

## 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. After surveying all Australian golf clubs in late 2017, GA accepted this invitation. At this stage it appears very likely that every other major country will also adopt the WHS. Full implementation of the WHS is scheduled to take place in Australia in late-January or early-February 2020.

### 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. 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. It will be called PCC (Playing Conditions Calculation). 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 PCC will only be calculated once a field size reaches 8 players with GA Handicaps of 36.0 or better (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).
- 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 effectively 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 reaches 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 the 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.
  - **EXAMPLE OF THE NEW DAILY HANDICAP CALCULATION.** A player's Daily Handicap under the existing GA Handicap System is 15 for a set of tees; the Scratch Rating is 72, and the par is 70 (ie the course is rated to be 2 shots harder than its par). Because the course is rated to be 2 shots harder than its par, the player gets an extra 2 shots added to their Daily Handicap, so their WHS Daily Handicap becomes:  $15 + 2 = 17$ .
  - **First 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. This will also make it easier for clubs to manage their legal risk around compliance with the 1984 Federal equal opportunity law (for more information see the Australian Human Rights Commission publication titled '*Guidelines for the promotion of equal opportunity for women and girls in golf*' which is available from the following webpage – [www.golf.org.au/equality-guidelines](http://www.golf.org.au/equality-guidelines)
  - **Second 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.
  - **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.
  
- **GA's 'Bonus Reduction for Exceptional Net Score' regulation will be a part of the WHS (with some refinement).**
  - GOLF Link will apply an automatic additional reduction to a player's GA Handicap if they return an 'exceptional score'. This regulation currently operates in Australia as an optional feature for clubs, and not as an automatic reduction applied by GOLF Link as will occur under the WHS.
  - An 'exceptional score' is one that is at least 7.0 strokes better than what the player's GA Handicap was at the time the round was played.
  - 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](http://www.golf.org.au).
  - 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.