



EGA
Zone Handicap
Conferences 2014

REPORT

2014 Zone Handicap Conferences

During 2014,
EGA Zone Handicap
Conferences
were held at the
following **locations**:

25-26 January,
Copenhagen
(North Zone)

8-9 February,
Rome (South Zone)

8-9 March,
Vienna
(Central Zone)



INTRODUCTION

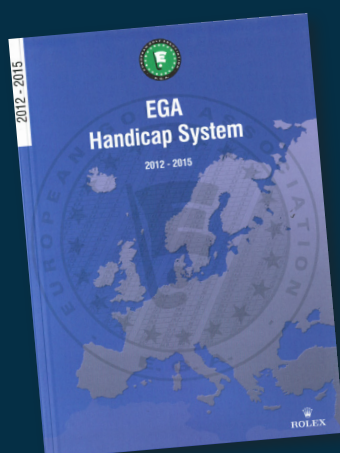
With the **objective** to continue a successful practice of “innovation through consultation” it has become a tradition for the EGA Handicapping and Course Rating Committee (henceforth the HCRC) to conduct conferences in the Continent of Europe Zones at four-year intervals. The **main purpose of the conferences** has been to present proposed changes to the EGA Handicap System and receive feedback from the handicap system licence holders. Another purpose has been to allow licence holders the opportunity to relate their views on how aspects of the handicap system are working within their respective countries, thereby identifying strengths as well as weaknesses of system features and system management.

This year's conferences were attended by the following national associations (NAs):

North Zone	South Zone	Central Zone
Danish Golf Union	Italian Golf Federation	Austrian Golf Federation
Swedish Golf Federation	Royal Spanish Golf Federation	German Golf Federation
Norwegian Golf Federation	Golf Association of Serbia	Swiss Golf Association
Russian Golf Federation	French Golf Federation	Netherlands Golf Federation
Polish Golf Association	Israel Golf Federation	Czech Golf Federation
Estonian Golf Association	Turkish Golf Association	Royal Belgian Golf Federation
Lithuanian Golf Federation	Golf Association of Slovenia	Slovak Golf Association
Golf Union of Iceland	(Finnish Golf Union)	Luxembourg Golf Federation
(Portuguese Golf Federation)		

In addition to representatives of the national associations (typically board members, members of associations' Handicap/Rules Committees, handicapping staff) attendees also included members of the EGA Executive Committee, Honorary Presidents of the EGA, and invited guests. The HCRC would like to take this opportunity to express its sincere **gratitude** to all the NAs and other attendees at this year's conferences – your constructive input in the form of submitted papers as well as engagement in discussions during the conferences is absolutely essential for the continued development of the EGA Handicap System.

We would also like to thank those NAs who agreed to co-host the handicap conferences, notably the Danish Golf Union, the Italian Golf Federation, and the Austrian Golf Federation; your assistance in practical matters as well as your hospitality made the conferences very successful.





REPORT PURPOSE AND OUTLINE

The **purpose of this report** is to provide a **very brief overview** from the conferences, all three of which were conducted on the basis of an almost identical program – a deliberate choice on the part of the HCRC (minor discrepancies were inevitable due to the contents and nature of the discussions in the conferences and sometimes allowances had to be made to accommodate individual requests from NAs). The main part of this report, however, is made up of a **review proposal** that has been **revised** as a result of the **feedback** received at the three handicap conferences.

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

The first part of the conference program included a brief **evolutionary history of the EGA Handicap System** to date, and an account of the principles that have governed the design of the system. Also the working principles of the HCRC and the “evolution through consultation” policy that has been the trademark of the HCRC was presented so that attendees would have a better understanding of why the system has evolved the way it has.

This presentation was later followed by a presentation from the **Handicap Research Group**, covering current handicapping topics subject to research by the group, or by other similar groups across the world. The following eight research topics were covered in all three conferences:

2013 questionnaire conclusions

Conclusions arising from the questionnaire sent to all license holders were presented. (These are presented in summary form below).

Simpler system

If players do not post enough rounds, is there really a need for a sophisticated handicap system? Could a simpler system attract and retain more golfers? On the other hand,

competitive golfers require accurate handicaps; so how to find a balance between these two apparently conflicting positions? These and other similar questions have been at the heart of the discussion in the HCRC and in a working group concerned with simplicity and flexibility in handicapping. The presentation showed the process followed by the HRG to investigate the current system, feature by feature, to review pros and cons in terms of accuracy versus complexity.

