Rights Commission publication titled '*Guidelines for the promotion of equal opportunity for women and girls in golf*' – www.golf.org.au/equality-guidelines).
- NEW DAILY HANDICAP FORMULA = $(\text{GA Handicap} \times (\text{Slope Rating} \div 113) + (\text{Scratch Rating} \text{ minus Par})) \times 0.93$.
- **FULL EXAMPLE OF THE NEW DAILY HANDICAP CALCULATION (software will do all this for you).** A player's GA Handicap is 15.2; Slope 124; Scratch Rating 72; Par 70. The WHS Daily Handicap is: $(15.2 \times 124 \div 113 + (72 \text{ minus } 70)) \times 0.93 = 17.37$ (which rounds to 17). If the player has 36 points off 17, they have played to their handicap.