

## **Groove and Punch Mark Local Rule for All Stages of Qualifying for the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open, U.S. Senior Open and U.S. Senior Women's Open Championships**

### **General**

The current groove and punch mark rules effective from 1 January 2010, will be adopted as a Local Rule for the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open, U.S. Senior Open and U.S. Senior Women's Open, as well as all qualifying stages for these four championships. The Local Rule will also be in effect at all USGA's national championships and team competitions that are contested by amateurs only.

The full text of the Local Rule appears at the end of this document.

### **The Local Rule**

#### **Model Local Rule G-2 Groove and Punch Mark Specifications**

"In making a stroke, the player must use clubs that conform to the groove and punch mark specifications in the Equipment Rules that took effect on 1 January 2010.

An Informational Club Database of fairway woods, hybrids, irons and wedges which have been tested for conformance to the current Equipment Rules is found at USGA.org.

#### **Penalty For Making a Stroke with Club in Breach of this Local Rule: Disqualification.**

There is no penalty under this Local Rule for carrying but not making a stroke with a club which does not conform to these groove and punch mark specifications."

### **Ping EYE2 Clubs\*\***

As a result of the waiver from Ping, Ping EYE2 irons manufactured prior to March 31, 1990, may **not** be used at the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open, Senior Open or U.S. Senior Women's Open, as well as all of their respective qualifying stages, unless they have been tested and found to conform to the current groove specifications. Please note that Ping has produced versions of the EYE2 iron that do conform to the current groove specifications (these clubs have markings distinguishing them from the original EYE2, particularly an "XG" engraved as a part of the serial number on the hosel).

**\*\*Please note- the above ONLY applies to USGA Open Championships**

### **Pre-Qualifying Communication with Players**

Attached to this document is championship-specific text (U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open, U.S. Senior Open and U.S. Senior Women's Open) and an info-graphic that **must** be included in your pre-qualifying communication with the players in your qualifying field, e.g., when you communicate information regarding practice rounds, starting times, etc. From the USGA's perspective, it is vitally important that we "over-communicate" with the players regarding this Local Rule.



## **Club Conformance Questions**

The USGA will encourage players to resolve any questions about club conformance prior to arriving on site for any qualifying event. However, we anticipate that an Official in Charge (OIC) might be asked to make a ruling on the conformity of a player's clubs. The first step will be to determine the make and model of the club in question and find out whether the club has been included in the *USGA Informational Club Database* at <http://www.usga.org/InfoClubsDB/intro.html>, which currently lists models of clubs that were available prior to 1 January 2010 which have been evaluated by the USGA and/or The R&A for conformance to the Local Rule. In 2014, the USGA and R&A expanded the database to include new models of clubs submitted on or after 1 January 2010. Please refer to the "Live Meeting" for tips on using the database.

If the club or set of clubs is listed in the *USGA Informational Club Database* as meeting the 2010 groove rules, or if the player can provide proof of conformance to the current Rules of Golf (e.g., a copy of a USGA or R&A decision letter, or a certificate provided by the USGA that the player's specific club(s) have been tested and meet the current Rules of Golf), the club has not been altered, and there are no other extenuating circumstances or other evidence of non-conformance, the club will be presumed to conform. If the club is not listed in the database as meeting the 2010 groove rules and has not been deemed conforming by the USGA or The R&A, and a determination cannot be made immediately, the player may choose to play with the club but risks disqualification if a determination is subsequently made that the club does not conform. Once a question is raised, whether by the player, a competitor or third party, the OIC must determine the conformance status of the club(s) in question.

If another player calls into question the conformity of a player's grooves, as with any question that arises during the competition, the on-site USGA Rules Committee must take all pertinent facts into consideration in evaluating the situation, and the above procedure will apply if necessary. The on-site USGA Rules Committee must render a decision in these circumstances and that decision will be final. If the club in question requires testing to determine conformance, the OIC must send it to Carter Rich at the USGA Equipment Standards Department. It is only necessary to send a club for testing if the player in question is a potential qualifier or an alternate. In such a case, Carter Rich will contact the OIC with the test results so that an official ruling can be made.