AHR improvements

The step-function and the Stableford-based algorithm are two parts of the current AHR in need of improvement. The HRG presented some alternatives.

Fourball qualifying-rounds

Fourball rounds are becoming increasingly popular. Sometimes the scorecards in these competitions contain enough information for handicapping authorities to consider fourball play qualifying for handicap purposes. The HRG is working to develop a simple algorithm to accept fourball rounds as qualifying rounds under certain conditions.

9-hole qualifying rounds

The implementation of 9-hole rounds for categories lower than 3 (the current limit) is also researched by the HRG.

Scandalous Scores

The handicap modification algorithm (incremental) was developed to accommodate a certain rate of golf playing ability improvement. Sometimes when players improve their playing ability beyond expectation, the system is too slow to react, which may lead to exceptionally high (Stableford) scores. The presentation showed different approaches currently under consideration by the HRG to address this issue.

Handicapping on short courses

Just as the case is for fourball scoring, golf on short courses



(shorter 2.750 meters) is becoming increasingly popular. In many cases, short courses are the first point of contact with golf for beginners. Also the Tee-it-Forward initiative (which has gained some momentum recently) could result in certain sets of tees being played shorter than the 2.750 meter mark. The HRG has initiated research on this topic, in consultation with the USGA as rights holders of Course Rating and Slope Rating.

WWH initiative

Some implications of changing from an incremental system to an averaging system were showed. The HRG task will be to investigate if the proposed WWH system is at least of the same quality, in all respects, as the current EGA Handicap System.

A very important part of the program during the first day was the presentation and discussion of **handicapping topics provided by the NAs**. A couple of themes were recurrent across the three conferences but the vast majority of topics were either direct comments on the review proposal, or related to topics part of the review proposal – these comments were collated and are reported on below. However, also other handicapping areas of interest were addressed by the Italian Golf Federation, the Netherland Golf Federation, the Royal Belgian Golf Federation, and the German Golf Federation as “stand alone” issues – we assure you that all constructive points made by these federations are brought to the attention of the HCRC. We are grateful for all data provided by NAs to support their presentations.

The topics brought up by these NAs were the following (in random order):

Italian Golf Federation

- 🚩 Data re Fourball scoring
- 🚩 Information re examination to receive an EGA Handicap
- 🚩 Suggestion to accept rounds played as Ecclectic and Flag competitions

German Golf Federation

- 🚩 AHR biased towards decreases; suggestion that EGA conducts a pan-EGA survey to supplement HRG work on AHR
- 🚩 Suggestion to revisit the “boundaries” between handicap categories

Royal Belgian Golf Federation

- 🚩 Alternative to CBA for providing a “predictive daily rating”
- 🚩 Suggestion to replace “handicap” by “index”
- 🚩 Changed buffer zones
- 🚩 New at Golf-initiative

Netherlands Golf Federation

- 🚩 Suggestion to accept EDS in category 1
- 🚩 Limit AHR to categories 1-3

The conference concluded with a presentation about the **status of the World Wide Handicap System initiative**. Attendees addressed questions to the HCRC and members of the Committee provided answers as best they could. In the NA-response received we noted in particular the following pertinent points raised by the German Golf Federation (and informally several other NAs asked similar questions), all of which we bring to the HCRC and the EGA Executive Committee for further discussion:

Q&A

- 🚩 *What are the real benefits of WWH (for NA, Clubs, players)?*
- 🚩 *Is WWH really needed in Europe for the European golfers?*
- 🚩 *What kind of influence would NAs have in a WWH?*
- 🚩 *What are the actual costs for changing to a WWH?*
- 🚩 *What does the governance structure of WWH look like?*

In terms of educating our golfers, a WWH initiative is a huge project; golfers would essentially have zero knowledge about the workings of the handicap system – this would be potentially detrimental to system credibility.



SYSTEM REVIEW PROPOSAL (REVISED VERSION, 2014-04-15)

While it is impossible for the HCRC to accommodate all requests in this feedback process, we hope that the revised proposal as it described below is reflective of the discussions that took place at the three conferences. In some cases conference attendees expressed the same or similar opinions regarding one of the areas on which the discussion focused; other times views diverged and on those occasions we had to go with what we perceived to be the **majority opinion**.

