



TENNESSEE  
SECTION



# FGCC Handicap Committee News & Briefs

## Your handicap and YOU--- Slope Explained

One of the more confusing concepts related to a player's handicap is the concept of *Slope*. Introduced about 30 years ago by a retired Navy commander in Rancho Mirage, California (Mr. Dean Knuth – the “pope of slope”) and the USGA – *Slope* is the mechanism by which the average player's handicap index is adjusted to compete more fairly with other players regardless of skill level.

*Slope* is a RELATIVE measure of the difficulty of a golf course for the average player versus the scratch player.

*Slope* is not an absolute measurement of course difficulty – that measurement is the course rating!!

Here's an example:

Ron and Bill enter the member/member as a team. Ron's handicap index is 9.8 and Bill's is 2.5. The first round will be played on the CRAG course from the white tees. How is each player's course handicap calculated?

First, we need some information from the golf course. Luckily, our membership with the Tennessee Golf Association provides each golf course a handicap/slope table that makes the job simple. (Other sources are available such as usga.org and by manual calculations.) Here is a summary of the data:

	Index	CRAG slope (white tees)	Course Handicap
Ron	9.8	118	10
Bill	2.5	118	3

So there you have it. Ron's handicap for the day is 10 and Bill's is 3. Interesting huh—and in this example because of the lower slope on the CRAG (118) the difference in the two player's indexes (9.8 vs. 2.5 = 7.3) is the same as the difference in the course handicaps (10 vs. 3=7).

Now let's throw a wrinkle into the mix. Suppose the players show up for play on Saturday morning and find out that the match is going to be staged from the BLUE TEES!!! Ron and Bill are informed that the tournament committee has recomputed all of the handicaps based on play from the BLUE TEES. They both are concerned that they are not getting enough handicap, so they consult the handicap/slope table posted at the golf course and note the following:

	Index	CRAG slope (BLUE TEES)	Course Handicap
Ron	9.8	130	11
Bill	2.5	130	3

Note that in this case from the back tees Ron is getting an additional stroke (11) – while Bill's course handicap remains the same at 3- why? The answer is SLOPE!! Because of the increased difficulty of the average player playing from the back tees, the slope adjustment for Ron kicks in and provides him with an additional shot on the match. Note that Bill's handicap did not change at 3.

Here is quiz to test your understanding of the USGA handicap system. Ron and Bill complete their round on Saturday and are enjoying an adult beverage on the veranda with their playing partners. Bill looks at the card and says to Ron –“nice round Ron, that 82 is right where you should be on your handicap.” Is he right???

Ron's “target score” for the day is derived by taking the course rating for the tees being played (remember the handicap/slope table?) and adding the course handicap – in this case, since Ron played the blue tees, the course rating from the table is 69.4 which when added to his course handicap of 11 results in 80.4 or about 80!! So Bill's compliment was inappropriate --- Ron's 82 is 2 shots higher than his handicap target score.

The committee hopes these articles add to your understanding of the handicap system we have in place here at Fairfield Glade. If you have any questions, please contact the golf professionals or any member of the handicap committee.