The above link provides very useful information for OIC in handling a conformance ruling in addition to the searchable database. Please see the attached sheet for additional information about how to use the database, as well as properly reading the search result.

## **Club Testing**

On-site club testing will only be available at the four Open sites proper. There will be no on-site testing at any Local or Sectional Qualifying sites. For information about testing prior to qualifying, please visit [www.usga.org/grooves/](http://www.usga.org/grooves/).

## **Application of the Groove and Punch Mark Local Rule**

The attached Q&A document addresses many potential situations involving the groove and punch Local Rule. Questions regarding this document may be referred to the USGA Rules Department.

## **Questions and Answers on the Application of the Groove and Punch Mark Local Rule**

**Q1. During a competition a player uses a club that he knows the USGA/R&A had ruled non-conforming to the groove rules effective from 1 January 2010 before the competition started. Before the competition is closed, the Committee discovers that the player used the non-conforming club. What is the ruling?**

A1. The player is disqualified – see the penalty statement to the Local Rule.

**Q2. During a competition a player uses a club that he knows the USGA/R&A had ruled non-conforming to the groove rules effective from January 1, 2010 before the competition started. After the competition is closed, the Committee discovers that the player used the non-conforming club. What is the ruling?**

A2. The player is disqualified – see Rule 20.2e of the Rules of Golf.

**Q3. During a competition a player uses a club that he did not know the USGA/R&A had ruled non-conforming to the groove rules effective from January 1, 2010 before the competition started. Before the competition is closed, the Committee discovers that the player used the non-conforming club. What is the ruling?**

A3. The player is disqualified – see the penalty statement to the Local Rule.

**Q4. During a competition a player uses a club that he did not know the USGA/R&A had ruled non-conforming to the groove rules effective from 1 January 2010 before the competition started. After the competition is closed, the Committee discovers that the player used the non-conforming club. What is the ruling?**

A4. The player's score stands – see Rule 20.2e. However, the player should be advised that the club does not meet the Local Rule and, as a result, must not carry or use it in subsequent competition rounds when the Local Rule is in effect.

**Q5. During a competition a player knowingly uses an ATR\* club (Additional Testing Required) and does not inform the Committee. Before the close of the competition this fact is brought to the attention of the Committee. The Committee sends the club to the USGA for testing and it is ruled that it does not conform. What is the ruling?**

A5. The player is disqualified – see the penalty statement to the Local Rule.

**Q6. During a competition a player knowingly uses an ATR club and does not inform the Committee. After the close of the competition this fact is brought to the attention of the Committee. The Committee sends the club to the USGA for testing and it is ruled that it does not conform. What is the ruling?**

A6. The player is disqualified. It is the responsibility of the player, not the Committee, to know whether his or her clubs conform and he or she assumes the risk that his clubs will be found to be non-

conforming if he or she does not know before making a stroke with them. The fact that a club has been classified as an ATR club should put a player on notice that it might not conform. Therefore, he or she ought to either not play with it or get it tested before the start of the competition. To allow a player to use a non-conforming club when he or she knows it might be non-conforming is unfair to the other players in the competition.

**Q7. During a competition a player unknowingly uses an ATR club. After the close of the competition this fact is brought to the attention of the Committee. What is the ruling?**

A7. Since the player was unaware that the club was an ATR club prior to the competition closing, the player's score stands – see Rule 20.2e.

**Q8. A player comes to the Committee and asks if a club conforms to the groove rules effective from January 1, 2010. What is the procedure for the Committee?**

A8. If there is enough time prior to the start of the player's round, the informational database should be consulted and the conformance status of the club can be verified. If the club is listed in the database as meeting the 2010 groove specifications, the face of the club has not been altered, and there are no other extenuating circumstances or other evidence of non-conformance, the club will be assumed to conform. If the club is not listed as such in the database and a determination cannot be made immediately or if there is not enough time to consult the database or access to the database is not available, the player may choose to play with the club but risks disqualification even after the competition has closed if a determination is subsequently made that the club does not conform and the player made a stroke with it.

