

Liberty Corner, N.J., USA and St. Andrews, Scotland (Feb. 22, 2021) – The USGA and The R&A have announced proposals for significant changes to the Rules of Amateur Status that govern the game worldwide.

These proposals result from a modernization initiative that has identified a clear need to bring the Rules up to date to reflect today's global amateur game and ensure that the Rules are easier to understand and apply.

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The proposed Rules, along with explanations to key changes, have been posted on usga.org and randa.org and the organizations are now inviting feedback from golfers and stakeholders. Comments will be accepted through Friday, March 26, with the new Rules scheduled to be adopted on January 1, 2022.

A comprehensive review of the Rules of Amateur Status began in late 2017, focusing on three main goals: to ensure the Rules are in the best interests of the game, reflect the modern game, and are easily understood and applied.

This review reaffirmed amateur golf's important position in the game and the value in maintaining amateur status Rules to safeguard all the ways golf is played and enjoyed.

The result is a set of Rules that redefine the distinction between amateur and professional golf and provide a condition of eligibility – amateur status – for amateurs who compete in golf competitions.

As part of the modernization effort, it is proposed that the new Rules will identify only three acts that will result in a golfer losing their amateur status:

- Accepting a prize in excess of the prize limit.
- Accepting payment for giving instruction.
- Accepting employment as a golf club professional or membership of an association of professional golfers.

To achieve this simplified approach, the following key changes are proposed:

- Eliminating the distinction between cash prizes and other prizes.
- Using the prize limit as the only way an amateur can lose amateur status through their play (meaning that entering or playing a competition as a professional would not, of itself, result in the loss of amateur status).
- Removing restrictions from the Rules surrounding competitions such as long-drive events, putting competitions and skills competitions that are not played as part of a tee-to-hole competition; and
- Eliminating all sponsorship restrictions.

“Golf is unique in its broad appeal to both recreational and competitive golfers,” said Craig Winter, USGA Senior Director, Rules of Golf and Amateur Status. “We understand and value how important amateur status is, not only to those who compete at the highest level of the amateur game, but for the millions of golfers at every age and skill level who enjoy competitive events at their home courses. These updates should help simplify these Rules and ensure the health of the amateur game.”

Grant Moir, Director of Rules at The R&A, said, “The Rules of Amateur Status play an important role in protecting the integrity of our self-regulating sport but the code must continue to evolve. This is particularly so in relation to the modern elite amateur game, where many of the players need financial support to compete and develop to their full potential, and the proposed new Rules will give much greater scope for this.”

The proposed new Rules are accompanied by an overview document and explanations that detail the rationale for why changes are being proposed and, in some instances, why they have stayed the same.

Materials regarding the proposed new Rules, as well as a link to provide feedback can be found at usga.org/amateurstatus or randa.org.

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