



BEDFORDSHIRE LADIES COUNTY GOLF ASSOCIATION

HANDICAP SECRETARIES' MEETINGS

13th & 14th MARCH 2009

INFORMATION SUMMARY
FOR HANDICAP SECRETARIES

Meetings of the BLCGA Handicap Secretaries held on Friday 13th and Saturday 14th March 2009.

1. Introduction
2. CONGU Changes & Clarification
3. Queries received by the Handicap Committee during 2008
4. EWGA Medals
5. Active/Inactive Handicaps
6. Feedback:
 - a) Nine Hole Qualifying Competitions
 - b) Supplementary Scores
7. Miscellaneous
8. Any Other Business

1. Heddwen Molloy welcomed everyone and introduced herself and her new Assistant Handicap Advisor, Shelagh Cormack. Heddwen, BLCGA Handicap Advisor, explained that she & Margaret Watchorn had attended the National Handicap Seminar at Edgbaston at the end of January chaired by Wendy Taylor, Chairman of the National Handicap Committee. Following on from that it was decided to hold two meetings for Handicap Secretaries to pass on directly to the Bedfordshire clubs the information gained at that meeting.

2. CONGU CHANGES / CLARIFICATION

- (a) Clarification of “exceptional circumstances” in Clause 23.b General Play Adjustment.

The clause permits the adjustment of a player’s handicap in “Exceptional Circumstances” and this phrase causes some problems. It is impossible to cover every ‘exceptional circumstance’ but these include:

- i. Impaired golfing ability resulting from extended illness or injury.
- ii. The need to correct a handicap that was allocated at an inappropriate level.
- iii. The return of a series of good scores in Qualifying Competitions within a short timeframe by a hitherto infrequent competitor.
- iv. A number of good playing performances in NQ competitions. Corporate and Society events are not always played over a measured course and the EGU will not be recommending they are used when reviewing a handicap.

These are just some examples. If in doubt or just want advice – clubs should contact the Area Authority.

- (b) Alternative Day/Practice on the Competition Course
Alternative Day Arrangements for Club Competitions

Rule 7-1b of the R & A Rules of Golf prohibits practice on the competition course prior to play on any day of a stroke play competition unless a condition of the competition permitting practice has been introduced by the Committee in terms of the Note to that Rule.

Alternative Day arrangements exist when a single competition is played over two days (the main day and the alternative day) which may or may not be consecutive, and in which a player is permitted to compete on only one of the two days.

Unless the Committee has introduced a condition of competition permitting practice/play, any player not taking part on the first competitive day but intending to play on the second competitive day would be in breach of Rule 7-1b (the penalty of which is disqualification) by playing on the competition course at any time during the whole of the first day of the competition whether it be a match or just social golf.

When club competitions involve alternate day arrangements Committees are encouraged to permit those players not competing on the first day to be able to play on the course, subject to available tee times and club rules, without such play being deemed as practice for the day during which they intend to compete in the competition. A suggested wording (*which can be tailored to suit club rules*) is

“Main Day and Alternative Day Competitions

When players have a choice between Main Day and Alternative Day participation for a single stroke play competition in terms of Rule 7-1b of the Rules of Golf, any player who elects to play on the second day of the competition is permitted to play on the competition course on the first day of the said competition (except)”

The R & A has confirmed that if the suggested wording (Main Day and Alternative Day Competition) is included within the conditions of competition it complies with the rules. Handicap Secretaries were asked to take this wording back and include it (or similar) in their Conditions of Competition.

(c) European Golf Association (EGA) & CSA Calculation (Decision 2.a (Q2) of the System)

The calculation of a CSA (equivalent to a CSS) is still somewhat haphazard within the EGA. Accordingly the CONGU Board agreed that for 2009, the seven organisations should not accept scores returned in EGA events for handicap purposes. CONGU will keep the matter under review.

(d) DQ'd Score Under Rules of Golf

A player who signs for a higher score is not disqualified under the Rules of Golf, yet the (incorrect) score stands for handicap purposes. A player who signs for a lower score is disqualified under the Rules of Golf but the score is corrected for handicap purposes.

In order to be consistent CONGU has agreed that both the higher and lower scores should be adjusted for handicap purposes.

(e) Membership and Handicaps

CONGU has been concerned with the development of ‘low cost’ membership which some clubs have been adopting to attract new members. In order to clarify the definition of a Member, a Decision has been drafted to help, should clubs adopt a ‘handicap’ membership or the like.

- Q. Do forms or categories of golf club membership such as ‘Handicap Only’ or ‘Competition Membership’ satisfy the intent of the definition of a ‘Member’ as contained in the CONGU Unified Handicapping System?
- A. It is a matter for individual golf clubs to determine the nature of their categories of membership. However, forms or categories of membership such as ‘Handicap Only’ or ‘Competition Membership’ satisfy neither the spirit nor the intent of the definition of a ‘Member’ as contained in the CONGU Unified Handicapping System and do not qualify for the allotment of a CONGU Handicap.