**Q9. Prior to the competition, a player informs the Committee that he has an ATR club but has no way of testing it. Is the Committee obligated to test the club? What is the procedure if they cannot do so, as in the case of a qualifier where no testing equipment will be on-site?**

A9. The player, not the Committee, is responsible for ensuring that his or her club conforms long before the day of the competition. Waiting until the day of the competition is the fault of the competitor, not the Committee. The Committee is under no obligation to test the club prior to the start of the stipulated round (at Local and Sectional Qualifying, the Committee will not be able to test the club the day of the competition). The player may carry the club. However, if it is later determined that the club is non-conforming (e.g., the player is a potential qualifier or alternate and the club is sent to the USGA Test Center for testing), including after the competition has closed, the player is disqualified if he or she made a stroke with it.

In general, if the player has had the conformity of his or her equipment questioned before the close of the competition, then the player should be disqualified if it is determined later that his club is non-conforming and the player made a stroke with it, regardless of when the determination is made. Questioned would include: (1) the player knew his or her club was listed as ATR, (2) the player had reason to believe his or her club might not conform, (3) the player has asked that it be tested for whatever reason, which implies that he has some question about the conformity of the club, or (4) another player or the Committee has chosen to question/test the conformance of the club.



Please note that all U.S. Open, Women's Open, Senior Open and Senior Women's Open entrants are advised upon entry that they may send their clubs to the USGA Test Center for evaluation if their clubs are listed in the database as ATR or if their clubs are not listed (players should contact the USGA prior to submitting clubs manufactured on or after 1 January 2010). See the following link for further detail:

<http://www.usga.org/grooves/>

**Q10. A player wins a competition with a non-conforming club. During a subsequent competition, it is determined that the player's club is non-conforming. Is the player disqualified from the competition which he had won?**

A10. No, unless the player knew he or she was or might have been in breach before the close of the earlier competition – see Rule 20.2e.

**Q11. What is the impact of the waiver granted to the USGA by Ping with respect to the use of Ping EYE2 clubs manufactured before 31 March 1990?**

A11. Ping EYE2 clubs may not be used at the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open, U.S. Senior Open or U.S. Senior Women's Open, as well as Local and Sectional Qualifying competitions for these championships, unless they have been tested and found to conform with the current groove specifications.

\*ATR (Additional Testing Required) indicator signifies that, based on the samples submitted to the USGA or R&A Test Centers, there was insufficient information available to provide a definitive answer regarding the status of the club or set of clubs relative to the groove and punch mark specifications effective from 1 January 2010. As a result, the player assumes the risk that his club or set of clubs does not conform if the player chooses to carry the club or set of clubs, when the Committee has adopted the Local Rule requiring conformance to the groove and punch mark specifications effective from 1 January 2010, unless the player has the individual club or set of clubs tested and they are found to conform to the Local Rule.

### **Links from USGA Website to Groove Specific Information**

**Grooves Resources and Information – <http://www.usga.org/grooves/>**

- Questions & Answers: Implementation of Local Rule Regarding Grooves and Punch Marks
- Link to Informational Club Database
- Invitation for Club Testing



## FOR USE IN PRE-QUALIFYING COMMUNICATION WITH PLAYERS

### U.S. Open

*In Local (first stage) and Sectional (second stage) Qualifying as well as in the Championship proper, the player's clubs must conform to the groove and punch mark specifications in the Equipment Rules effective from 1 January 2010. **Note: Ping EYE2 clubs manufactured prior to 31 March 1990 may not be used during Local and Sectional Qualifying as well as the Championship proper.** The Local Rule is available for review on the entry application and applies to all fairway woods, hybrids, irons and wedges.*

*The USGA and The R&A have created a reference resource called the Informational Club Database to assist golfers in determining whether their irons, wedges, hybrids and fairway woods comply with the Equipment Rules effective from 1 January 2010 and are permissible for play under the groove and punch mark Local Rule, which is in effect for all USGA Open Championships. For information about and to access the database, please use the following link: <http://www.usga.org/InfoClubsDB/intro.html>. Additionally, for other information regarding the groove Local Rule, please use the following link: <http://www.usga.org/grooves/>. Finally, for information regarding the conformance status of clubs not listed or for any other questions regarding the Local Rule, please contact the USGA Equipment Standards at (908) 234-2300.*

