



Notice to Manufacturers

Communication of New Rules Interpretation



Title	Surface Roughness and Crest to Trough Evaluation	Notice #	C2024-001
Supersedes Notice #	N/A	Effective Date	Sept. 16, 2024
Relevant Rule	Part 2, Section 5b of the Equipment Rules		

Relevant Rule Language

Part 2, 5b: “Except for markings specified in the following paragraphs, the surface roughness within the area where impact is intended (the “impact area”) must not exceed that of decorative sandblasting, or of fine milling (see Fig. 46). . .”

Interpretation: When dealing with the surface roughness of a club face (not including putters, see Section 5f), the claims made by the manufacturer must be taken into account – especially if there is a claim that the roughness of the face influences the movement of the ball. In the absence of such claims, the ruling is made purely on the amount of roughness there is. Sandblasting or other treatments of roughness greater than 180 micro inches (4.5 µ metre) are not permitted. In addition to this requirement for roughness, milling is not permitted if the crest to trough depth exceeds 0.001 inches (0.025 mm). A reasonable tolerance is allowed for both of the above measurements. Non-conforming sandblasting or milling usually feels rough to the touch.

Background / Reason for Communication

In recent years, laser etching, laser milling, and other face treatments have been increasingly applied to club faces during the manufacturing process and a question has been raised as to whether such treatments are evaluated for roughness and crest to trough depth, and if so, how crest to trough depth is evaluated. This communication clarifies that the club face, including any method of surface finishing, must meet both criteria. Additionally, to ensure consistency in application and to provide transparency, The R&A and USGA provide the interpretation below.

Interpretation

The purpose and intent of this Rule is to allow for roughness in the impact area that does not unduly influence the movement of the ball. For clubs other than putters, the surface roughness and/or any face treatments, regardless of how created (i.e., sandblasting, fine milling, laser etching/milling or any other means), must meet the following requirements (Reference: ISO 21920-2:2021):

1. The R_a must not exceed 180 µin (4.5 µ metre).
2. The R_z must not exceed 0.001 inches (0.025 mm).

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Interpretation (cont'd)			

Conformance to these limits will be made at certainty levels consistent and appropriate with the methods and equipment used in making the measurement. Any surface treatments that intersect with the edges of grooves may cause the groove profiles to be non-conforming if they cause the groove edges not to be in the form of a round.

If submitted clubs are found to have a maximum crest to trough of any individual section significantly exceeding 0.001 inches (0.025 mm), The R&A and USGA reserve the right to require additional information and/or samples, prior to issuance of a decision, to verify that any measurements of crest to trough dimensions that significantly exceeded 0.001 inches (0.025 mm) are artifacts of the methods of manufacturing and/or measurement employed, and not an intended feature of the design.