

USGA RELEASES CHANGES TO HANDICAP SYSTEM

The United States Golf Association has announced revisions to the USGA Handicap System™, effective Jan. 1, 2016. It also will be introducing more changes to the System in 2018. Below are some of the new 2016 changes.

- **Definition of a tournament score:** Additional guidance is provided to Committees conducting competitions regarding the definition of a tournament score, placing greater emphasis on “significant events.” The definition excludes fundraising events and regular league play, in favor of designated competitions such as a member/guest or club championship, local amateur tournament or national qualifying and competition. A note explaining the consequence of over-designating T-Scores was added, and a new chart with examples inserted. (Section 2: Definitions and Section 10-3, Reduction of Handicap Index Based on Exceptional Tournament Scores). The continued importance and clarity shows that club Tournament Committees and Handicap Committees need to work together to determine which events will be designated as “Tournament Scores” for handicap purposes.
- **Posting scores when a player is disqualified:** To improve alignment with the Rules of Golf, the revised Handicap System is clearer about what scores are acceptable when a player is disqualified. In general, a score is acceptable for handicap purposes even when a player fails to hole out, or apply a Rule that affects the rights of another player. If the disqualification breach is determined to provide an advantage for the player, the score is deemed unacceptable for handicap purposes. (Section 5-1: Acceptability of Scores)
- **Anchoring and posting:** A new reference concerns a player who anchors the club while making a stroke during a round and fails to apply the appropriate penalty or an adjusted hole score (Section 4-2). Since the score would not be reflected as playing under the Rules of Golf, it would be unacceptable for handicap purposes. (Section 5-1: Acceptability of Scores)
- **Playing alone and necessary peer review:** To further support the key System premise of peer review, scores made while playing alone will no longer be acceptable for handicap purposes. This change underscores the importance of providing full and accurate information regarding a player’s potential scoring ability, and the ability of other players to form a reasonable basis for supporting or disputing a posted score. (Section 5-1: Acceptability of Scores)
- **Committee responsibilities in connection with disabilities:** In an effort to assist the Handicap Committee with its responsibilities, this revision addresses a player with a temporary disability or permanent disability who has a Handicap Index that is no longer reflective of current potential ability. In the particular instance cited, the Committee will no longer assign a local handicap (denoted with the letter “L” for local use only), but instead will issue a (temporary) modified Handicap Index (denoted by the letter “M”).

This change supports the portability of a disabled player's handicap, so that it can be used anywhere. (Section 8-4c: Handicap Index Adjustment by Handicap Committee)

- **Elimination of Internet Score Type:** Internet score posting is a means of posting and not a type, so scores posted via this means will no longer be denoted in any special way. Additionally, a club is no longer positioned to determine whether use of the internet is acceptable for score posting purposes.

These and numerous other changes to the USGA Handicap System can be found at scga.org on the Handicap Chair website under GHIN Tips.