

Handicap



Responsible golf

THE PLAYER IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PIECE OF THE RCGA HANDICAP SYSTEM PUZZLE BY MATT MACKAY, RCGA HANDICAP & COURSE RATING COORDINATOR

Let us imagine the RCGA Handicap System as a machine with various cogs working in unison, each dependent on one another to complete the task at hand. The task in this case is to make the game more enjoyable by enabling golfers of differing abilities to compete on an equitable basis through the establishment and accurate usage of RCGA Handicap Factors. The RCGA, along with the provincial associations, make extensive efforts to help organize and train handicap committees who are then responsible for administering the RCGA Handicap System at the club level. (For information on attending a Handicap Certification Seminar, contact your provincial golf association.) We are well on our way to meeting our goal of having at least one certified handicap official at every RCGA member club and are relying on these certified officials to form effective handicap committees. However, the essential cog in the machinery is the player. The efforts of associations and committees are moot if golfers are not aware of or disregard their responsibilities to the RCGA Handicap System.

The basic premise underlying the entire system is that every player will try to make the best score possible at each hole in every round and that the player will post every acceptable score, adjusted by Equitable Stroke Control

(ESC). Most people have no problem with the first aspect of this premise but there seems to be continual confusion over what constitutes an acceptable score for posting purposes. At the dawn of a new golf season it's important that we review some very common questions regarding acceptable scores.

Q: Can I post a score if I started a hole but didn't finish it or I was conceded putts throughout the round?

A: Yes. If a player starts but does not complete a hole or is conceded a stroke, that player shall record their most likely score. The most likely score consists of the number of strokes already taken plus, in the player's best judgment, the number of strokes that the player would need to complete the hole from that position more than half the time. This number may not exceed the player's ESC limit. The use of "most likely score" is important because it allows for the posting of match play scores, where the concession of strokes is common.

Q: What if I don't play all the holes?

A: If 13 or more holes are played, the player shall post an 18-hole score. If seven to 12 holes are played, the player shall post a nine-hole score. In either case, scores for unplayed holes shall be recorded as par plus any handicap strokes that the player is entitled to receive on the unplayed holes. For example, a player with a Course Handicap of 30 stops playing after 17 holes because of darkness. Hole 18 is a par-4 and is the number 12 stroke hole. The player will record four (par) plus two (handicap strokes to which they are entitled) for a total score of six.

Q: Should I post a score for a round played in Toronto in March?

A: Every provincial golf association is responsible for declaring the duration of an active season. In this particular case, the score would not be acceptable because the GAO active season is April 15 to October 31. However, if a golfer were to record a score in Myrtle Beach in March, that score would be acceptable for handicap purposes because South Carolina observes an active season that is year round. Contact the authorized golf association for the area where your round was played to find out if it occurred during an active season.

Q: What is Equitable Stroke Control?

A: ESC is the downward adjustment of individual hole scores for handicap purposes in order to make handicaps more representative of a player's potential scoring ability. ESC sets a maximum number that a player can post on any hole depending on the player's Course Handicap (*see sidebar below*). There are two methods of ESC: one for an 18-hole handicap and one for an nine-hole handicap.

EQUITABLE STROKE CONTROL

| COURSE HANDICAP (9-HOLE) | MAXIMUM SCORE | COURSE HANDICAP (18-HOLE) | MAXIMUM SCORE |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| 0 or plus | 1 over par | 0 or plus | 1 over par |
| 1-9 | 2 over par | 1-18 | 2 over par |
| 10-18 | 3 over par | 19-32 | 3 over par |
| 19 and over | 4 over par | 33 and over | 4 over par |