

The WHS Course Rating System - Overview

INTRODUCTION

The WHS Course Rating System takes into account the factors that affect the playing difficulty of a golf course.

Course rating teams from authorized golf associations carry out the on-course portion of the rating process. Authorized golf associations then review the work of the teams and issue ratings.

Accuracy and consistency are the keys to effective course rating. A course must first be accurately measured. The measured yardage must then be corrected to give the effective playing length.

The effective playing length correction factors are roll, elevation, dogleg/forced lay-up, prevailing wind, and altitude.

Obstacles that affect playing difficulty must then be evaluated in accordance with established standards. These standards increase objectivity in course rating.

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

The following are terms essential to the WHS Course Rating System:

- **Scratch Player:**

A male 'scratch player' is a player with a 0.0 Handicap Index. A male scratch player, for rating purposes, can hit tee shots an average of 250 yards and can reach a 470-yard hole in two shots at sea level.

A female 'scratch player' is a player with a 0.0 Handicap Index. A female scratch player, for rating purposes, can hit tee shots an average of 210 yards and can reach a 400-yard hole in two shots at sea level.

- **WHS Course Rating:**

A WHS Course Rating is the evaluation of the playing difficulty of a course for scratch players under normal course and weather conditions. It is expressed as the number of strokes taken to one decimal place (i.e. 72.5), and is based on length and other obstacles to the extent that they affect the scoring difficulty of the scratch player.

- **Bogey Player:**

A male bogey player is a player with a Handicap Index of approximately 20.0. For rating purposes, he can hit tee shots an average of 200 yards and can reach a 370-yard hole in two shots at sea level.

A female bogey player is a player with a Handicap Index of approximately 24.0. For rating purposes, she can hit tee shots an average of 150 yards and can reach a 280-yard hole in two shots at sea level.

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- **Bogey Rating:**

A Bogey Rating represents the scoring difficulty of a course for the bogey player. It is expressed as the number of strokes taken to one decimal place (i.e. 92.1), and is based on yardage and other obstacles to the extent that they affect the scoring difficulty for the bogey player.

- **Slope Rating:**

Slope Rating is defined as the WHS mark that indicates the measurement of the relative difficulty of a course for players who are not scratch players compared to the Course Rating (i.e. compared to the difficulty of a course for scratch players). Slope Rating is computed from the difference between the Bogey Rating and the Course Rating times a constant factor and is expressed as a whole number from 55 to 155. A golf course of standard relative playing difficulty has a Slope Rating of 113.

THE RATING PROCESS

The rating process requires a study of each hole, including detailed data obtained at all landing zones for both the scratch and the bogey player. The rating teams use the average shot lengths for both scratch and bogey players to determine the landing zones. Length corrections and obstacle values are considered at each landing zone:

- **Effective Playing Length Factors**

The following correction factors are evaluated to determine if the hole – in playing terms - is effectively longer or shorter than the actual measured length:

- **Roll:**
Roll is an evaluation of how far full shots for scratch and bogey players roll, and the effect that has on the playing length of the course.
- **Elevation:**
Elevation is a measure of how changes in elevation from tee to green affect the playing length of a hole.
- **Dogleg/forced lay up:**
Dogleg/forced lay-up is a measure of how much longer or shorter a hole is played because it has a bend (allowing players to cut the corner or forcing them to lay up), or because it has obstacles, such as water or deep bunkers, crossing the fairway in the players' landing zones (which force the scratch or bogey player to hit less than a full shot).
- **Wind:**
Wind is a measure of the effect on the overall playing length of the course based on average daily wind speed during the main playing season and at times when golf is played. Considerations include how much the course is protected from - or exposed to – such wind.

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- **Altitude:**

Altitude is an evaluation for courses at 2,000 feet or more altitude that will play shorter than their measured length because shots fly further in the thin air.

- **Obstacle Factors**

The following obstacle factors are determined for each landing zone for both the scratch and the bogey player with each obstacle assigned a value of 0 to 10, from standard Obstacle Tables – according to strict rules - depending on its relation to how a scratch or bogey player would play the hole:

- **Topography:**

Topography is a factor if the stance or lie in the landing zone is affected by slopes or mounds, or the shot to the green is uphill or downhill, making club selection more difficult.

- **Fairway:**

Fairway is an evaluation of the difficulty of keeping the ball in play from tee to green. Fairway ratings are based on fairway width in all landing zones, hole length, and nearby trees, hazards, and punitive rough.

- **Green Target:**

Green Target is an evaluation of the difficulty of hitting the green with the approach shot. Primary considerations are green size, approach shot length, green surface visibility, firmness, and contours.

- **Recoverability and Rough:**

Recoverability and Rough is the evaluation of the probability of missing the tee shot landing zone and the green, and the difficulty of recovering if either, or both, is missed. The Green Target rating drives the Recoverability and Rough rating value.

- **Bunkers:**

Bunkers is the evaluation of their proximity to target areas and the difficulty of recovery from them. The Green Target rating also drives the Bunkers rating value.

- **Crossing Obstacles:**

Crossing Obstacles is the evaluation of the problem involved in playing over obstacles including Penalty Areas, Out-of-Bounds and Extreme Rough which must be crossed between tee and green, and where a ball may be lost or virtually unplayable.

- **Lateral Obstacles:**

Lateral obstacles is the evaluation of obstacles including Penalty Areas, Out-of-Bounds and Extreme Rough which are lateral to the line-of-play based on their distance from the centre of the landing zone and / or the line of play, and where a ball may be lost or virtually unplayable.

- **Trees:**

Trees is the evaluation of the overall impact of trees on the play of the hole.

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- **Green Surface:**

Green Surface is the evaluation of a green's difficulty from a putting standpoint. Green speed and surface contouring are the main factors. The size of the green is considered irrelevant in evaluating putting difficulty. A Stimpmeter is utilized to measure the speed of the greens based on midseason conditions.

- **Psychological:**

Psychological is the evaluation of the cumulative effect of the other obstacles. The location of many punitive obstacles close to a target area creates uneasiness in the mind of the player and thus affects his or her score. This value is purely mathematical and is automatically calculated and added after the on-course rating is complete.

When the evaluation is complete, for each of the 10 obstacles, the rating values on all holes are totalled and multiplied by a relative weighting factor for that obstacle to provide the overall rating contribution from each obstacle.

The weighted obstacle values are applied to scratch and bogey formulas and then converted to strokes.

Those strokes are added or subtracted from the Yardage Rating to produce a Bogey Rating and Course Rating, and the difference between those two values is multiplied by a constant factor to produce the Slope Rating.

RATING REVIEWS

Courses must be re-rated at least every 10 years, or if it is a new golf course, within 5 years. A course must also be re-rated if significant changes have been made to the course. To schedule a course rating, the club representative needs to contact its authorized golf association.