



CONGU - APPENDIX G

HANDICAP STROKE INDEX

Committee Procedures 5-I(4) requires Committees to 'publish a table indicating the order of holes at which handicap strokes are to be given or received'. To provide consistency at Affiliated Clubs it is recommended that the allocation is made based on the following principles.

- 1.** Of paramount importance for match play competition is the even spread of the strokes to be received at all handicap differences over the 18 holes.
- 2.** This is best achieved by allocating the odd numbered strokes to the more difficult of the two nines, usually the longer nine, and the even numbers to the other nine.
- 3.** The first and second stroke index holes should be placed close to the centre of each nine and the first six strokes should not be allocated to adjacent holes. The 7th to the 10th indices should be allocated so that a player receiving 10 strokes does not receive strokes on three consecutive holes.
- 4.** None of the first eight strokes should be allocated to the first or the last hole, and at clubs where competitive matches may be started at the 10th hole, at the 9th or 10th holes. This avoids a player receiving an undue advantage on the 19th hole should a match continue to sudden death.
Unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary, stroke indices 9, 10, 11 and 12 should be allocated to holes 1, 9, 10 and 18 in such order as shall be considered appropriate.
- 5.** Subject to the foregoing recommendations, when selecting each stroke index in turn holes of varying length should be selected. Index 1 could be a par 5, index 2 a long par 4, index 3 a shorter par 4 and index 4 a par 3. There is no recommended order for this selection, the objective being to select in index sequence holes of varying playing difficulty. Such a selection provides more equal opportunity for all handicaps in match play and Stableford and Par competitions than an order based upon hole length or difficulty to obtain par.

Note 1: Par is not an indicator of hole difficulty. Long par 3 and 4 holes are often selected for low index allocation in preference to par 5 holes on the basis that it is easier to score par on a par 5 hole than 4 on a long par 4. Long par 3 and 4 holes are difficult pars for low handicap players but often relatively easy bogeys for the player with a slightly higher handicap. Difficulty in relation to par is only one of several factors to be taken into account when selecting stroke indices.

Note 2: When allocating a stroke index it should be noted that in the majority of social matches there are small handicap differences thereby making the even distribution of the lower indices of great importance.





The above recommendations for the 'Handicap Stroke Index' provision are principally directed at match play and have proved to be suitable for that purpose. The 'Handicap Stroke Index', however, is also used widely for Stableford, par and bogey competitions.

In these forms of stroke play competition the need to have a uniform and balanced distribution of strokes is less compelling. There is a cogent case for the Index in such competitions to be aligned to the ranking of holes in terms of playing difficulty irrespective of hole number. Such a ranking facility is available through many of the licensed handicap software programs currently used by Affiliated Clubs. Clubs that conduct a significant number of Stableford, par and bogey competitions may wish to provide separate stroke indices for match play and the listed forms of stroke play.

To avoid confusion this would be best done on separate scorecards. These recommendations supplement those made by the R&A Rules Ltd contained in Committee Procedures - which may be downloaded from the R&A website www.randa.org.