*Player Club Testing is available for the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open, U.S. Senior Open, and U.S. Senior Women's Open Championships. Please use the following link: <http://www.usga.org/grooves/> for more information.*

*The USGA strongly suggests that all players verify the conformance of their clubs well in advance of their scheduled qualifying competition. It is the player's responsibility, not the USGA's responsibility to ensure that his or her clubs conform. Waiting until the day of the competition is the fault of the player. The Committee is under no obligation to test the club the competitor may play. However, if it is later determined that the club is non-conforming, including after the competition has closed, the player will be disqualified if the player made a stroke with it.*

### U.S. Women's Open

*In Local (first stage) and Sectional (second stage) Qualifying as well as in the Championship proper, the player's clubs must conform to the groove and punch mark specifications in the Equipment Rules effective from 1 January 2010. **Note: Ping EYE2 clubs manufactured prior to 31 March 1990 may not be used during Local and Sectional Qualifying as well as the Championship proper.** The Local Rule is available for review on the entry application and applies to all fairway woods, hybrids, irons and wedges.*

*The USGA and The R&A have created a reference resource called the Informational Club Database to assist golfers in determining whether their irons, wedges, hybrids and fairway woods comply with the Equipment Rules effective from 1 January 2010 and are permissible for play under the groove and punch mark Local Rule, which is in effect for all USGA Open Championships. For information about and to access the database, please use the following link: <http://www.usga.org/InfoClubsDB/intro.html>. Additionally, for other information regarding the groove Local Rule, please use the following link: <http://www.usga.org/grooves/>. Finally, for information regarding the conformance status of clubs not listed or for any other questions regarding the Local Rule, please contact the USGA Equipment Standards at (908) 234-2300.*





Player Club Testing is available for the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open, U.S. Senior Open, and U.S. Senior Women's Open Championships. Please use the following link: <http://www.usga.org/grooves/> for more information.

*The USGA strongly suggests that all players verify the conformance of their clubs well in advance of their scheduled qualifying competition. It is the player's responsibility, not the USGA's responsibility to ensure that his or her clubs conform. Waiting until the day of the competition is the fault of the player. The Committee is under no obligation to test the club the competitor may play. However, if it is later determined that the club is non-conforming, including after the competition has closed, the player will be disqualified if the player made a stroke with it.*

### **U.S. Senior Open**

*In Local (first stage) and Sectional (second stage) Qualifying as well as in the Championship proper, the player's clubs must conform to the groove and punch mark specifications in the Equipment Rules effective from 1 January 2010. **Note: Ping EYE2 clubs manufactured prior to 31 March 1990 may not be used during Local and Sectional Qualifying as well as the Championship proper.** The Local Rule is available for review on the entry application and applies to all fairway woods, hybrids, irons and wedges.*

*The USGA and The R&A have created a reference resource called the Informational Club Database to assist golfers in determining whether their irons, wedges, hybrids and fairway woods comply with the Equipment Rules effective from 1 January 2010 and are permissible for play under the groove and punch mark Local Rule, which is in effect for all USGA Open Championships. For information about and to access the database, please use the following link: <http://www.usga.org/InfoClubsDB/intro.html>. Additionally, for other information regarding the groove Local Rule, please use the following link: <http://www.usga.org/grooves/>. Finally, for information regarding the conformance status of clubs not listed or for any other questions regarding the Local Rule, please contact the USGA Equipment Standards at (908) 234-2300.*

Player Club Testing is available for the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open, U.S. Senior Open, and U.S. Senior Women's Open Championships. Please use the following link: <http://www.usga.org/grooves/> for more information.