2012-2015 EGA HANDICAP SYSTEM – PRESENT SITUATION

The EGA Handicap System is the world's largest handicap system in terms of the number of national license holders; currently 35 national associations use the system and implement it uniformly across the Continent of Europe. Overall, the system works well for the players it was designed for, essentially golfers who play in competitions and return enough scores to provide for a reasonable data set to be used for handicapping purposes. The system contains a small number of technical features (CBA, AHR etc.) the purpose of which is to facilitate a handicapping process at local, regional and national levels that is as fair and equitable as possible.

RATIONALE FOR SYSTEM REVIEW/PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

During the spring of 2013, the HCRC administered a questionnaire to all EGA national associations holding a license to use the 2012-2015 EGA Handicap System. The purpose of the questionnaire was to get a better understanding of the handicapping situation and handicapping praxis among our national associations. We were also keen to see what parts of the system were working as expected, and to receive feedback to assist us in connection with future

amendments (for detailed information concerning the questionnaire, please refer to the 2013 September News Update from the HCRC).

The main conclusion to be drawn from the questionnaire is that substantial numbers of Continent of Europe players (in many instances as many as 80 %) are essentially excluded from several of the system's key handicapping procedures because they do not return nearly as many qualifying scores as the system assumes to function as intended. Such handicaps are a bad reflection of actual playing ability and many players may suffer from being incorrectly handicapped if/when they wish to play in organized competitions or if/when they wish to monitor individual progress with any degree of accuracy. It is, however, also acknowledged by the HCRC that many players have no real interest in being "correctly" handicapped because their golf playing habits do not require a correct handicap, calculated with any precision, even if the vast majority of this group of players wish to have a handicap for other reasons (e.g. to be eligible to play away from their home course). It is very clear from the analysis of data from the national associations that there is a correlation between EGA Exact Handicap and playing habits, where it is evident that high handicap players have much less need for a sophisticated handicap system.

The HCRC launched a review of the system guided by a single **crucial question**: Can a future version of the EGA Handicap System be designed so that appropriate precision can be maintained for those players who expect precision from the system whereas more flexible and much less rigidly managed system structures can be made available for those who do not need it, or have no desire for it.

The review work has been conducted under the following **guiding principle**: While trying to accommodate the playing habits of as many players as possible, change as little as possible, and keep the system as simple as possible for all categories of players.



The three zone handicap conferences unanimously expressed their agreement that measures need to be taken to address different player profiles.

The three zone handicap conferences unanimously expressed their agreement that precision and accuracy must be maintained for low handicap players but that flexibility would be welcome for players with higher handicaps.

Our starting point – one system with handicap categories of different degrees of sophistication

It is our conviction that bifurcation must be avoided at all costs as this is administratively difficult and potentially introduces an undesirable and unwarranted distinction between players; consequently, there should be a single EGA Handicap System, not two systems working in parallel.

The concept of handicap categories is a good one in principle and will be kept. Essentially, handicaps in handicap categories 1-3 are maintained according to the same robust and precise principles as in the current edition of the EGA Handicap System while only a limited level of system sophistication for any handicap above 21.9 (a shifted upper boundary for handicap category 3) is considered needed. The reason to suggest a cut-off point at handicap 21.9 is because of the significantly larger variation of scores presented by players with higher handicaps, something that makes equitable handicapping difficult.

Two “new” categories of EGA Handicaps are created, **category 4 going from 22.0-36.0** (essentially a “collapsing” of what used to be categories 4 and 5) and **category 5 going from 37-54**.

Crucially important is the principle that having a handicap in the 22.0-54 range does not, by itself, preclude anyone from entering competitions (conditions for competition entry will be decided by the national associations, clubs, or competition organizers). All handicaps, regardless of category, are designated “EGA Handicap” and are considered valid EGA Handicaps. It is not our intention to disenfranchise golfers holding a handicap of 22.0-54 – on the contrary, it is our intention to make the handicap system flexible and attractive to this very large group of golfers, encouraging them to maintain a handicap in an easier way.

The vast majority of NAs represented in the three zone handicap conferences expressed their support for the handicap cut-line approach and expressed strong views that the cut-line should be at a category boundary. The reason we suggest a cut-off point at handicap 21.9, rather than at an existing category boundary, is to guarantee that as many golfers as possible who would benefit from being handicapped under more flexible procedures are included in categories 4 and 5, regardless of gender and association affiliation.

