

Standardization of Par Across Tee-sets

Background

Appendix F of the 2024 Rules of Handicapping states that “where appropriate, the standardization of par across tee sets is recommended.”

This means that a hole which is a par 4 from the back tees for men, should also be a par 4 for men from every other tee on that hole.

This practice is already used in many countries around the world and the WHS recognizes the benefits, as follows:

- It helps to simplify the application of net double bogey and net par adjustments, by making them consistent across all tee-sets on a hole.
- For those countries that include the difference between Course Rating and par within the calculation of a Course Handicap, it simplifies the calculation of the number of strokes given or received when players are competing from multiple sets of tees.

Considerations

The primary factor for determining whether par should be standardized is the design of the hole as it was intended to be played. Secondary factors include the most commonly played set of tees per gender and the most common par value on a hole.

In instances where the yardage for one or more tees falls outside of the established par guidelines, the Authorized Association (or the body to which it delegates responsibility) should determine whether this changes the way the hole is meant to be played.

Examples

The following are examples of where it would be practical to establish a standardized par on a hole:

- The hole lengths from all sets of tees on a specific hole lie within the recommended par-4 range for men, except for the forward tee with a length of 235 yards. This hole plays uphill, increasing the effective length of the hole; i.e. it is a 2-shot hole for most players, especially those who are likely to play from this forward tee. Each set of tees on this hole should be designated as a par-4 due to the way the hole is designed to be played.
- A double dogleg hole has three sets of tees for the men: 497 yards, 458 yards, and 409 yards. Hole lengths fall into both par-5 and par-4 ranges following the guidelines as set forth within the Rules of Handicapping. However, the hole was designed to play as a double dogleg from all sets of tees, and therefore should be adjudicated as a par-5 accordingly.
- The hole lengths from all sets of tees on a specific hole lie within the recommended par-5 range for women, except for the forward tee with a length of 355 yards. Most players, especially those who are likely to play from the forward tee, play it as a 3-shot hole. Each set of tees on this hole should be designated as a par-5 due to the way the hole was designed to be played.

The following are examples where it would be impractical to establish a standardized par on a hole:

- The hole length from the back tee for women is 520 yards, which is well within the par-5 range based on the guidelines within the Rules of Handicapping. It was designed to be played as a 3-shot hole. All other tees on the hole are considerably shorter and were designed to be played as a 2 shot hole. In this case, it would be recommended that the back tee is designated as a par-5 and all others as a par-4.
- The forward tee on a hole was designed to play to an alternate green, with the yardage of 140 yards for men well within the par-3 guidelines. The golf club determined to make this alternate green available because the approach shot to the original green is significantly uphill and requires crossing a large penalty area. In this case, it would be recommended that the forward tee is designated as a par-3 and all other tees as a par-4.
- A tee is placed in the fairway for juniors, which is significantly shorter than the other sets of tees on the hole. The way the hole was designed to be played was not considered in the placement of this junior tee. It is recommended that par be considered independently for this tee. Moreover, if junior tees are placed throughout the course, then they should be kept on a separate scorecard.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Authorized Association, in consultation with the golf club, to establish an accurate par for each hole for handicap purposes, reflecting the score a scratch player would be expected to score.