*The USGA strongly suggests that all players verify the conformance of their clubs well in advance of their scheduled qualifying competition. It is the player's responsibility, not the USGA's responsibility to ensure that his or her clubs conform. Waiting until the day of the competition is the fault of the player. The Committee is under no obligation to test the club the competitor may play. However, if it is later determined that the club is non-conforming, including after the competition has closed, the player will be disqualified if the player made a stroke with it.*

### **U.S. Senior Women's Open**

*In Local (first stage) and Sectional (second stage) Qualifying as well as in the Championship proper, the player's clubs must conform to the groove and punch mark specifications in the Equipment Rules effective from 1 January 2010. **Note: Ping EYE2 clubs manufactured prior to 31 March 1990 may not be used during Local and Sectional Qualifying as well as the Championship proper.** The Local*



*Rule is available for review on the entry application and applies to all fairway woods, hybrids, irons and wedges.*

*The USGA and The R&A have created a reference resource called the Informational Club Database to assist golfers in determining whether their irons, wedges, hybrids and fairway woods comply with the Equipment Rules effective from 1 January 2010 and are permissible for play under the groove and punch mark Local Rule, which is in effect for all USGA Open Championships. For information about and to access the database, please use the following link: <http://www.usga.org/InfoClubsDB/intro.html>. Additionally, for other information regarding the groove Local Rule, please use the following link: <http://www.usga.org/grooves/>. Finally, for information regarding the conformance status of clubs not listed or for any other questions regarding the Local Rule, please contact the USGA Equipment Standards at (908) 234-2300.*

*Player Club Testing is available for the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open, U.S. Senior Open, and U.S. Senior Women's Open Championships. Please use the following link: <http://www.usga.org/grooves/> for more information.*

*The USGA strongly suggests that all players verify the conformance of their clubs well in advance of their scheduled qualifying competition. It is the player's responsibility, not the USGA's responsibility to ensure that his or her clubs conform. Waiting until the day of the competition is the fault of the player. The Committee is under no obligation to test the club the competitor may play. However, if it is later determined that the club is non-conforming, including after the competition has closed, the player will be disqualified if the player made a stroke with it.*

## **Informational Club Database**

The USGA has received numerous inquiries from golfers wishing to know whether or not their clubs will meet the new groove and punch mark specifications effective from 1 January 2010 (the "Current Groove Rules"). Many of these inquiries have come from golfers who plan to play in events where the Local Rule is in effect, requiring that the player's clubs conform to the Current Groove Rules (the "Model Local Rule G-2"). As a result, the USGA and The R&A have created a reference resource called the Informational Club Database (the "Database").

### **How to Use the Informational Club Database**

The purpose of the Database is to assist golfers in determining whether their irons, hybrids and fairway woods comply with the Current Groove Rules.

The Database is a searchable database of irons, wedges, fairway woods and hybrids which have been submitted to the USGA and/or The R&A to determine whether they meet the requirements of the Local Rule.

If it is indicated in the Database that a club does not comply with the Current Groove Rules, it does not mean that the club does not conform to the Equipment Rules. Irons, wedges, fairway woods and hybrids available prior to 1 January 2010, which conform to the 2008-2009 Rules of Golf, are permitted for use until at least 2024, provided that the Local Rule is not in effect.





Additionally, clubs available prior to 1 January 2010, which conform to the 2008-2009 Rules of Golf, were permitted to be produced and sold by manufacturers until 31 December 2010, and may be sold by retailers indefinitely.

In listing the compliance status of clubs in the Database with respect to the Current Groove Rules, the USGA has chosen to indicate whether a club complied or did not comply only if the test results were clear. In situations where the test results were mixed within a set submitted or the model did not consistently meet the Current Groove Rules, the Database indicates that there was insufficient information available to determine compliance to the Current Groove Rules. Any player who wishes to carry such clubs in events where the Local Rule is in effect should have their clubs tested individually and those clubs must meet the Current Groove Rules. **It is important to remember that most clubs in production prior to 1 January 2010 were designed to comply with a different set of groove and punch mark specifications. Clubs that conform to the groove rules that were in effect prior to 1 January 2010 will continue to conform to the Equipment Rules until at least 2024, unless the Local Rule is in effect. If the Local Rule is in effect, the clubs must comply with the specifications effective from 1 January 2010.**

Unlike the List of Conforming Driver Heads, the Database is to be used for reference purposes only. The Database is not to be used in any manner stipulating that clubs must be included in the Database in order to be carried when the Local Rule is in effect.