An information sheet issued by CONGU was given out to attendees of the meetings.

(f) Annual Review

Handicap Committees in clubs are still having some difficulty understanding the implementation of handicap changes following the Annual Review and the matter continues to be the source of most queries to CAAs. The computer generated Annual Review Report is based on performance against target, based on scores against a statistical equivalent (perfect golfer) for each category which will show if a player is below this statistical equivalent (decrease) or above (increase). Performance on these reports is calculated against the CSS not the SSS. CONGU will keep these reports under review.

These reports are a guide. Handicap records and other supporting evidence should be considered in conjunction with the Annual Review Report as different factors may give justification for a change of handicap.

If 3-6 cards are submitted in the year, there would probably be no change to handicap as it is thought that 7 cards are enough to give reasonable information on playing ability. Reduction only cards will be included in the report. Most members have handicaps too low rather than too high.

(g) Non-Qualifying Competitions

It is considered that Clause 15 gives adequate reason to play qualifying competitions during the winter months. However, if the club committee considers the condition of the course is not good enough to warrant a qualifying competition then it can be deemed non-qualifying - prior to the commencement of the competition (despite playing off full length, main greens & tees etc.) It cannot be designated a “reduction only” competition.

(h) Statistical Committee Review

Much feedback on the system has been received over the years and the Statistics Committee does consider this feedback. At present the Committee is looking at the following areas and these will be considered before publication of the 2012 CONGU manual.

- CSS calculation for stroke play competitions
- CSS calculation for small fields and reduction only competitions
- The relationship of CSS to course difficulty and other factors
- The inclusion of Category 5 players into the CSS calculations
- The effectiveness of the Annual Review algorithm
- 4BBB scores, the justification for ¾ handicap allowance and the use of scores for handicap purposes
- Slope for women

The EWGA is looking for a representative to sit on the CONGU Statistics Committee so if anyone is interested in sitting on this Committee let us know.

3. QUERIES (Received by the Handicap Committee During 2008)

a. EWGA Handicap Appeal Procedure

The procedure for dealing with handicap appeals is set out in the EWGA handbook. Where possible, appeals should be contained within the club unless further help is needed. In those cases they should refer to the CAA, NOT the EWGA Handicap Committee.

b. Overseas Handicaps in Competitions

The decision as to whether players with overseas handicaps are eligible to play in Open competitions, etc. is the responsibility of the organising competition committee. If overseas handicaps ARE allowed then this should be stated in the competition conditions and the scores MUST be used in the CSS calculation.

Players with handicaps from both home and overseas: Handicap Secretaries should refer to Dec. 2(e) on page 85 of the CONGU manual to convert EGA handicaps.

c. Preferred Lies (Clause 15)

The period for preferred lies is 1st October – 30th April, however, if necessary, permission can be obtained from the CAA to extend this period. If permission is granted it relates to all sections of the club. There is no change but it appears clubs are becoming a little more lax in seeking approval. Any competitions played under winter rules outside those dates will not count for handicap purposes unless permission has been obtained from the CAA to extend the period. Permission may be obtained retrospectively but only within a day or so and not several weeks later.

Clubs may decide to allow the use of fairway mats in competition due to the condition of the course. In such cases the use of fairway mats is permissible in qualifying competitions but teeing up on the fairways is not.

d. CONGU Licencees.

There have been some faults found in the computer programmes and in future CONGU will advise of any faults found and post them on their website.

e. Away Days

It was recommended that these should be run as 'fun days' unless a club specifically wishes to run the competition as a qualifying competition in which case this should be arranged with the host club.

4. EWGA MEDALS

- LGU medals ceased from 31st January 2009 and EWGA medals started 1st February 2009.
- The EWGA year runs from 1st January to 31st December.
- Minimum of 4 EWGA medals, maximum of 24 per year.
- No alternative day EWGA medals.

- All players eligible for all the EWGA medals.
- One medal, one field, one winner. (i.e. no longer silver and bronze divisions)
- 1 qualifier per club based on the 4 best nett scores eligible to enter Regional Final.
- EWGA memento will be awarded to each club winner.
- Medal winners' memento will be sent to clubs with the August mailing, to be presented at the end of December.
- Entry forms will also be sent out in August for winners to complete and return during January / February of the following year.
- EWGA Regional Final: 100 players in each Regional Final which will be played at the weekend.
- EWGA Grand Medal Final: Best 10 nett scores eligible from each regional final.
- Buggies will be allowed in EWGA medals without the need for a medical certificate provided the club permits their use.
- Distance measuring devices WILL NOT be allowed in EWGA medals.
- From 2010, with the introduction of Active/Inactive handicaps, only players with an active handicap will be eligible to compete and win.

Although there will no longer be the alternative day option for EWGA medals, clubs may continue to play their CLUB competitions over two days if they so wish. Clubs could put on two EWGA medals, i.e. midweek and weekend and run these in conjunction with the one club competition. However, clubs should state in their conditions of competition which card would be accepted for the club competition should a player take part in both EWGA medals.

