

COURSE RATING

Course rating is expressed within GB&I as a Standard Scratch Score (SSS) and is a measure of the playing difficulty of a golf course under normal mid-season course and weather conditions. The USGA Course Rating System takes account of the measured length of a golf course together with factors that affect both the playing length and the playing difficulty (obstacle factors).

The SSS is based on the performance of the scratch golfer, whereas, the measurements taken for bogey golfers determines the *Slope Rating*.

The Rating Process

The rating process requires a study of each hole, including details obtained at all landing zones for both the scratch and the bogey golfer. The rating teams use the average shot lengths for both scratch and bogey golfers to determine the landing zones, where the following effective playing length corrections and obstacle values are considered.

The factors that affect the **effective playing length** of a golf course are:

- Roll - How far a ball will roll on fairways with various conditions/contours
- Wind - Assessment of average wind strength
- Dogleg - Where the design of a hole does not allow for a full tee shot.
- Elevation - Difference in elevation between tee and green for approach shots
- Forced Lay Up - where a player is forced to play short due to obstacles that cross fairways

The ten **obstacle factors** that determine the playing difficulty of a golf course are:

- Topography- Stance & lie and the approach shot elevation to green
- Fairway - Width at landing zones and nearby obstacles
- Green Target - Evaluation of hitting the green with approach shot
- Recoverability and Rough - Difficulty of recovery if landing zones missed
- Bunkers - Size, depth and proximity to landing zones and greens
- Out of Bounds/Extreme Rough - Depth & nature and proximity to landing zones & greens
- Water Hazards - Carries and proximity from centres of fairways & greens
- Trees - Overall impact on the hole and recovery difficulty
- Green Surface - Putting difficulty - green speeds and contours
- Psychological - The evaluation of the cumulative effect of the above obstacles.

Each hole on the golf course is evaluated on a scale 0-10 for each of the ten obstacles and account taken of the effective length correction factors e.g. the effective playing length of a fast running links course is quite different from that of a moorland course with soft fairways.

To take account of course changes and evolution, established courses are required to be re-rated on a ten-year cycle and any changes to the courses between the re-ratings must be reported to Wales Golf. Supplying detailed information about these changes and photographs will assist in ensuring that the robustness of ratings are retained.

To permit work to be carried out, but for a course to retain its SSS for qualifying competition purposes, course yardages may be increased or decreased by 100 yards without change to the standard scratch. Changes of between 100-300 yards may increase or decrease the standard scratch and advice should be sought from Wales Golf.

Standard scratch ratings are calculated to a decimal place, but all ratings, as with playing handicaps, are issued as whole numbers with values rounded by the convention of lower and upper bounds e.g. 70.4 becomes 70 whilst 70.5 will be 71.

Changes to the Process

The course rating process is regularly reviewed by the USGA and the R&A to ensure that the process is robust. Only fully trained raters can carry out rating assessments as consistency is the key to accurate ratings and full training is given by Wales Golf to its raters in accordance with the USGA & R&A regulations.

The main changes to the system in the last few years include:

- Wind, which is now an overall yardage adjustment based on normal daily wind speed at midseason, and at times when golf is played. Yardage is broken down by nines to accommodate 9-hole courses or courses where wind varies by each nine.
- The reduction of yardages from the centre of the landing zone for which obstacles do not exist, so they are now the same for both men and women
- Introduction of punitive obstacles that are unusually difficult and likely to cost the player a shot
- Changes to the way trees, and recoverability from them, are rated.

Course Length Measurement

Course length is the predominant factor in the evaluation of Standard Scratch Scores. The accurate measurement of each hole is therefore essential.

Measurement must be along the horizontal plane from the tee's *permanent marker* to the centre of the green of each hole.

Measurement must be carried out by a person who is competent and experienced in the use of the appropriate measuring equipment and familiar with the requirements of Appendix A. To satisfy the requirement placed on the Affiliated Club by Clause 6.6, a Certificate of Measurement must be provided:

- (a) showing details of the length of each hole and the total playing length of the course for each set of tees used, or intended to be used, for Qualifying Competitions; and
- (b) recording the type of measuring device used to establish the measurement and its accuracy; and
- (c) identifying any non-compliance, such as incorrectly sited permanent markers or the absence of such markers.

Note: The Certificate of Measurement must be retained by the Affiliated Club and made available to the representatives of the Wales Golf on request e.g. for course rating

SLOPE RATING

Slope Rating is computed from the difference between the Bogey Rating and the USGA Course Rating. A course of standard playing difficulty has a slope rating of 113, and ratings range from 55 (very easy) to a maximum of 155 (extremely difficult).

CONGU do not currently use Slope Ratings, but those who play golf abroad will probably be familiar with the slope rating charts displayed at courses.

