

**THROUGH THE GREEN** By Jim Cowan, Director of Course Rating & Handicapping

# In Sync of 'N Sync



**FOR YEARS**

I have had a front row seat to a nagging little issue within the Handicap System. I maintain

a handicap here as well as one at the course I grew up on in my hometown of Tacoma, Washington. Despite the fact that the NCGA and Washington subscribe to the same handicap service (GHIN) and that I have a single scoring record, my Handicap Index between the two states often varies.

The reason for this is straightforward and easy enough to understand—Washington pushes the “button” to revise handicaps on different dates than the NCGA (as does Oregon and Nevada). With new scores pushing old scores out of my record all the time, different revision dates can and often do translate into different handicaps. The differences are usually minor and there are provisions within the Handicap System that offer guidance for this phenomenon (in multi-club events, a tournament may require the golfer to play to his lowest handicap), but the situation does create confusion.

A happy ending to this issue is now in sight. The USGA recently announced that effective 2012, all handicaps in the country will be revised on the exact same dates.

Given the wide array of golf seasons and diverse climates across the country, arriving at a single revision schedule was not easy. After all, how do you balance the needs of the Midwest with its short, but intensive golf season with say, Arizona, where golf is actually played during the winter months?

In the end the USGA has decided that all handicaps will officially be issued on the 1st and 15th of each and every

month. For those areas of the country that hibernate in the winter, no harm/no foul as the same Handicap Index is regurgitated revision after revision during the many months of inactivity.

In Northern California, the transition will be simple—twelve “bonus” updates on the 15th of each month to complement the traditional 1st-of-the-month offerings.

Such a simple and logical transition, in fact, why wait until 2012?

We’re not! Effective immediately, NCGA handicaps will now be revised twice a month. This new schedule will offer more timely updates to those who play a lot of golf and will allow new golfers to establish a handicap more quickly.

And when Washington follows suit in 2012, it means my handicaps will always be in sync.

## Online NCGA Handicap Certification Program Update

In 2002 the NCGA launched an educational program designed to teach member clubs the inner workings of the USGA Handicap System. Dubbed the NCGA Handicap Certification Program, the seminars carried a mandatory attendance requirement. That is, all NCGA clubs were required to have a representative attend and complete a half-day seminar or face dire consequences (membership would be ineligible to compete in NCGA events).

Little did we know at the time that the USGA was watching. So much so that in 2006 they upped the stakes and made it a requirement that every club in the country complete a similar education program every four years in order to be



authorized/licensed to issue so-called “official” handicaps.

I am happy to report that the NCGA is about to unveil an online program that can substitute for attendance at a “live” seminar. Clubs will be able to satisfy both NCGA and USGA obligations from the convenience of players’ own homes or offices at their own pace.

Complete details on this web offering (pictured above) will be forwarded to all clubs.

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**KNOW YOUR RULES** By John Vander Borgh, Manager, NCGA Junior Tour

# Post-Round Responsibilities



**IN THE SUMMER ISSUE** of *NCGA Golf*, I wrote about your responsibilities when you arrive at the first tee. In this issue, you will learn about your responsibilities after the round.

When you complete your round, Rule 6-6b states that you should return your scorecard to the Committee as soon as possible. When you leave the putting green of the 18th hole, you should go to the scoring area with the rest of the players in your group, exchange cards and review your card for accuracy. While there is no set time, you

could be disqualified if you fail to return the card promptly. If a player forgets to turn in his card, he will definitely be disqualified. If a player goes to his car to put his clubs away and returns promptly he probably won’t, but it is rude to leave the other players in the group waiting.

Once you get to the scoring area, you should return the card you kept to its owner. You should get your card from your marker. The NCGA typically prints scorecards with a tear strip at the top which are labeled “Marker’s Notes.” This is an area where you can keep track of your own score. Before you give the card to the player, tear this strip off. Once you get

your card, you can lay the strip next to the scores on the card and compare them. If there are any discrepancies, you should resolve them with your marker. If your marker is not there, NEVER change the card yourself without first discussing it with the Committee person in the scoring area. The Committee will try to find the marker or someone else in the group to confirm the change.

It is always best to check the card yourself rather than having your marker read the scores to you. They might mis-state something accidentally and you end up responsible.

Many players don’t sign cards until they are satisfied

# Upgrading Each Year



**EVEN WITH** the hard economic year the support of the tournament program was unbelievable. We are very

appreciative of our member clubs players. The rules and competitions department continues to evaluate and make the necessary upgrades to its existing program so the best experience possible is provided to participants.

