

The Golf Rules Review

An Intermittent Communique by the WWGA Golf Rules Maven

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Ask the Golf Rules Maven - Questions from our WWGA Members Shorter Tees & Golf Course Ratings

Referencing the move of the Senior Championship from Mountain View to Stony Lick, a member asked "Why can't we just have shorter tees?"

In the above question the member wanted shorter tees on Mountain View. A logical question with so many of the men playing from the shorter green tees instead of the white tees.

This is a very expensive proposition for The Woods Club/Owner of our golf courses. There just isn't a good value proposition for them to build a set of shorter tees on Mountain View when Stony Lick has three sets of tees, all shorter than Mountain View Gold. It is unlikely there would be any tangible return on this investment without raising the dues/green fees for everyone, many of whom are satisfied with the current blue, white, green and gold tees.

Perhaps the member was asking for the course to be set up with shorter temporary tees as it was done for the Charity Tournament on Mountain View. I am afraid setting up temporary tees for a Championship is not possible.

- The Charity Tournament was a scramble, not a recognized USGA format. For a scramble/shambles we can set the course up anyway we want, but the scores are not valid for anything other than to identify the winning scramble team.
- For our Championships, and any stroke play or match play tournaments, we play under USGA rules and use rated tees. The rated tees at The Woods are the Blue, White, Green and Gold Tees on Mountain View and the White, Green, and Gold tees on Stony Lick. If we shorten the tees, we don't have a rating for these temporary tees to calculate handicaps and the scores are not valid for handicap purposes. So, playing from Stony Lick gold is as short as it gets (see side bar).

What are Rated Tees?

All golf courses in the world, operating under the World Handicap Systems (via GHIN app in the US) and following the USGA rules or R&A rules (the golf governing body for the rest of the world), must have their golf course rated by the USGA or R&A to determine the course difficulty. Every golf course is different with some easier than others. For example, it doesn't make sense for your handicap to be the same for Mountain View and the shorter Stony Lick course from the gold tees. So, course ratings are the equalizer. They allow you to take your handicap index and translate it to what your handicap would be playing any course in the world. At The Woods, a handicap index (H.I.) of 54 which is the highest index you can have, translates to a Course Handicap (C.I.) of 53 for women playing from the gold tees on Mountain View and to a 39 on Stony Lick.

Where do I find my Course Handicap?

On the GHIN app, pressing the button marked "Handicap Calculator" takes you to a screen where you can enter the name of or select the course you want to play. Once that selection is made you will see your H.I. (handicap index) and C.H. (course handicap) The C.I. number is your handicap stroke(s) for the course selected.

Fun Fact

The minimum length for a golf course to receive a USGA rating is 3,000 yards for 18 holes and 1500 yards for 9 holes. So the Stony Lick gold tees just barely make it at 3018 yard tees for 18 holes and 1515/1503 yards for 9 holes.