USGA Media Center

FAR HILLS, N.J. (Nov. 23, 2015) – In tandem with the 2016 updates to the Rules of Golf, the United States Golf Association has announced revisions to the USGA Handicap System™, effective Jan. 1, 2016.

“The USGA Handicap System is constantly evolving to ensure that the System works for the game today and tomorrow,” said Steven Edmondson, the USGA’s managing director of Handicapping & Course Rating. “As we examine the game domestically and globally, these revisions support the integrity and reliability that millions of players around the world expect of this System. We continue to explore substantive changes as we work toward a World Handicap System in the years ahead.”

Six significant changes are among those noted in the upcoming edition, which will impact approximately 10 million golfers who hold a Handicap Index® issued throughout the U.S. and 32 licensed associations, federations and unions around the world. Those highlighted changes include:

- **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. (*Section 2: Definitions)*
- **Adjusting hole scores:** A revised decision provides clarity for acceptable scores in limited situations where the player has not played a hole(s) under the Rules of Golf, but his or her score would be sufficiently accurate for handicap posting purposes. Three areas covered under the examples include: 1) where the Local Rule is not in effect, but a player chooses to use a Distance Measuring Device or preferred lies; 2) where a player does not wish to cause undue delay; or 3) where the situation is outside of the player’s control, such as an incorrectly marked golf course. (*Section 4: Adjusting Hole Scores)*
- **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 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 his/her 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 outside the player’s home club. (*Section 8-4c: Handicap Index Adjustment by Handicap Committee)*

An overview of these changes with more detailed information will be provided at usga.org before the end of 2015. The complete USGA Handicap System Manual will be posted to the same site, and it will be available for purchase at USGAshop.com, on Jan. 1, 2016.

About the USGA Handicap System™

The purpose of the USGA Handicap System is to make the game of golf more enjoyable by enabling players of differing

abilities to compete on an equitable basis. A Handicap Index, represented as a number taken to one decimal place (such as 10.4), indicates a player's potential, and can be adjusted as the player's game changes. It is useful for all forms of play.

A Handicap Index reflects the player's potential because it is based upon the best Handicap Differentials posted for a given number of rounds, ideally the best 10 of the last 20 rounds. The Handicap Index is portable from course to course, as well as from one set of tees to another set of tees on the same course, as a player can convert a Handicap Index to a Course Handicap™ based on the Slope Rating® of the tees played.

The USGA Handicap System is a trademark of the USGA and is currently licensed throughout the U.S. and to 32 international associations, federations and unions.

For more information: www.usga.org/handicapping.html

About the USGA

The USGA conducts the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open, as well as 10 national amateur championships, two state team championships and international matches, attracting players and fans from more than 160 countries. Together with The R&A, the USGA governs the game worldwide, jointly administering the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status, equipment standards and World Amateur Golf Rankings. The USGA's reach is global with a working jurisdiction in the United States, its territories and Mexico, serving more than 25 million golfers and actively engaging 150 golf associations.

The USGA is one of the world's foremost authorities on research, development and support of sustainable golf course management practices. It serves as a primary steward for the game's history and invests in the development of the game through the delivery of its services and its ongoing "For the Good of the Game" grants program. Additionally, the USGA's Course Rating and Handicap Systems are used on six continents in more than 50 countries.

For more information about the USGA, visit www.usga.org.

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