A major revision of category boundaries (whole numbers, new increments etc.) was proposed by a small number of NAs; however, in keeping with the guiding principle stated above, the HCRC proposes no changes to category boundaries, the exception being the upward shift of the upper boundary in category 3 referred to, and the collapsing of what used to be category 4 and 5 into a single category 4. As the rules of handicapping apply equally to all handicaps in the 22.0-36.0 range it makes little sense to divide this range into two different categories.

CHANGES PROPOSED; MORE VS. LESS SOPHISTICATION

The proposal as introduced in brief above begs the question **“What is meant by ‘less sophistication’?”** Table 1 below serves as an outline for whether some different central handicapping features are applicable to EGA Handicaps in the different categories. Our reasoning is described in the subsections that follow. It may appear that we are proposing major changes to the handicap system, but in actual fact what is being proposed is making some handicap system features optional/subject to NA discretion, i.e. allowing for a more flexible application of handicapping rules throughout.

The **most important changes** being proposed are: (i) establishing a new category 4, ranging from handicap 22.0-36.0; (ii) introducing a new recognized EGA Handicap category 5, ranging from handicap 37-54 (iii) making the Annual Handicap Review (AHR) only a recommended handicapping feature in category 4 (handicap 22.0-36.0); (iv) removing the mandatory designation of handicaps as “Active” or “Inactive” and making a handicap “status” designation optional across all handicap categories; (v) providing that handicap adjustments in categories 4 and 5 are reduction only (but with a strongly recommended reset mechanism allowing for increases at the end of the season); providing that handicap reductions are always by one full stroke in category 5 (37-54) and by 0.5 in category 4 (22.0-36.0); (vi) authorizing NAs to suspend CBA (this right may be further delegated by NAs to individual affiliated clubs) in categories 2-3; (vii) removing the application of CBA altogether from categories 4 and 5.



TABLE 1 : OVERVIEW OF CENTRAL FEATURES OF EGA HANDICAP SYSTEM 2016-2019

Designation of Handicaps	EGA Handicap				
Classification	Cat 1	Cat 2	Cat 3	Cat 4	Cat 5
Handicap Ranges	+ to 4.4	4.5 to 11.4	11.5 to 21.9	22.0 to 36.0	37 to 54
AHR	Yes	Yes	Yes	Recommended, if not used, then strongly recommended application of reset mechanism	Recommended, if not used, then strongly recommended application of reset mechanism
Designation of handicap « status »	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional
CBA-calculation	Yes	Strongly Recommended	Strongly Recommended	No	No
Affected by CBA	Yes	If used, yes	If used, yes	No	No
Slope	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	as diff. factor of 36.0
Adjustment UP	0.1 / score	0.1 / score	0.1 / score	No	No
Adjustment DOWN	0.1 / point	0.2 / point	0.3 / point	0.5 / point	1.0 / point
General use of EDS	No	Optional	Optional	Yes	Yes
9-holes scores	No	Recommended	Recommended	Yes	Yes

Handicap designation

All handicaps, regardless of category, are referred to as “EGA Handicap”. For all EGA Handicaps in categories 1-3 the handicap is a number taken to one decimal place (e.g. 18.3). For EGA Handicaps in categories 4 and 5, however, since the playing patterns and performance of players in this handicap range are significantly more varied, a handicap cannot be determined with sufficient accuracy to warrant the first decimal place – this only leads to a false impression of precision that, in reality, does not exist. For this reason, we propose that handicaps in category 4 are determined with reference either to a whole number, .0, or to .5 (e.g. 27.5->28->28.5 and so on), and that handicaps in category 5 are determined with reference to integers only (e.g. 37->38->39 and so on).

Conference feedback re handicap designation:

A very strong message was sent to the HCRC from all three conference sites: do not make any distinction “by name” between handicaps administered under slightly different rules.

