

2024 Rules of Handicapping Update Effective April 1st 2024

1.0 Introduction

Just as with the Rules of Golf, the WHS™ Rules of Handicapping are updated every 4 years – this is set to be the year preceding the Rules of Golf change (last update January 2023). This allows WHS to be appropriately adapted to any impacts from the Rules of Golf changes. The next WHS change is from 1 January 2024.

Under guidance from the R&A and USGA® these changes have been made to ensure a more unified approach worldwide to WHS, especially within GB&I, this will give consistency to golfers travelling to different jurisdictions and to take advantage of digital innovations and therefore giving further improvement to having more scores which are acceptable for handicapping purposes.

Golf Ireland, England Golf, Scottish Golf and Wales Golf work closely together to ensure a simplified, aligned, and collaborative approach is taken to ensure golfers within GB&I can seamlessly play in each jurisdiction. Therefore, we have all agreed, the new updates to the rules will not take effect until the 1st of April 2024. This will allow further education and understanding for all our counties, clubs, and golfers.

This document will detail the changes for Clubs within Ireland, how they work and their benefit/impact upon their golfers.

A summary of the WHS 2024 changes are listed below and more detail is outlined in the following pages. These changes are being implemented to enhance the accuracy, fairness, and overall experience of the handicap system.

- ✓ **Introduction of Course Rating™ minus PAR (within GB&I nations)**
 - In line with the rest of the world and is more accurate calculation of playing handicap. Course & playing handicaps may go up or down This will be managed by club software when registering for competitions or general play. Updated handicap charts will be posted in the clubhouse & published on the website on April 1st, 2024
- ✓ **Introduction of Acceptable Scores from Four-Ball formats**
 - In the ongoing attempt to capture all golf for handicap calculations, certain four-ball events can be included for handicap calculations – see more detail below
- ✓ **Implementation of Expected Scoring**
 - A system of calculating a score for holes not played for handicap purposes. This allows us to play any number of holes above 9 holes i.e. 14 holes competitions in Winter. It also allows expected scores to be calculated for holes not played for valid reasons i.e. storm or illness
- ✓ **Using Un-rounded Course Handicap™ calculation**
 - Currently the CH is rounded before calculating the PH. The new system will only round the PH. Club software will manage this, however, for inter-club competitions there will be manual calculations required.
- ✓ **Course Rating™ changes**
 - Rating of courses of a minimum 1500 yards
 - Reduced from 3,000 yards to 1,500 yards. Not relevant for Rathcore
 - Standardising Par
 - More flexibility for clubs for determining indexes and par criteria – not relevant for Rathcore

2.0 Course Rating™ minus Par (C.R.™-PAR)

What it is?

It is an adjustment for the difference between the Course Rating and Par of the course being played. It will be implemented as part of the Course Handicap™ calculation to give players the number of strokes required to play the course.

Current CH™ calculation is $CH = H.I. \times (SLOPE/113)$

CH Calculation with C.R.-PAR is $CH = H.I. \times (SLOPE/113) + (C.R.-PAR)$

Without C.R.-PAR, the target score for a golfer to play to handicap is the Course Rating. However, with C.R.-PAR implemented, it will move that target score to PAR of the course or 36 points.

How it works?

If the C.R. is higher than Par, players will receive additional strokes, however if the C.R. is lower than the par, they will lose strokes, this is to ensure that handicap target score is Net Par/36 points.

For example:

A male player currently playing a course from the white tees (C.R. – 74.4, SLOPE - 151, Par 73), with a H.I. of 10.0, would have a CH of 13.

- $H.I. \times (SLOPE/113)$
- $10.0 \times (151/113)$
- 10.0×1.3362831
- 13.362831 (13)

However, using C.R.-PAR, the player's CH would be 15, taking into consideration the difference in the Course Rating and the Par of the course.

$(H.I. \times (SLOPE/113)) + (C.R.-PAR)$

- $(10.0 \times (151/113)) + (74.4 - 73)$
- $(10.0 \times 1.3362831) + (1.4)$
- $13.362831 + 1.4$
- 14.762831 (15)

This means that players are now aiming for Net Par/36 points.

