1 February 2021

Notice to Manufacturers - Notice and Comment

On 4 February 2020, The R&A and the USGA published the Distance Insights Project Report along with a conclusions document entitled "Implications of Hitting Distance in Golf". In that conclusions document, we committed to publish a more specific set of research topics intended to address the broader issues identified. This communication was originally scheduled for publication by 19 March 2020. However, we delayed this next step until now. Today we have published a further Area of Interest notification under the Equipment Rulemaking Procedures on these additional research topics. In addition to the work on these research topics, in the conclusions document, we also committed to pursuing several other topics including, specifically:

- Reviewing our equipment testing processes, protocols and standards to ensure their effectiveness in relation to distance limits;
- Assessing and providing guidance on how golf course design, agronomy, maintenance and set-up can affect hitting distance; and
- Assessing and providing guidance on the availability of short enough forward tees and the appropriate tee-to-hole playing distances for golfers of all levels.

Therefore, as a separate workstream, we have taken the opportunity during the last year to progress our work on some specific topics.

The purpose of this communication is to issue, as a Notice and Comment to manufacturers, three specific proposals for their feedback.

Club length – reduction to 46 inches available as Model Local Rule (MLR)

An Area of Interest notice was issued to manufacturers regarding this topic on 17 December 2014 and a proposal to reduce the maximum club length limit for clubs other than putters from 48 inches to 46 inches, was communicated on 17 October 2016 including an indication of the research that had been conducted on this proposal. Comments to this proposal were requested by 20 January 2017. The comments that were received have been considered. Most of these comments were associated with concerns about the proliferation of clubs in excess of 46 inches within players' bags. In June 2018, we communicated a pause to our process associated with our proposed rule change. This pause was associated with our intention to embark on the data gathering stage of the Distance Insights project.

With the publication of the Distance Insights Project Report in February 2020, The R&A and USGA now propose to make available a Model Local Rule (MLR) for Committees that will permit them to limit the maximum length of clubs, other than putters, to 46 inches. The measurement technique will remain as defined within the Equipment Rules and an appropriate accommodation will be made to ensure the fidelity of that measurement. It is currently being contemplated that this

MLR, like other equipment related local rules would be recommended for use only in competitions limited to highly skilled players (that is, professional and elite amateur competitions). Comments for this proposal are requested by 4 March 2021 (within 30 days of this notice).

Update on testing method for golf balls

Following the update to the testing associated with the Overall Distance Standard adopted in 2002, the test protocol has remained essentially unaltered. At that time, we considered whether changes to the testing conditions used for the determination of conformance to the Overall Distance Standard (Equipment Rules, Part 4, 6.) was merited. We decided that a ball's Actual Launch Conditions (ALC) would be utilised in determining a ball's overall distance. Testing utilizing ALC continues to be the method currently employed. We now propose a modification to the testing conditions which would use a ball's optimum launch conditions within a bounding window.

The ball speed would still be determined via the current protocol (using a mechanical golfer to hit balls with a calibration driver swinging at a clubhead speed of 120 mph such that a calibration ball is launched at 10 degrees and 42 revolutions per second). However, rather than using the ball's Actual Launch Conditions, the ball's optimum launch conditions would be used. The optimum launch conditions would be defined as those between a launch angle of 7.5 and 15 degrees, and backspin between 2200 rpm and 3000 rpm, such that the ball's total distance is optimised. This value would be used to determine the conformance of the ball against the limit of 317 yards plus the current testing tolerance of 3 yards.

We envision if this change was adopted, it would be phased in via the relisting of previously submitted golf balls as well as all new golf ball submissions. Comments on this proposal are requested by 2 August 2021 (within 181 days of this notice).

Further details regarding the proposed testing method and the implications for balls currently included on the List of Conforming Golf Balls will be made available when appropriate. It is proposed that a ball's optimum launch conditions in its longest orientation will be utilised to assess its Spherical Symmetry (Equipment Rules, Part 4, 4.).

Change to testing tolerance – Characteristic Time

The preamble to the Equipment Rules includes the following dictate:

"Where a club, ball, device, other equipment, or part thereof, is required to meet a specification within the Equipment Rules, it must be designed and manufactured with the intention of meeting that specification."

The evaluation of equipment for conformance to the specifications set out in the Equipment Rules utilises tolerances to ensure the repeatability and reproducibility of the measurement. The Equipment Standards groups are continually looking to improve testing methods and clarity. Associated with this is a review of testing tolerances. This proposal is associated with an update to the testing tolerance associated with the evaluation of a club's spring-like effect (Equipment Rules, Part 2, 4c (i)). This section refers to the "Pendulum Test Protocol (on file)". The testing tolerance within the Pendulum Test Protocol of 18 microseconds was designed to replicate the allowance within the preceding cannon test (communicated on 2 December 2003). However, as detailed in the "Technical Description of the Pendulum Test" issued in November 2003, a gauge

repeatability and reproducibility study determined that the actual testing tolerance for the Pendulum Test was 6 microseconds.

As such, we propose a revision to the testing tolerance for the Pendulum Test to 6 microseconds. This value would be utilised to assess the conformance status of clubs with lofts less than 35 degrees. Please refer to the communication on 11 January 2016 for further detail. Also, please note that the Pendulum Test will continue to be used as a screen for those clubs with a suitable radius of curvature. As part of this proposal, consideration will be given to elimination of the limitation of the characteristic time outside the impact area (Equipment Rules, Part 2, 4c(ii)).

Comments for this proposal are also requested by 2 August 2021 (within 181 days of this notice).

<u>In summary</u>

Area	Summary	Application	Deadline for comments
Club length	Availability of MLR restricting club length (other than putters) to 46 inches	Recommended for use only in competitions limited to highly skilled players (that is, professional and elite amateur competitions)	4th March 2021
Golf ball	Use of optimised launch conditions within the Overall Distance Standard	Testing of golf balls (new submission and resubmissions) using revised conditions for listing	2nd August 2021
Spring-like effect	Reduction on testing tolerance within Pendulum Test Protocol from 18 to 6 microseconds	Testing of clubs using revised testing tolerances for listing	2nd August 2021

Please note that the publications referenced in this Notice are available on the USGA and The R&A websites. Comments from stakeholders are welcome throughout the various notice periods. These communications should be addressed to Professor Steve Otto at The R&A via the email address equipmentstandards@randa.org.