Annual Handicap Review (AHR)

It is felt that the AHR is a crucial component of the handicapping process, and it should continue to be mandatory for all EGA Handicaps in categories 1-3. The AHR also needs reasonable evidence in order to work properly; for this reason we propose a minimum of 4 scores/year for any EGA Handicap to be part of the AHR. Any EGA Handicap based on fewer than 4 scores in a calendar year will simply not be part of the AHR. We also propose that the area authority or the NA must ratify all AHR-adjustments to handicaps in category 1. However, the need for an AHR for EGA Handicaps in categories 4 and 5 is less obvious. Despite this, the AHR may be seen as a useful resource also in handicapping category 4 players. For this reason we propose that these categories are not subject

to a mandatory AHR; for category 4, however, this decision rests with the NA. However, in order to avoid frustration in those cases where a category 4 or 5 handicap is not subject to AHR and where a handicap clearly does not reflect playing ability, we strongly recommend the application of a “reset” mechanism, meaning that in all cases where a category 4 or 5 player has returned at least one score, but where no score amounted to [TBD] points or better, then that player’s handicap is increased by 1 full stroke at the end of the season. In addition, players who hold an EGA Handicap in category 4 and 5 should be eligible for a less formal “review” of their handicaps from the Handicap Committee at any time, according to less strict rules than dictated by “General Play”, if such players feel that their handicap does not reflect their playing ability.

Conference feedback re AHR:

Strong views were expressed to limit the application of AHR in what are currently categories 4 and 5. We believe that our proposal addresses the criticism without risking the overall integrity of handicaps in this handicap range. In addition, conference attendees sent a clear message to the HCRC to consider the following issues relating to AHR: (i) the AHR algorithm should be reviewed in detail (especially the ratio between suggested increases and decreases; (ii) EASS values for category 1, especially plus handicaps, needs thorough review; (iii) some opinions were raised that the AHR should run without application of CBA-adjustment on scores, if applicable. These points will be considered by the HCRC during 2014.

Designation of handicap “status”

While a handicap is only as reliable as the evidence used to determine playing ability it is not for the handicap system to decide what should be considered reliable as this may vary considerably depending on the context. NAs or other parties

may have perfectly valid reasons for (not) wanting to designate a handicap status, and for this reason we propose that (i) the “active” / “inactive” designation of the current system is abandoned as a mandatory feature, but that (ii) any NA wishing to designate handicap status by means of referring to handicaps, for example, as “Reviewed”, “Competition Handicap” or by similar means, would be entitled to do so, but only as an option.

It is notable that, as a baseline, competition entry should be open to all handicaps in all categories (they are all recognized EGA Handicaps), but ultimately this is at the discretion of the competition organizer (NA, club, other event organizer) who can dictate that a certain number of qualifying scores is a condition of competition, or impose a general handicap (category) restriction.

Conference feedback re handicap status designation:

Conference attendees expressed virtually unanimous agreement that the designation “Active/Inactive” should be abolished, and consequently there should be no requirement to return a given number of qualifying scores. The point was raised that some NAs may like to maintain the four-score requirement, and some kind of status designation for all or some competition contexts; any NAs wishing to impose an n-score condition for competition entry, or wishing to delegate such discretion to affiliated clubs or other event organizer, would be entitled to do so according to the above proposal.

Computed Buffer Adjustment

The revised CBA-algorithm seems on the whole to have worked well during the 2013 spring, summer, and autumn seasons. After the modifications suggested last year, a number of NAs decided to follow HCRC advice to implement the revised CBA-algorithm already in time for 2013 and the feedback we have received has been very favourable. The HCRC maintains that CBA has strong merits and constitutes an important feature in the handicapping process, but we are also sensitive to the fierce criticism brought against CBA by some NAs. For this reason, we propose that the amended system includes CBA as a mandatory feature only in category 1, while we propose a “CBA suspension” option subject to a decision by an NA in other handicap categories; any NA wishing to continue to apply CBA also to categories 2 and 3 is strongly encouraged to do so; any NA wishing to suspend the application of CBA in categories 2-3 would be entitled to allow clubs within its jurisdiction do so, or do it at a national level (though we would advise against the latter without reviewing the implications – in most cases, if applicable, CBA “protects” players’ handicaps, and a national decision to take away this safety net against exceptionally adverse conditions may backfire). We furthermore propose that the minus range for CBA is reduced (to -3 or -2, to be decided) in order to avoid excessive handicap reductions.

Conference feedback re CBA:

Concerning CBA, there is some resistance towards this feature of the EGA Handicap System. Interestingly, however, perceptions/opinions re CBA vary significantly between EGA

zones; the strongest opposition comes from the Central Zone whereas North Zone and South Zone conference attendees reported that CBA is well-liked overall and thought to add important dimensions to the handicapping procedures.