Benefits

- ✓ **Golfers are playing to PAR of the course for handicapping purposes.**
- ✓ **Golfers will receive shots based on the course difficulty.**
- ✓ **More suitable adjustment between tee sets.**
- ✓ **Alignment with the majority of other jurisdictions.**
- ✓ **No confusion for golfers when playing overseas.**
- ✓ **Easier calculation required for Mixed Tee and Mixed Gender events – as the difference on Mixed Gender will be the Course Par.**

3.0 Acceptable Scoring for Four-Ball formats

What it is?

Currently, only scores from certain singles formats of play are returned to WHS™ for Handicap Index® calculation within GB&I. As of 1 April 2024, scores from Four- Ball (such as Strokeplay, Stableford and Par/Bogey) will be acceptable for handicap purposes in GB&I. These additional and popular formats of play will allow more scores to be returned for handicap purposes based on some specified criteria.

Note: this is for competition play only

How it works?

Once the acceptable pairs/team score is returned to WHS, WHS will look for specific criteria, which is as followed:

One player of the pair must have scored on a minimum of 9 holes. The total pair score

must be at least 42 points or 6 under Par.

If these triggers are hit, then the golfer who has scored on the minimum 9 holes will have an upscaling value added for their un-played holes based upon their playing partner's score and if the score equates to 36+ points/level par or better it will calculate a Score Differential™ and the score will be added to the scoring record for handicap purposes.

This score may or may not be one of their best 8 score differentials used to update/recalculate their handicap index. For scores not hitting the specified trigger points, the score will still be added to records but not used in calculations, as it will be indicated so in the records.

Benefits

- ✓ **Make the game more inclusive as more scores are available for handicapping purposes from various formats of play.**
- ✓ **Handicaps will be more reflective of a player's demonstrated ability.**

4.0 Expected Scoring

What it is?

A change in the method used to scale up 9-hole scores and any holes not played during a round. The new method provides a more accurate reflection of what the player would have scored on those holes (using player equations rather than net par) and should, therefore, result in a more accurate Handicap Index®.

If the hole is not played for a valid reason (due to course maintenance, weather, fading light etc.) or other invalid reasoning (player walks off), WHS still requires values to calculate a Score Differential™ for these holes not played and will use expected scoring method.

How it works?

The calculation of an expected score is automated and is used to attribute a statistical value against any hole or holes not played within an acceptable 9-hole or 18-hole round so that a 9-hole or 18-hole Score Differential can be calculated, subject to other provisions set out within the Rules of Handicapping.

The procedure for calculating a Score Differential using an expected score can be summarised as follows:

1. An expected Score Differential for the hole or holes not played is calculated, based on a given Handicap Index and a course of standard difficulty.
2. A Score Differential for the holes played is calculated using the player's actual scores and the rating value of the holes played.
3. The Score Differential from the holes played is combined with the expected Score Differential to produce either a 9-hole or 18-hole Score Differential.
4. For 9-hole rounds - An 18-hole Score Differential is created by combining the 9-hole Score Differential for the 9 holes played with the player's expected score over 9 holes.

Note – expected scoring is a closed calculation which is generated by computer precision software.

If a player starts a hole and does not finish, the normal procedure of Net Double Bogey is applied to the adjusted gross score.

Benefits

- ✓ **A more precise calculation for 9-hole up-scaling to an 18-hole score differential ensuring a more reflective and accurate Handicap Index® compared to a player's demonstrated ability.**

5.0 Unrounded Course Handicap™

What it is?

A Course Handicap is the number of shots the golfer receives for the tee set they are going to play. Currently in Ireland, England and Wales this value is calculated to a decimal and then rounded for the golfer, which is the value they use when playing golf (both general play and competition golf).

Under the 2024 WHS rules of handicapping update this will remain unchanged, only if there is a lack of “machine precision*” for calculation purposes. Where there is an ability to use “machine precision” calculation by using ISV software or the Golf Ireland App etc. the Playing Handicap™ calculation will change to “unrounded”.

The unrounded value is carried forward to then calculate the Playing Handicap, the Playing Handicap would then be rounded to a whole number.

*machine precision – utilising the computer software to ensure the accuracy of the calculations.

How it works?

Course Handicap calculation using unrounded calculation.

