

## Maintaining Your Course & Slope Rating

The Golf Canada Course Rating System is designed to ensure that the rating of a course is in proper relation to the ratings of other courses. If this is not achieved, players at courses rated too low will be overhandicapped, and vice versa.

**Accuracy** and **consistency** are the keys to effective course rating. A course must first be accurately measured, and the measured yardage must be corrected for factors that affect the playing length, which are roll, changes in elevation, forced lay ups, doglegs, prevailing wind, and altitude. Obstacles that affect playing difficulty must then be evaluated in accordance with established standards. These standards reduce subjectivity in course rating.

A golf course is rated on its effective playing length and its playing difficulty under normal conditions. If the length or playing difficulty changes materially, handicaps will be distorted. Placement of tees and holes must be balanced each day and maintenance practices (watering, cutting, etc.) must be consistent from day-to-day and month-to-month so that the Golf Canada Course Rating and Slope Rating will remain accurate.

Minor construction may have an effect on the ratings of the course. Following are some examples of the impact that improper course management, changes in course maintenance, and minor construction can have on the Golf Canada Course Rating and Slope Rating. Please see Section 15 of “The Golf Canada Handicap System” for more information.

### 1. Change in effective playing length

Increasing the effective playing length of the course by 22 yards for men or 18 yards for women adds one-tenth (0.1) of a stroke to the Golf Canada Course Rating; reducing the length lowers the rating by the same amount. Increasing effective playing length also raises the Slope Rating: adding 93 yards for men or 85 yards for women increases the Slope Rating by 1. Shortening the course reduces the Slope Rating similarly.

- **Teeplacement**

The most obvious way to increase or decrease effective playing length is to move all the tee markers behind or ahead of the permanent yardage markers. Placing tee markers 10 yards per hole behind the permanent markers adds 180 yards to effective playing length which in turn increases the Golf Canada Course Rating by 0.8 for men and 1.0 for

women of a stroke, and increases the Slope Rating by 2.

- **Dogleg or forced lay up**

Adding obstacles that force a scratch player to lay up short of the normal 250 yard tee shot for men [or 210 for women] increases the Golf Canada Course Rating. Removing them so the scratch player can hit a full tee shot lowers the ratings. Building deep bunkers across the fairway 220 yards for men [or 180 yards for women] from the tee forces a 40-yard lay-up and adds 0.2 of a stroke to the Golf Canada Course Rating. Since the bogey golfer would not lay up, Slope Rating decreases by 1.

Building bunkers in, or transplanting large trees at, the corner of a dogleg that previously was routinely “cut” by the scratch player adds effective playing length to the course equal to the added yardage of the approach shot.

- **Roll**

Softening fairways increases effective playing length; hardening fairways decreases effective playing length. If overnight watering is increased so that fairway condition changes from firm to average, or from average to soft, the Golf Canada Course Rating goes up almost 0.5 of a stroke for men [or 0.6 of a stroke for women], and the Slope Rating increases by 1.

## 2. Changes in obstacles

Generally speaking, changing obstacles has less effect on the Golf Canada Course Rating and Slope Rating than changing effective playing length. Increasing an obstacle rating value by 1 (e.g., from a “4” to a “5”) has negligible effect because the rating points are first weighted (0.03 to 0.15, depending on the obstacle) then multiplied by 0.11 in conversion to scratch obstacle strokes (or by 0.26 in conversion to bogey obstacle strokes). Assuming a weighting of 10 percent (0.10), a “4” to “5” change in obstacle difficulty results in a Golf Canada Course Rating increase of only 11 one-thousandths (0.011) of a stroke (or a Bogey Rating increase of 0.026 of a stroke). To achieve an increase of 0.1 of a stroke in Golf Canada Course Rating, obstacles must be rated a total of 9 points higher. Adding 22 yards for men [or 18 yards for women] to the effective playing length achieves the same result.

Some examples of changes in obstacles that produce an increase in Golf Canada Course Rating of 0.1 of a stroke are listed below.