Computer software will cope with all aspects of EWGA medals which are run in conjunction with club competitions.

5. ACTIVE/INACTIVE HANDICAPS

Following consultation it appeared that most clubs were not in favour of introducing the lapsing of handicaps but did feel the need for a restriction. With effect from 2010 handicaps will either be Active or InActive. A sheet drawn up by the EGU/EWGA was given out explaining the system in detail.

- Players must submit 3 qualifying scores during 2009 to avoid having an inactive handicap for 2010 and thereafter must submit 3 qualifying scores per year to maintain an active handicap (including Supplementary Scores/ 9 Hole QCs and Away scores).
- Players submitting less than 3 qualifying scores will not be permitted to carry any over to the following year.
- Organising Committees of Opens and Trophy Competitions may impose a restriction that players with inactive handicaps will not be allowed to enter but in such cases the restriction should be included in the Conditions of Competition.
- In all other cases clubs must allow "home" players with inactive (i) handicaps entry to qualifying competitions in order to provide as much opportunity as possible for the removal of the inactive (i) handicap.
- Clubs will be permitted to exempt players from an inactive (i) handicap for injury/illness that has prevented them from achieving the required number of qualifying scores during a calendar year. This will also include those players who are transferring membership who

have submitted scores albeit at another club and to golfers new to the game who are being issued with a first CONGU handicap.

- Following the review in 2010 it is thought that the number of qualifying scores to be submitted to retain an Active handicap will be increased.

6. FEEDBACK

(a) 9 Hole Qualifying Competitions (Clause 22)

830 clubs have applied and received 9 hole SSS. These competitions have been met with a mixed response even though the facility was aimed at those people who have difficulty playing 18 holes for whatever reason. The interest shown in 9 hole competitions may change with the introduction of Active/Inactive handicaps.

It is recommended that separate cards are used for 9 hole qualifying competitions and a sample was given out. Obviously there is a cost element to this but BLCGA is currently considering drawing up a card on the computer to enable clubs to just print their own on card should they so wish as they will not need very many, certainly initially. If clubs wish to have a copy, contact Heddwen.

(b) Supplementary Scores (Clause 21)

Clubs were requested to trial this procedure over a 2 year period but it was made mandatory from the start of 2008. Feedback suggests that there is not a good take-up and it does not appear to be promoted well with ladies' sections. However, it is hoped that with the introduction of the Active/Inactive handicaps next year we will see a rise in players submitting supplementary scores.

7. MISCELLANEOUS

(a) Merger Talks

At the end of February representatives of the EWGA and the EGU met to re-open talks on the possibility of merger between the two organisations.

(b) The Role of the Area Authority

It often appears that the EGU's County Secretary and EWGA's County Area Authority do not work closely with each other, and often give different decisions. Although the EGU and EWGA structure their Area Authorities differently, all decisions should apply to both men and women. This is being looked at with a view to structuring the EGU and EWGA County Authorities in the same way.

(c) Slope

The EGU do not wish to go over to the Slope system but as the EWGA is in the process of re-assessing all the English courses (using the USGA system) ladies could change over relatively easily to the slope system should it be brought in. An analysis of scores would need to be done to enable slope to be introduced and this will be done in counties where all courses have been USGA rated.

(d) Category 1 Audit

The CAA carries out each year an audit of all players with a handicap of 1 or better.

National amateur tournaments are heavily oversubscribed and frequently need to ballot out players on handicap. Players at this level frequently receive national coaching and are considered for national teams etc. so to ensure the best players are included it is important that players entering these competitions have the correct exact handicaps. The audit is carried out as a safeguard.

Clubs with a player or players with handicaps of 1 or better were asked to let Heddwen have a copy of their handicap record.

(e) Websites

1. www.congu.com Everything on handicaps is there.
2. www.englishwomensgolf.org Information / Newsletter and many FAQs
3. www.blcga.co.uk Everything for the county is there.
Share news with other clubs!!

8. AOB

No items were received under this heading.

Questions Raised At The Meetings

- (a) EGU Associate Membership – Does this satisfy the intent of the definition of a ‘Member’ as contained in the CONGU Unified Handicapping System?

This scheme was discontinued in 2008 although support is being given to Associate Members until May 2009.

- (b) Will Nil Return cards be acceptable for Active handicaps? Must a player complete a certain number of holes before the card will be accepted for handicap purposes?

“A NR in a qualifying competition will be accepted if the Handicapping Committee are happy that it is a genuine score and that the adjusted Stableford score is reflective of the player’s current playing ability. Deliberate poor scores or where players have walked off the course after a few holes will not be accepted as either a qualifying score or for the allocation of an Active handicap.”

See also Decision 2(c) [Page 84 CONGU Handbook] which gives the status of incomplete cards and ‘No Returns’ with regard to Qualifying Scores.

V.H. Molloy
Handicap Advisor
BLCGA
24th March 2009