

World Handicap System Highlights

The World Handicap System is being instituted on January 1, 2020. It will allow golfers to maintain a Handicap Index which is portable to any course in the world. Below are some of the highlights of this new system.

- When you play a round, it is important that you post your score to GHIN right after you play the round. Your index will be updated at midnight after you post.
- To aid in posting and determining your Course Handicap there is a new GHIN app for your phone. It should be available after January 1, 2020, and can be downloaded from the Apple Store or the Google Play Store.
- Rather than using your best 10 out of your last 20 scores (and multiplying the average by 96%), as is currently done to calculate your Handicap Index, the new system will just average your best eight out of 20. As a result, if your index is relatively low, it is likely that your first calculated Handicap Index will go down. If you have a higher index, it could go down, up, or stay the same.
- Your Course Handicap will be calculated a little differently than in the past. It will be different for each tee box as before, but it will be calculated against par not Course Rating. As a result it might be lower than you received in the past (but again, so will everyone else's). For example, if you're playing the Iron Tees on Indian/Cottonwood (where the Course Rating is 70.0 and the par is 72), you'll receive two fewer strokes than you did in the past.
- There is a new method for determining the maximum score you can post for any hole. ESC no longer exists. Instead the maximum score you can post is now a "net double bogey." This might be a little complicated at first because it means you'll need to know the holes on which you get handicap strokes.

Before you play a round determine your Course Handicap for the tees you're playing. You can do this with the GHIN app. Most courses mark each hole of the course with a handicap number from 1 to 18. This is the order in which you apply your handicap strokes. For example, if your CH is 15 you get a stroke on the holes marked 1 – 15. If your CH is 24, you get one stroke on every hole, and since you still have 6 unused strokes (24 – 18), you get a second stroke on holes marked 1 – 6.

West Woods currently numbers each nine from 1 to 9, so you need to divide your Course Handicap by two and apply that number to each nine. If your CH is an odd number, the extra stroke is applied to the front nine. For example, if your CH is 15, you'll get strokes on the holes marked 1 – 8 on the front nine and the holes marked 1 – 7 on the back nine for a total of 15 holes. If your CH is 24, you'll get 12 strokes on each side. In this case you'll get one stroke on every hole, and because you still have three strokes that haven't been applied, you get a second stroke on holes with handicap numbers 1, 2 and 3. This gives you two strokes on those holes and one on the rest for a total of 12 on each nine or 24 for eighteen.

Having determined the strokes you get on each hole, the rest is “easy.” The maximum score you can post on a hole is par, plus the number of handicap strokes you get, plus two. So, if your Course Handicap is between 0 and 18, you can only post a double bogey (on holes where you don't get a stroke) or a triple bogey (on holes where you do get a stroke). If your CH is between 19 and 36, you can only post a triple bogey (on holes where you get one stroke) or a quad (on holes where you get two strokes). Finally, if your CH is between 37 and 54, you can only post a quadruple bogey (on holes where you get two strokes) or a quintuple bogey (on holes where you get three strokes).

The new GHIN app eventually will allow you to post hole-by-hole scores. So, if all the above is too confusing, just use this new feature. You'll tell the app what course you're playing and which tee box. Then it will know your course handicap and make the appropriate adjustments for maximum scores.

- There is a new concept called the Playing Condition Calculation. This is a statistical calculation that GHIN will make after all the scores on a given day are submitted. If the scores are higher or lower than would be predicted, GHIN may determine that the course was playing harder or easier than normal and make an adjustment. This should accommodate bad weather conditions or unusual course setups. GHIN only expects to use this PCC about 10% of the time. It might result in adjusting your posted score up by one stroke or down by one to three strokes.

This new calculation increases the importance of posting your scores immediately after you play a round. The calculation will only be made once, so if you post your score a day or more after the round, you'll have to find out if PCC was applied and make that adjustment yourself before you post the round. It's not yet clear where you'll get this information.

- Because the new Course Handicap is calculated against par, you can now compete against a player who is playing a different tee box without a lot of extra calculations. Merely determine the difference in Course Handicaps of each player to establish whether strokes are given. The only time an additional calculation is necessary is if the par is different from the different tee boxes.