- a. Fairway**

Change mowing pattern to decrease fairway width by 10 yards on 4 holes. Decreasing

fairway width from 30 yards to 20 yards on all par-4 and par-5 holes adds over 0.3 of a stroke to the Golf Canada Course Rating and increases the Slope Rating by approximately 1 ½ points.

#### **b. Recoverability and Rough**

Raise mower blades to increase rough height by 1 inch on 3 holes. Increasing the rough height from 2 ½" to 3 ½" on all 18 holes adds nearly 0.7 of a stroke to the Golf Canada Course Rating and increases Slope Rating by approximately 5.

#### **c. Out of bounds**

Move the white stakes 10 yards closer to five fairway landing zones or greens.

#### **d. bunkers**

Add 13 average bunkers, each in a strategic place such as near the scratch player's tee shot landing zone (where none existed before) or closely bordering a green (adding ¼ to "the fraction of the green closely bordered by bunkers"). These bunkers will add just over 1 to the Slope Rating. A smaller number of bunkers will produce the same result if they are deeper than 3 feet for men [or 2 feet for women] or must be carried to reach the target.

#### **e. Green Target**

Decrease watering the greens on 10 holes to change them from "unusually soft" to "average firmness" or from "average" to "unusually firm." Changing the holding properties of the greens on all 18 holes adds about 0.2 of a stroke to the Golf Canada Course Rating, and increases the Slope Rating by 1.

#### **f. Green Surface**

Lower greens mower cutting height to increase Stimpmeter measurement by 12 to 18 inches on 8 greens. Speeding up all 18 greens by 1 to 1 ½ feet adds just over 0.2 of a stroke to the Golf Canada Course Rating and almost 1 to the Slope Rating.

In summary, moving tee markers, changing mowing patterns, cutting heights, and watering practices on all 18 holes can increase or decrease the Golf Canada Course Rating and Slope Rating as follows:

Course Maintenance And Setup – Potential Impact		
<i>Obstacle/effective length factor Changed</i>	<i>Change in Golf Canada Course Rating</i>	<i>Change in Slope Rating</i>
Tee Placement	+ or - 0.8 [1.0 for women]	+ or - 2
Roll	+ or - 0.5 [0.6 for women]	+ or - 1
Fairway	+ or - 0.3	+ or - 1
Recoverability and Rough	+ or - 0.7	+ or - 5
Green Target	+ or - 0.2	+ or - 1
Green Surface	+ or - 0.2	+ or - 1
<b>Total Change</b>	<b>+ or - 2.7 [3.0 for women]</b>	<b>+ or - 11</b>

As can be seen, it is imperative that the course setup and maintenance remain consistent with the difficulty when rated. Otherwise, inaccuracies up to 5 or 6 strokes in Golf Canada Course Rating and 20 or more points in Slope Rating can result.

### 3. Modification of Courses

#### a. Temporary Changes

When temporary tees and/or greens are used, you must notify British Columbia Golf. We will decide whether or not scores made under those conditions are to be accepted for handicap purposes, and whether the Golf Canada Course Rating and Slope Rating should be modified temporarily. Your club has a responsibility to notify its members that when a hole is not played due to construction, the score for that hole must be par plus any handicap strokes the player is entitled to on that hole.

When you use a temporary green (that is not an alternate permanent green), you must inform the players to post par plus any handicap strokes the player is entitled to receive on that hole. The par plus method should also be used when a course rotates the holes being renovated so that the course changes many times over the length of the renovation.

If temporary tees are being used or an alternate permanent green is being used, we recommend the following:

- If the overall change in yardage is minimal (less than 100 yards) it may be possible to adjust tees on holes not being modified to keep the approximate overall yardage the same. This will not require a temporary rating to be issued.



- If the modification will last two months or less, notify British Columbia Golf and we will calculate a temporary Golf Canada Course Rating and Slope Rating.
- If the modification will last more than two months, notify British Columbia Golf and we will calculate a temporary Golf Canada Course Rating and Slope Rating.

#### **b. Permanent Changes**

The club must notify British Columbia Golf when permanent changes are made to the course. Permanent changes to the course require a review of the current Golf Canada Course Rating and Slope Rating and to determine whether a re-rating is necessary.