

“The 5 Things You Need to Know About the New World Handicap System (WHS) Beginning in 2020 a Brand-new set of Rules for Handicapping will be Introduced Globally

1. Your Handicap Index may change.

But that’s ok! Finally, players around the world will have an apples-to-apples handicap. Your new Handicap Index will be more responsive to good scores by averaging your eight best score out of your most recent 20 (currently, it’s 10 out of 20 with a .96 multiplier). In short, your Handicap Index will be determined by your demonstrated ability and the consistency of scores. In most cases for golfers in the U.S., it will change less than one stroke.

2. You need to know your Course Handicap.

In the new system, your Course Handicap will be the number of strokes needed to play to par. This will result in greater variance in that number and presents a change, as historically it has represented the number of strokes needed to play to the Course Rating. This is a good thing, as par is an easy number to remember. Target score for the day? Par plus Course Handicap. The Course Rating will now be inherent within the calculation to be more intuitive and account for competing from different tees.

3. Net Double Bogey.

The maximum hole score for each player will be limited to a Net Double Bogey. This adjustment is more consistent from hole to hole than the Equitable Stroke Control procedure. Net Double Bogey is already used in many other parts of the world and the calculation is simple: Par + 2 + any handicap strokes you receive.

4. Your Handicap Index will be revised daily.

One way that handicapping is being modernized is a player’s Handicap Index will update daily (which will provide a fairer indication of a player’s ability in the moment), if the player submitted a score the day before. On days where the player does not submit a score, no update will take place.

5. Safeguards in the new system.

The new system will limit extreme upward movement of a Handicap Index, automatically and immediately reduce a Handicap Index when an exceptional score of at least 7 strokes better is posted, and account for abnormal course or weather conditions to ensure that scores reflect when a course plays significantly different than its established Course Rating and Slope Rating.

These safeguards help maintain accuracy of a Handicap Index, greater integrity within the system and promote fun and fair play for golfers of all abilities.”

From time to time over the winter I expect to put out more information on the new World Handicap System. For now, I suggest you start practicing good habits for posting scores. In the future handicaps will be revised daily and weather and course conditions can impact your performance for that day. If your current posting habits are relaxed...who cares if I post today or next week as long as the scores are posted prior to the next revision? In the future revisions are daily. Jokingly, I have stated more matches are won on the first tee than the 18th hole when determining the strokes given. You really don't want to shoot your best round of the year on Saturday, forget to post, and explain to your friend on Sunday that your index and course handicap did not change because you “forgot to post.” Now what? Practice prompt posting now so that you will have good habits next year.

Whatever happens to the system, we will adjust quickly to the new World Handicap System. For close to ten years I had the honor to serve on the USGA's Handicap Procedure Committee and if there is one thing I learned it is that when it comes to math and golf...the USGA has figured it out.

Bill M.