To use the Database, simply select the club type (irons and wedges, hybrids, or fairway woods) and enter the appropriate search criteria in the manufacturer, product name and/or markings fields. Once you have located the club model, expand at least one of the "View Markings" fields to ensure that the markings on your clubs match the markings displayed. There may be subtle differences in the markings differentiating two versions of the same model of a club (e.g., a pre- 2010 and post-2010 version of the same model) or indicating two different models. For example, one version of a model may include a hosel marking indicating compliance with the Current Groove Rules, while the original version may not include the hosel marking. Please note that these differences vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. As a result, **if all markings of the clubhead shown in the Database do not match exactly the markings on the club in question, it may be a different model or version and you should consult the USGA for further assistance.**

### Reading the Search Result

1. The search result provides the club's conformance status with the groove rules in effect prior to 1 January 2010 (Yes or No), as well as an indication of whether the club meets the 2010 Groove Rules (Yes, No or ATR).
2. A 2010 status of "Yes" or "No" indicates that, based on the samples submitted, there was sufficient information available to provide a definitive answer regarding the status of the club or set of clubs relative to the 2010 Groove Rules.
3. A 2010 status of ATR (Additional Testing Required) indicates that, based on the samples submitted, there was insufficient information available to provide a definitive answer regarding the status of the club or set of clubs relative to the 2010 Groove Rules (e.g., some of the samples submitted within the set met the 2010 Groove Rules, while other samples within the set did not).
4. An individual club or set of clubs with an ATR status indicates that the player assumes the risk that his clubs do not comply with the 2010 Groove Rules if the player does not have his or her



club or set of clubs tested for compliance prior to the competition and the player chooses to carry the club or set of clubs when the Local Rules in effect. Accordingly, it is highly recommended that the player has the individual club or set of clubs tested to ensure they are in compliance with the 2010 Groove Rules. **It is important to remember that clubs available prior to 1 January 2010 were designed to comply with a different set of groove specifications. Clubs that conform to the groove rules that were in effect prior to 1 January 2010 will continue to conform to the Equipment Rules until at least 2024, unless the Local Rule is in effect. If the Local Rule is in effect, the clubs must comply with the specifications effective from 1 January 2010.**

5. Please note that because the new edge radius requirements do not apply to clubs with lofts of less than 25 degrees, some searches may yield a result indicating that clubs with lofts less than 25 degrees within an iron set meet the 2010 Groove Rules, while the higher lofted irons within a set do not. However, please note that a second major change to the Groove Rules (Area divided by Pitch), applies to all clubs, regardless of loft, other than driving clubs and putters.
6. It is the player's responsibility to ensure that his clubs conform to the Equipment Rules, including all applicable Local Rules. Players, therefore, should take care to ensure that any clubs carried during the stipulated round meet the requirements of the rules on clubs in effect for that competition. Moreover, it is strongly recommended that any questions regarding compliance with the 2010 Groove Rules be resolved by the player in advance of the competition because on-site testing may not be available.
7. It is anticipated that the committee in charge of the competition may rely on the Database and presume that clubs listed as meeting the 2010 Groove Rules, as designated as a "Yes", may be carried in the competition, without further field testing. However, if a club is tested and fails any on-site evaluation for compliance with the 2010 Groove Rules, that individual club may not be carried by the player, when the Local Rule is in effect, even if that model is included in the Database as complying with the 2010 Groove Rules. Similarly, if a club or set of clubs is listed as not meeting the 2010 Groove Rules, but they are tested and found to comply with the 2010 Groove Rules, that individual club or set of clubs may be carried by the player when the Local Rule is in effect. In other words, in all events, actual testing of the club or clubs in question, if applicable, shall supersede the findings in the Database.

**RULES AND COMPETITIONS STAFF**

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