USGA Media Center

FAR HILLS, N.J., and ST. ANDREWS, Scotland (June 2, 2016) – The USGA and The R&A have published a research document that reports important facts on driving distance in professional golf. Supporting data comes from seven tours, including PGA TOUR data beginning in 1968.

Key facts noted in the paper include:

- Between 2003 and the end of the 2015 season, average driving distance on four of the seven tours increased about 1%, or 0.2 yards per year.
- For the same period, average driving distance on the other three of the seven tours studied decreased about 1%.
- Looking at all of the players who are ranked for distance on the PGA TOUR and PGA European Tour, the amount by which players are "long" or "short" is virtually the same – for instance, the 10 shortest players in that group are about 6% shorter than average, while the 10 longest players in the group are about 7% longer than average. The statistics are not skewed toward added distance.
- The average launch conditions on the PGA TOUR – clubhead speed, launch angle, ball speed and ball backspin – have been relatively stable since 2007. The 90th-percentile clubhead speed coupled with the average launch angle and spin rate are very close to the conditions that the USGA and The R&A, golf's governing bodies, use to test golf balls under the Overall Distance Standard.

In 2002, the USGA and The R&A co-authored the Joint Statement of Principles, which confirmed their commitment to the fundamental notion that skill, not technology, should be the primary determinant of success in the game. The Joint Statement acknowledged the benefits of equipment technology for golf, but noted that any further significant increases in hitting distances at the highest level were undesirable.

Since that time, the USGA and The R&A have continued to monitor equipment technology's effect on the game, and considered the effects of other factors, such as course setup, athleticism and coaching. When appropriate, new Rules have been introduced after discussions with equipment manufacturers and other stakeholders, in accordance with the Equipment Rulemaking Procedures produced in 2011.

"Hitting distance is, and has long been, a constant subject of healthy and spirited debate in golf," said Mike Davis, executive director/CEO of the USGA. "We want everyone in the game to have access to the facts, to better understand the decision-making process and the research we use to ensure that our game is both enjoyable and sustainable for future generations."

"I believe it is important in terms of good governance and healthy for the sport to achieve greater transparency on key issues such as driving distance," said Martin Slumbers, Chief Executive of The R&A. "We have decided to publish this report on distance data and will do so each year in the future. This is clearly a frequently debated topic in golf which elicits strong views. By publishing the data we can help to inform the debate and ensure reliable information is available."

The report is available at www.usga.org and www.RandA.org.

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 http://www.usga.org.

About The R&A

Based in St Andrews, The R&A runs The Open, elite amateur events, international matches and rankings. Together The R&A and the USGA govern the sport of golf worldwide, operating in separate jurisdictions but sharing a commitment to a single code for the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status and Equipment Standards. The R&A governs worldwide, outside of the United States and Mexico, with the consent of 152 organisations from amateur and professional golf and on behalf of over 30 million golfers in 140 countries.

The R&A is committed to working for golf and supports the growth of the sport internationally and the development and management of sustainable golf facilities.

R&A Rules Ltd

With effect from 1st January 2004, the responsibilities and authority of The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews in making, interpreting and giving decisions on the Rules of Golf and on the Rules of Amateur Status were transferred to R&A Rules Limited.

For more information about The R&A visit www.randa.org.

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