Example: A player playing from the White tees (C.R. – 74.4, SLOPE - 151, Par 73), with a Handicap Index® of 10.0.

$$\checkmark CH = (H.I.^{\circ} \times (SLOPE/113)) + (C.R.-PAR)$$

$$\checkmark CH = (10.0 \times (151/113)) + (74.4 - 73)$$

$$\checkmark CH = (10.0 \times 1.3362831) + (1.4)$$

$$\checkmark CH = 13.362831 + 1.4$$

$$\checkmark CH = 14.762831 (15)$$

With a Playing Handicap™ allowance of 95%

$$\checkmark \text{Playing Handicap} = 14.762831 * 0.95$$

$$\checkmark 14.02 (14) = 14.76 * 0.95$$

The Playing Handicap would be 14.

Golf Clubs should be utilising the following:

✓ Use of the ISV software for Competition and General play rounds

✓ Signpost the golfer to the Golf Ireland App for General Play rounds & Course Handicap™ Calculator.

Benefits

- ✓ **Exact Playing Handicap™ values are used to calculate a Playing Handicap™ for competitions by the ISV software.**
- ✓ **Ensures everybody is playing off the most appropriate handicap.**
- ✓ **As digital enhancements are available there is no mandatory requirement for Course Handicap™ Boards – clubs may choose what is best for them.**

6.0 Course Rating™ Changes

6.1 Short Courses

What it is?

The minimum length of an 18hole course that can receive a WHS™ Course Rating will be reduced to 1500 yards (750yds for 9 holes)

How it works?

Currently the minimum length of an 18-hole course that can be rated under WHS is 3000 yards or 1500 yds for 9-holes. This is mainly due to the current rating system not being able to calculate accurate Ratings™ for courses with many short holes.

The change will reduce this minimum length by half to all shorter courses and Par 3 courses (average 84 yards per hole) to gain a WHS rating. The rating program is being further developed to make the appropriate adjustments to accommodate the accurate calculation of shorter courses.

Benefits

- ✓ **Short courses play a big part in the recruitment of new players. Allowing these courses to have a WHS rating, will encourage more Junior, Beginner and Disabled golfers to gain a handicap which will aid retention and support their transition into full membership.**
- ✓ **Allow currently unaffiliated facilities/clubs with an unrated short course to seek affiliation, increasing participation.**
- ✓ **Golf Ireland could gain additional revenue from new affiliated clubs**

6.2 Standardising Par

What it is?

Standardising Par will allow clubs to retain the same Par across all tee sets rated for the same gender

How it works?

Currently the guidance given to clubs for the allocation of Par centres around a set of yardage limits within which a hole should fall to be allocated a particular scorecard Par (Appendix F – Rules of Handicapping).

Moving forward, clubs now have a choice to standardise (keep the same) par for each tee set regardless of whether they move out of certain yardage brackets as indicated in Appendix F.

Since the introduction of WHS, shorter and longer tees are now being rated for each gender. Currently a hole which plays as a Par 5 from the White and Yellow tees but falls short of the minimum length for that same Par from the Red tees (shown in Appendix F), is advised to be allocated a Par 4.

With the change in Standardising par, the hole could remain a par 5 in line with all other tee sets for that gender.

With the addition of C.R.[™]-Par in the new Course Handicap[™] calculation which will bring a player's "play to handicap" score back to 36 points regardless of the Par, clubs will now be permitted to standardise their Pars if they wish to.

Benefits

- ✓ **Standardised Pars will allow clubs to simplify scorecards and avoid any confusion for players around different Pars, without having a different play to handicap score for all tee sets where there is a difference between C.R. and Par.**
- ✓ **It will be easier for Clubs to retain the same Stroke Indices across all tee sets for the same gender as the Par will be the same for each.**
- ✓ **It will make Course Rating[™] easier for Clubs rating teams in relation to the allocation of par.**

7.0 Summary

The USGA[®] and R&A have appropriate rationale for the changes, given by the amount of data received and feedback from 3 years of using WHS[™], this will ensure WHS's integrity is maintained and a golfer's Handicap Index[®] is reflective of their demonstrated ability, especially by making more formats of play acceptable for handicap scoring. It will further make administration of the system easier on clubs as we continue to enhance and improve on the use of digital technology.