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17th October 2016

TO: ALL MANUFACTURERS

PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE MAXIMUM LENGTH FOR CLUBS OTHER THAN PUTTERS

On 17 December 2014, The R&A and the USGA issued an Area of Interest Notice, alerting manufacturers that The R&A and USGA were initiating an investigation on the topic of club length. In addition to further quantifying the driver club lengths used by players of all abilities, the research investigated the potential effect of increases in club length beyond those typically used today, and considered whether the current maximum length of 48 inches, for clubs other than putters, is still appropriate.

Based on the data collected to date from both professional (>600 players) and recreational golfers (~400 players) worldwide, we have determined that only a small fraction of golfers at any level (1.1% of professional and 2.1% of recreational golfers) currently use drivers in excess of 46.5 inches. Furthermore, our research demonstrated that increasing driver length from 46.5 inches to the current limit of 48 inches could result in a distance increase of as much as 6 yards.

The Joint Statement of Principles provides that “any further significant increases in hitting distances at the highest level are undesirable”. In keeping with this principle, we believe that it is in the best interest of the game to reduce the current maximum allowable length of clubs (other than putters) and eliminate the possibility that players could migrate to longer clubs in the future.

Therefore, in accordance with the Equipment Rulemaking procedures adopted in November 2011, The R&A and USGA propose a reduction in the maximum length of clubs (other than putters), as noted in Appendix II, 1c of the Rules of Golf, from the current maximum length of 48 inches to 46 inches. To account for variations in grip designs, a tolerance of 0.5 inches will be associated with this measurement. The measurement will continue to be made using the protocol described within the Rules of Golf (Appendix II, 1c).

In addition, the guideline will remain in effect authorising local committees to permit the use of clubs longer than the maximum length allowed, provided that there is evidence of a medical or physical need for the player to use such clubs and that the shortest club carried by the player is no more than 10 inches shorter than his or her longest club, not including the putter.

Written comments, questions, data or other information that you would like to contribute should be sent to Dr Steve Otto at The R&A, 6 Pilmour Links, St Andrews, Fife, KY16 9JG or by email: steveotto@randa.org by 20th January 2017. Please make sure to complete and return the attached form with any comments.

Yours sincerely

Dr Steve Otto

Director– Research and Testing



Section 2.1 of the Equipment Rulemaking Procedures states:

“Comments which are provided to The R&A and USGA in response to a proposed Rule change, including the identification of the source of the comments, will be published on the respective websites of The R&A and USGA.”

In accordance with this procedure, please check the appropriate box below and return it with your comments.

Permission to Publish Comments Received

- PERMISSION IS GRANTED FOR THE COMMENTS TO BE PUBLISHED VERBATIM.**
- PERMISSION IS GRANTED TO PUBLISH A MODIFIED VERSION OF THE COMMENTS** which redacts any sensitive and/or proprietary information.

Please attach the modified document for publication.

(NOTE: The contents of the modified document, however, must be substantially similar to the non-published version)

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