The general Central Zone criticism against CBA is that it is not well-liked by the golfers, difficult to explain/justify for handicap committees/championship committees, and that its operation leads to undesirable decreases in handicaps, an effect that is perceivable across handicap categories. The point was made that any negative effects in terms of unwarranted downward adjustments are further amplified because of the AHR. It was suggested that the AHR was performed on the basis of the actual score, i.e. without the application of an adjusted buffer. The point was also made that any adjustment should not be based on the performance of the players on the day in question; rather a daily adjustment feature should be based on more transparent factors, visible (literally) to all players prior to the round. A further suggestion involved a narrowing of the CBA “window” to take away the impact of -3 and -4 buffer zone shifts. Several NAs suggested that yet another way to address what they perceive is a malfunctioning CBA is to make the buffer zones larger, or shift the buffer only at the lower end. Suggestions were made both to abolish CBA altogether and to make it non-obligatory. Alternatively, the EGA should consider a completely different daily adjustment feature.

The EGA responded by showing data indicating that CBA (the revised algorithm from 2013) does indeed work as intended. However, it was acknowledged that the proper functioning of CBA assumes that all players are correctly handicapped throughout; otherwise there is indeed an increased risk of CBA minus results based on underperformance in relation to handicap. EGA also emphasized the importance of AHR in this case as the AHR and CBA are strongly related. So if clubs fail to carry out the AHR (for example by not applying the proposed adjustments) this is likely to impact very negatively on CBA. Notwithstanding the asserted merits of the CBA feature, we acknowledge the serious concerns raised. We believe that the revised proposal re CBA accommodates both those NAs that may wish to give affiliated clubs the possibility to suspend CBA, and those NAs that wish to maintain it as is. We do not think that different ways of applying CBA across the area of jurisdiction is a threat to portability since there are already considerable variations regarding the ratio between competition scores and EDSs. The HCRC will continue to research CBA and other daily adjustment features. We also took on board the point that in view of the current playing cultures (at least in the Central and the North Zone), with few recorded scores in general and few from qualifying competitions but sometimes many more from EDS, CBA actually does not affect the majority of scores (actually often only a small minority). A relevant question is then of course if a daily adjustment feature can be introduced to work also outside competitions and whether a whole new feature that works this way would have any appeal to NAs.



Application of SLOPE

When it was first introduced, SLOPE met with some resistance from the golfing public. However, over the years, it seems that SLOPE has become a widely accepted, important and integral part of the handicapping procedure on the Continent of Europe to factor in the relative difficulty of a golf course for players who are not scratch golfers. We propose that SLOPE continues to operate as in the current system for categories 1-4. For EGA Handicaps in category 5, SLOPE will be applied as a differential factor of 36.0, as has been the procedure for club handicaps in the past.

Conference feedback re SLOPE:

There was virtually unanimous agreement in favour of the proposal from all three conferences. However, several NAs expressed the view that if, for some reason, a lower “cut-off” point is selected, e.g. the boundary point between categories 3 and 4, then applying SLOPE as a differential factor of that handicap may be too penalizing.

Handicap adjustments

For EGA Handicaps in categories 1-3, the principles for handicap adjustments are maintained as in the current system, with the application of buffer zones to reduce the possibility of too rapid upward or downward movements in handicap. For EGA Handicaps in categories 4 and 5, however, again because adjustments by less than ½ stroke gives a false impression of non-existent precision, we propose that downward adjustments are always made by ½ stroke for every Stableford point above 36 in category 4, and by 1 full stroke in category 5. Importantly, we

propose that no automatic upward adjustments are applied to EGA Handicaps as a result of players returning less than 36 Stableford points; players may, however, request that the Handicap Committee reviews the player's recent performance and assigns a higher handicap on an individual basis. See also provisions provided under “AHR” above.

Conference feedback re handicap adjustments:

There was wide support for an essentially “decrease only” system for categories 4 and 5, but it was also felt that there have to be provisions for increases for those players that feel an increase is warranted. The reason to propose decreases by half a stroke in category 4 (and designation with reference either to a whole number or to .5) is that it was widely considered that decreases by full strokes would result in too rapid decreases (and with limited possibilities for increases, this could lead to frustration).

