

# World Handicapping System

## Part 1 - WHS Overview

**The World Handicapping System (WHS) will come into effect on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020**

This, and future communications, is intended to give members of Brett Vale a solid grounding in the fundamentals of the WHS, how it works and what it means for them as golfers. Over the coming weeks at roughly 10-day intervals, the Competitions and Handicap Committee will produce a series of documents explaining various elements of the WHS. This is the first of them.

You will no doubt have heard many things about the WHS, some of these things you have heard may be correct, others may be incorrect (e.g. that all social rounds must be submitted for handicap). Please be guided by your committee as to what is correct and not by the bloke down the pub who plays once a year or what you read on website XYZ (especially some of the golf magazines – they were especially culpable at producing misinformation when the new rules came out in 2019). Be also wary of “old” information on the web, the WHS has been in development for several years now and what might have been true three years ago, may well not be true today. Also, although it is a WORLD Handicapping Scheme, there will be variations in how the system operates in different regions so things you may read may not actually be relevant to the UK.

Members who wish to ask questions about the WHS or anything they read here or elsewhere, may do so by submitting them to the following e-mail address: [whsquestions@btinternet.com](mailto:whsquestions@btinternet.com)

We are all learning, and nobody has yet seen a full copy of the finalised Handicapping Rule book, so we may not be able to answer some questions at this moment in time. As soon as we can do so, we will answer all outstanding questions.

Your committee will review the questions at regular periods and will collate all questions asked into a single document which will be distributed to everyone via email. You will not get an individual response.

This first communication is merely intended to give a high level background behind the WHS, why the authorities decided to implement it, the benefits they see it bringing and outlines some key terms and definitions that you will see come up in future editions of this communication. It is not designed to provide significant detail into the mechanics of the system...that will come later.

OK... let us get going.

### **Why is the WHS being implemented?**

Currently, across the world, there are no less than 6 handicapping authorities and systems in place, all of them operating slightly differently and biased towards the format of golf most played in those regions. e.g. in the UK, our handicapping is based primarily around competition golf, in the US it is driven by returns in social golf and in other parts of the world the preferred format is 4 ball better ball.

Because of the nature of how scores are returned and the formats played, there is often a wide discrepancy in handicaps across the world...a 10 handicapper in the US may well be a far different standard of golfer to a 10 handicapper in the UK

The WHS is designed to replace all those systems, whilst retaining the core elements of the systems that are currently in place in each region, to allow an easy transition.

It is designed to allow as many golfers as possible the opportunity to:

- Obtain and maintain a Handicap Index
- Use their Handicap Index on any golf course around the world
- Compete, or play recreationally, fairly, regardless of where they play
- Give all golfers a Handicap Index that can be transferable from club to club

This, the authorities believe, will attract more players to the game and the new system will make handicapping easier to understand.

### **How does the new WHS fundamentally compare to the old CONGU system?**

In mathematical terms the CONGU system is a “step based” system where your handicap was adjusted in discrete increments (either up 0.1 or down in multiples of 0.1, 0.2, 0.3 etc). The WHS however is a “moving average” system and your Handicap Index will be based on the average of your best 8 out of your last 20 scores.

The term “exact handicap” is now replaced by “handicap index”.

Under the WHS your Handicap Index will represent your ability at a course that is of “standard playing difficulty”, it does not represent your ability round your home course. In this way a golfer from Brett Vale with a Handicap Index of 10 will be of the same standard as a golfer with a similar index who plays all his golf at Augusta, Carnoustie or St. Audrys.

When you play a round of golf your Handicap Index is converted into a Course Handicap and then into a Playing Handicap depending upon the format of golf (Singles Strokeplay, Singles Matchplay, 4BBB etc etc) you are about to play.

The details of the mechanics of these calculations/conversions will be documented in future communications but it is expected that a lot will be done by freely available lookup tables and electronic applications.

There is no concept of buffer zones in the WHS and there will be no such thing as a “competition” status handicap. Your handicap will never lapse and will always remain active whilst you are a member of a club

### **Glossary of Terms**

Like any new system the WHS comes with a whole set of new terms, some of which will be obvious what they mean, some less so. Many of these terms will be explained in greater detail in future communications. It may be useful to familiarise yourselves with these terms as they will be repeated often in future communications.

**Scratch Golfer**- A player who can play to a course handicap of zero on any rated golf course

**Course Rating** - Measures how many strokes a Scratch Player should take on any given course and it is used to calculate the difficulty of a golf course (*effectively replaces SSS*)

**Bogey Golfer** - A player that averages a handicap of between 20 for men and 24 for women (*no CONGU equivalent*)

**Bogey Rating** - Bogey Rating is the measure of the playing difficulty of a set of tees for a Bogey Golfer (*no CONGU equivalent*)

**Slope Rating** - Is the number which indicates the relative playing difficulty of a course for Bogey Golfers, compared to Scratch Golfers. The combination of the Course Rating and the Bogey Rating is used to calculate the Slope Rating of a particular set of tees (*no CONGU equivalent*)

**Handicap Index** - The measurement of a player's potential ability on a course of standard playing difficulty, calculated by taking the best 8 of their previous 20 rounds. It is transferrable to take to any golf course around the world (*similar to Exact Handicap in CONGU*)

**Course Handicap** - The number of strokes a player will receive for a specific set of tees on the golf course being played (*no CONGU equivalent*)

**Handicap Allowance** - The stroke allowance applied to the Course Handicap to determine the Playing Handicap.

**Playing Handicap** - Represents the number of strokes a player receives when playing with or against other players in a competition round

**Playing Conditions Calculation (PCC)** - PCC is used to adjust Score Differentials to better reflect a player's actual performance when adverse weather conditions or abnormal course set-up causes scores to be unusually high or low on a given day. (*Think of it as similar to the change in CSS compared to SSS*)

**Score Differential** - The difference between a player's gross score (adjusted for blow up holes) and the Course Rating, reflecting the Slope Rating and the Playing Conditions Calculation (PCC). It is a numerical value attributed to a score achieved on a golf course on a specific day that is posted into the player's scoring record

**Low Handicap Index** - Represents the demonstrated ability of a player over a 12-month period, preceding the most recent score in the player's scoring record. It provides a reference point against which the current Handicap Index can be compared (*no CONGU equivalent*)

**Soft Cap** – The Soft Cap will suppress movement of the Handicap Index by 50% after a 3.0 stroke increase over the Low Handicap Index has been reached (*no CONGU equivalent*)

**Hard Cap** - Hard Cap will restrict upward movement to 5.0 strokes over the Low Handicap Index (*no CONGU equivalent*)

**Exceptional Score Reduction (ESR)** - ESR is a procedure for dealing with exceptional scores which may indicate a player's ability is rapidly improving (*this differs from the current CONGU ESR in that it is triggered by just a single exceptional score, rather than two scores*)

I think that is plenty for you all to digest at this stage, especially for a "high level overview" but hopefully that will have whetted your appetite for more information. The next communication will be all about Course Rating for scratch and bogey golfers. You can expect to see it sometime during the first week in August.

A final reminder, any questions about the WHS should be sent to: [whsquestions@btinternet.com](mailto:whsquestions@btinternet.com)

