



TENNESSEE
SECTION



FGCC Handicap Committee News & Briefs

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Allocation of Handicap Strokes and What It Means!

One of the elements of our club's conformance to the USGA handicap system is a periodic undertaking by the handicap committee to do a hole-by-hole assessment of handicap stroke allocations at each of our courses. By now, pretty much everyone is aware that the handicap hole assignments changed about a year ago after the handicap committee had completed a thorough analysis. Here are some of the activities undertaken by the committee in the analysis:

- Scores were used from a multitude of different groups as secured by members of the committee.
- Roughly 600 conforming rounds were used per course in the sample.
- Scores were used from white tees (Men) and red tees (Ladies). These are the tees in predominant use by our membership ladies and men.
- The holes were rank-ordered using the USGA recommended techniques – regression analysis and comparative modeling.
- The committee then met as a whole to review the statistical data and impose the USGA recommendation of how the strokes should be allocated.

As expected, there has been some confusion/concern raised by some members who have not been involved in the analysis. Most of the confusion seems to revolve around each member's definition of "the hardest holes" or the idea that there should be strokes awarded based on a player's own view of what his most difficult hole is versus par!

The following statement is word for word from The USGA Handicap System manual *developed by the United States Golf Association*.

Section 17-1. Discretion of Committee

..."The *Handicap Committee* should review the course hole by hole, bearing in mind that the basic principle is to equalize the abilities of players at different handicap levels. A handicap stroke should be an equalizer and should be available on a hole where it most likely will be needed by the higher-handicapped player to obtain a half in singles or

four-ball match play. Difficulty in making *par* on a hole is not an effective indicator of the need for a stroke.”

a. Basis of Allocation

“Allocate strokes based on play of the course from the tee markers used most often by the majority of club members.”

“Allocate the first stroke to the hole on the first nine on which the higher-handicapped player most needs a stroke as an equalizer and the second stroke to the hole on the second nine on which the higher-handicapped player most needs a stroke as an equalizer. Alternate in this manner for the full 18 holes.”

Basically, a handicap stroke on a given hole is used as an equalizer for a higher-handicapped player to compete against a lower-handicapped player in a match play situation. Take for instance two holes on the BRAE course --#16-a short downhill par 5, & #17-a long par 3!

The statistical analysis completed by the handicap committee revealed that the slope of the regression line of score vs. player handicap was steeper on hole #16 than #17!

Said another way, the comparison of scores from more skilled players (single digit handicappers) versus scores of bogey players on hole #16 was more significant than those of hole #17.

In the end, the purpose of the stroke allocations is to reduce this gross score difference – and thus hole #16 is ranked lower (8) versus hole #17 (12).

While this simple hole comparison might seem counter intuitive, it makes perfect sense from the statistics! Hole #16 is an easier par than hole #17. If that were the only determination used for stroke allocations it would be easy to understand! But remember, the basis of the stroke allocations is to equalize players of different abilities in a match play situation – where par is not a competitor!!

The committee hopes this flyer helps clarify things. If you have any further questions please contact any member of the handicap committee or the professional staff here at any of our courses.

Chet Weeks—Committee Chair

Rag Jones—PGA