The 2010 tournament season brings new events and exciting changes to the program. One major change is the new online registration program provided by GHIN that will directly integrate with the GHIN Tournament Players Program (TPP). This new system more efficiently provides for the production of the events. As a player or tournament chairman you will find it user-friendly to enter tournaments. When you use it for the first time you will have to start over and provide a user name and password. I do not think that is asking too much.

## Changes and Additions California Golf Association

The CGA board approved

the Senior State Amateur to rotate between north and south like the State Amateur has since 2007. Starting this year the rotation has the senior played in the north in Fresno at Fort Washington November 1-3.

The State Amateur will take place in June at Rancho Santa Fe and La Jolla Country Club. In 2011, the Senior Amateur moves to the south as the State Amateur is held at The Olympic Club. With both championships rotating and having open qualifying, more players will have the opportunity to participate in these great events and at great venues.

## Super Senior Championship

A super senior championship will be introduced this year. This event will take place in November at Merced Country Club. The age limit is 65 years and up with an index of 9.4 and less.

## Zone Program

The zone program will change venues. Poppy Hills still remains as one course and the second venue will be Quail Lodge. The Zone Championship held at the conclusion of the 14

zones is still set for Spyglass and Poppy Hills. Quail will be an excellent course for the zone program and those that have never played it will enjoy it immensely.

## One Ball Rule

The tournament committee has eliminated the use of the "One Ball Rule." This local rule had been in effect for many years for scratch events but will no longer be used. The committee felt that the different brands of golf balls today are very similar and a player is not going to change balls during a round for the purpose of manipulation. Other golf associations are adopting this change as well.

## Breaking Ties—Scratch Events

The NCGA breaks ties for second place and the last qualifying spot in handicap championships by matching scorecards using the USGA suggested method (last nine – last six – last three – last one). This method will now be used in scratch events for second place ties and for player points for second place; duplicate medals for third place ties remains the same. Qualifying

for scratch events remains the number of spots and ties. First place ties in handicap and scratch events will still require a playoff.

## Early Closing

The Senior Championship and Public Links Championship will have closing dates one month earlier this year. The Senior will close February 12 and the Public Links closes February 19. Our dates were moved forward because of the U. S. Open at Pebble Beach in June. The Pebble Beach Co. will use Spyglass during and after the Open. Therefore the Senior Championship will be played April 8-9 and the Public Links Championship April 26-27.

## Rules of Golf/Decisions on the Rules of Golf

The Rules of Golf are revised every four years, so there will not be any changes until 2012. The Decisions on the Rules of Golf are revised every two years with this year being a change year. There are 28 new decisions, 51 revised decisions, one withdrawn decision and two re-numbered decisions. If you are interested in the Rules of Golf and want to learn more, the NCGA offers five 2 1/2-day seminars that cover all 34 rules. You can register online at [www.ncga.org](http://www.ncga.org) and click on the rules link.

Remember if you have any questions or concerns the rules and competitions staff is always available to assist. It is important to mark your calendars for closing dates and to tell your members who qualify the next date for NCGA qualifying or championship. All notification of pairings and player information is done via e-mail. If a player does not have e-mail we will mail the tournament information. If you have not heard from the NCGA one week prior to the qualifying or championship, please call the office.

Have a great season.  
Roger Val can be e-mailed at [rval@ncga.org](mailto:rval@ncga.org).

they are correct. It is a much better idea for the marker to sign the card before he hands it to you and for you to sign it as soon as you get it. Just because the card is signed doesn't mean that changes can't be made.

Remember that the only things you are responsible for are that the 18 hole-by-hole scores are correct, that there are two signatures and if it is a handicap event, that your handicap is correct. Once you are sure of all these things, give the card to the scorer. You should then wait for the scorer to check the card and add the score. The scorer will add it and tell you what the total is. If that makes sense, you can leave the

area, although you should stay until the card you kept is also confirmed. Until you leave the scoring area, corrections can be made. Once you leave the scoring area, the card is final.

There are some organizations that use a box where you deposit your card. Usually putting the card in the box makes it final. Be very careful before you put it in the box.

If the card does not have two signatures or has too low a handicap you are going to be disqualified after turning it in. If the score on any particular hole is too low, you will be disqualified. If a score or handicap is too high, you will have to live with that score.

Also remember that if you are playing in a four-ball event, you are responsible to ensure that the score used is credited to the proper person. NEVER turn in a card with large numbers written across the two boxes for the players. This would result in disqualification.

When you play in a tournament, you are on the course for four or more hours. You should be willing to spend the extra five minutes it takes to get the scorecard correct and not ruin all the work you put in by being careless.

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