

FAR HILLS, N.J. (July 20, 2016) – The maximum age for competitors in the U.S. Girls' Junior and U.S. Junior Amateur championships will be raised from 17 to 18 years old starting with the 2017 championships, the United States Golf Association (USGA) announced on Wednesday.

The maximum Handicap Index® requirements for both championships will also be lowered, from 18.4 to 9.4 for the Girls' Junior and from 6.4 to 4.4 for the Junior Amateur. Additionally, sectional qualifying for the U.S. Junior Amateur will be reduced from 36 holes to 18 holes.

“These significant changes in the USGA's junior championships are part of the Association's continuous review of these global-reach competitions, which focuses on conducting excellent championships,” said Stuart Francis, USGA Championship Committee chairman. “Enhancing the player experience is paramount for the USGA as it strives to provide the most comprehensive test in junior golf on the game's grandest stages. We are thankful to our respective junior committees, state and regional golf associations, and our industry partners for their roles in reviewing and implementing these new conditions of competition.”

Raising the maximum age brings these championships more in line with the worldwide standards for junior golfers. The age limit of 17 had been in place for both the U.S. Junior Amateur and U.S. Girls' Junior championships since they were inaugurated in 1948 and 1949, respectively. In 1964, 36-hole sectional qualifying was introduced for the Junior Amateur. In 1996, 18-hole sectional qualifying was introduced for the Girls' Junior.

“The changes in our junior championships are being made to ensure the strongest fields possible,” said Diana Murphy, USGA president. “We anticipate that raising the maximum age will also increase our entries and participation in junior golf in general, which ties into our strategic mission for championships. We feel that making the changes in 2017 allows us adequate time to accurately communicate the message to prospective competitors, in addition to facilitating a successful transition.”

The 69th U.S. Junior Amateur Championship is currently being contested at The Honors Course in Ooltewah, Tenn., and the 68th U.S. Girls' Junior Championship is concurrently being contested at The Ridgewood Country Club in Paramus, N.J. (www.usga.org/junioram and #USJuniorAm; www.usga.org/girlsjunior and #USGirlsJunior). The championship final matches are scheduled for Saturday, July 23.

Flint Hills National Golf Club in Andover, Kan., is the host site of the 2017 U.S. Junior Amateur, which will take place from July 17-22, and Boone Valley Golf Club in Augusta, Mo., will host the 2017 U.S. Girls' Junior from July 24-29. Along with the new handicap requirements, the championships are open to amateur golfers who will not have reached their 19th birthday on or before July 22, 2017, for the Junior Amateur, and on or before July 29, 2017, for the Girls' Junior.

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