

Returning of Acceptable Scores

(Competition and General Play Scores)

UPDATE: 13/07/2021

As our Governments reduce/repeal COVID restrictions, the advice from the Home Unions is changing in response. The current advice from the Home Unions is to remove situations where the touching of course furniture or score cards is not permitted, along with rule adjustments to accommodate this. The new advice, as restrictions are lifted, is to once again allow those touchpoints – flagsticks may be touched/removed, bunker rakes are to be allowed and score cards can be exchanged once more. Accordingly, as each Home Union provides this updated advice, **all** adjustments to the rules (as set out below) are rescinded and play will be according to the Rules of Golf and Rules of Handicapping.

Current Situation (as at 13/07/2021)

All adjustments to the Rules of Golf continue to be in place for all Unions not identified below.



ENGLAND GOLF – From Monday 19th July 2021

All restrictions on touch points are removed. All adjustments to the Rules of Golf to cover the COVID pandemic are rescinded.

Flagsticks may be removed and the hole must conform to the Rules of Golf such that the definition of a Ball Holed is once more enforced (noting the exception in Rule 13.2 – Ball Resting Against Flagstick).

With no restrictions on bunker rakes on the course, a local rule to allow preferred lies in bunkers is not permitted (apart from situations already covered under the Rules of Golf and the appropriate Model Local Rules utilised) and generally making all bunkers GUR is no longer permitted.

Rule 3.3b (scoring in Stroke Play) is reinstated fully and a return to a 'normal' method of attestation must be used for physical scorecards. Any use of electronic scorecards must fully implement the requirements of this rule.

Returning of Acceptable Scores – COVID Adjustments

Whilst the COVID-19 situation persists, the R&A has made a number of adjustments as to what is permissible under the Rules of Golf in respect of returning scores (specifically Rule 3.3b). In particular:

Committees may choose to allow methods of scoring in stroke play that do not strictly comply with Rule 3.3b, or do not comply with the normal methods used under Rule 3.3b. For example:

- *Players may enter their own hole scores on the scorecard (it is not necessary for a marker to do it)*
- *It is not necessary to have a marker physically certify the player's hole scores, but some form of verbal certification should take place*
- *It is not necessary to physically return a scorecard to the Committee provided the Committee can accept the scores in another way*
- *As provided in the Rules of Golf, scorecards can be electronic, which could include emailing or texting scores to the Committee*

In addition, the R&A has confirmed that any of the above approaches are also acceptable for Handicapping purposes. It further advises that a Committee may accept such scores without any physical certification as long as scores are visible to all players to allow Peer Review. A published competition result sheet will satisfy this.

Whilst recognising the adjustments allowed by the R&A and wishing to enable the safe submission of acceptable scores, CONGU® would like to maintain a level of integrity within the World Handicap System and make the following recommendations:

- The Committee should be satisfied that their approach to the safe receipt of scores allows them to identify the player(s) who have certified the score submitted.
- They should also be satisfied that the handicap that the player has used for their score is identifiable.

As allowed by the R&A, scores can be submitted in a variety of ways:

1) Physical Scorecards

- a. If a Committee determines that the use of physical scorecards is still appropriate, it needs to be satisfied that the players in the group (who verbally agree the scores) are identifiable. It may be that all players are recorded on a start sheet (which may be paper or electronic), but CONGU® recommends that the player records the name of one of the other players to provide the Committee a contact name, should it be required. Note that this is a strong recommendation – a player cannot be disqualified for failing to do this. Any persistent disregard should be handled via the club disciplinary approach (in the same way that a persistent ignoring of the requirement to enter a score onto the computer would be).
- b. Subsequent to the round, all scores must be entered into the club computer system. Options for this would be:

- i. By a Club Official – from a submitted card or from an image of the card sent electronically (e.g. email, or text)
 - ii. By the player via Player Score Entry.
- c. When a scorecard is not physically submitted (e.g. for Player Score Entry, the club does not require the card to be physically submitted on safety grounds, or a card image has been submitted electronically) the player should be asked to retain their card at least until the results have been posted in case any issues arise.

2) Electronic Returns

- a. A Committee may determine that an electronic score return is sufficient, though it is recommended that the Committee is satisfied with the level of certification that this affords. Electronic Returns could be by simple text message (where hole-by-hole scores would be required in order to ensure that the handicap system requirements are met), by email (with the same hole-by-hole requirements) or via an App associated with the club's handicap system. In all of these approaches the recommendation for the Committee to ensure that the players in each group are identifiable will still apply. If the format used allows, it is recommended that one or other of the players in the group is entered along with the scores. In a free-form format method (e.g. email, text etc.) this should not present a problem to the player. However, an App may not provide this facility – this does not preclude such an App being used under the current COVID-19 situation.

These strong recommendations are provided to enable Clubs to reintroduce the return of acceptable scores in a safe manner whilst maintaining the integrity of the World Handicap System as far as possible. They will continue to be applicable in GB&I for as long as the R&A advice is in force. Any changes to the R&A advice will result in these recommendations being reviewed and re-published as required.

Please note that these recommendations are in addition to the Guidance Document published on 23rd March 2020 (and updated on 5th and 11th May 2020) which provide the allowable changes to the Rules of Golf when submitting acceptable scores. Additionally, regardless of the type of scorecard used, the relaxation of the regulations for scorecards does not affect the requirement to pre-register for any acceptable score **on the day and prior to commencing play**. Entry on a tee booking sheet does not in itself satisfy this requirement. If direct registration by the player into the software is not possible then clubs must specify an alternative e.g. entry onto a list held by the pro-shop, text or e-mail to a nominated official.