Extra Day Scores as qualifying

The EGA Handicap System is based on the premise that all players return a sufficient number of qualifying scores to provide reasonable evidence of playing ability. Our research shows very clearly, however, that only a very small minority of all EGA players return enough qualifying scores. When Extra Day Scores were made a mandatory provision in the system in 2012, albeit with significant discretions given to national associations about the exact format for EDS, this was done to augment the often exceptionally sparse (even non-existent) information about playing ability provided by qualifying competition scores. Extra Day Scores have become widely accepted, at least in most parts of the EGA



area of jurisdiction, and we see little reason to change this feature of the system. Consequently, we propose that the EDS feature remains as in the current edition of the system. We believe strongly in maintaining EDS as a mandatory feature of the system for categories 4 and 5, the reason being that significant numbers of players in this handicap range hardly ever (or never) play in qualifying competitions. Without the possibility of recording an EDS these ranks of players would essentially not be able to record qualifying scores.

Conference feedback re EDS:

There was wide agreement in support of the basic proposal, i.e. to leave EDS as a feature in the system, and with considerable latitude being given to NAs re exactly how this feature is implemented within the NAs jurisdiction.

Three NAs sought support for extending EDS down into category 1, albeit with restrictions. Lengthy discussions led to the conclusion that this could possibly risk the integrity of the system in category 1. In addition, experience from CONGU where this has been piloted, suggests to us that this would not be in the interest of the EGA players.

9-hole scores as qualifying

There is a certain analogy between allowing 9-hole qualifying scores and allowing EDS. In response to popular demand, provisions for 9-hole scores were extended to include even more players in connection with the 2012 revision of the system, on a pilot basis. The experience from those pilots suggests to us that 9-hole qualifying scores could well be extended into category 2; our research also indicates that this would not have a detrimental effect on handicaps. Furthermore, encouraging more players to play 9 rather than 18 holes may have positive effects on e.g. pace of play/course accessibility. We are currently reviewing the principles for calculating the final result in connection with 9-hole scoring.

Conference feedback re 9-hole scoring

There was wide agreement in support of the proposal. The point was made that actual extension of the provision for 9-hole scoring could be made an NA discretion. The proposal now has 9-hole scoring as a recommended feature in categories 2 and 3.

MANAGING TRANSITIONS BETWEEN HANDICAP CATEGORIES 3&4, AND 4&5

As soon as a player who holds an EGA Handicap in category 4 scores enough Stableford points to take him/her below 22.0 i.e. "into" category 3 (from 4) or "into" category 4 (from 5) and the application of slightly different procedures, the handicap is reduced at the factor appropriate for the higher category only so far as to bring the handicap into the lower category; the balance of the reduction is then made according to the factor of the lower category (this is entirely consistent with the procedure in the current system for adjustments "across" category borders). Upward adjustments

over category boundaries is considered unproblematic and would typically only happen at the end of the season in category 4, or as a result of a handicap increase in category 3. Specific rules govern initial allocation of handicaps.

CONCLUSIONS

We believe that the changes that we are proposing can be achieved with a minimum of technical changes in the system, but the resulting amendments would mean huge improvements for the vast majority of golfers. Furthermore, the above proposals for amendments succeed in maintaining appropriate precision where it is vitally important whereas more flexible system structures are made available for those players who do not need it, or have no desire for it.

NEXT STEPS – HANDICAP SYSTEM REVIEW

The feedback obtained from the conferences has been collated and put before the EGA Handicapping and Course Rating Committee at its meeting in St Andrews (28-29 April). Following internal discussion, the HCRC will now consult with the Handicap Research Group whose task it will be to evaluate the proposed amendments and highlight important implications of any amendments made; the HRG will also make recommendations to the HCRC. It is anticipated that a final HCRC proposal will be sent to all NAs for internal discussions/review/consultation with software providers etc., at least one month prior to the 2014 EGA Annual General Meeting. In connection with the AGM in November, a special section of the forum focusing solely on the issue of handicap system review will be open to all NAs. At this meeting NAs will be invited to provide the HCRC with final verbal input. Those NAs deciding not to attend the forum are obviously welcome to communicate any feedback in writing (this should then be addressed to the HCRC Chairman or the HCRC Secretary and submitted no later than 10 November – a reminder to this effect will be sent out during the autumn). After the AGM the HCRC will prepare the final version of the EGA Handicap System 2016-2019; we are hopeful that a final decision can be taken by the EGA Executive Committee at the 2015 February meeting, after which a PDF-version of the revised EGA Handicap System 2016-2019 manual will be sent out to all our licence holders.

Göteborg, 1 May, 2014

Hans Malmström,
HCRC Chairman





EUROPEAN GOLF ASSOCIATION

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