

# USGA POSITION PAPER ON THE EQUITABLE STROKE CONTROL PROCEDURE

Over the years, many refinements have been made to the USGA Handicap System including the procedure of adjusting individual hole scores for handicap purposes. Equitable Stroke Control (ESC) sets a maximum number that a player can post on any hole depending on the player's Course Handicap.

In the fall of 1997, the USGA Executive Committee met to discuss the status of the fixed score procedure of Equitable Stroke Control. Over the years, the USGA formally surveyed member clubs nationwide. Our surveys showed that clubs were satisfied with the ESC procedure because it was simple to use. However, opinions were expressed to the USGA by golfers, golf clubs and golf association that it didn't seem right that the single-digit Course Handicap player was not able to post a double bogey on a par-5 but was permitted to post a triple bogey on a par-3.

In 1997, 12 state and regional golf associations throughout the country were authorized to test a modified par based system that addresses the concerns and comments that had been expressed. After a year of testing, results showed no significant change to a player's USGA Handicap Index, as expected.

Therefore, the Executive Committee concluded that the ESC procedure would remain the same, with the exception that a player with a Course Handicap of 9 or less could record a maximum of double bogey on any hole. Not only did this satisfy the single digit player's concerns, but it also allowed the rest of the procedure to remain unchanged. With this change, the average Handicap Index of a single-digit player may increase by fifteen one-hundredths of a stroke. The current ESC procedure is as follows:

COURSE HANDICAP	MAXIMUM NUMBER ON ANY HOLE
9 or less	Double Bogey
10 through 19	7
20 through 29	8
30 through 39	9
40 or more	10

This change to ESC was included in the 1998 version of The USGA Handicap System Manual. The modified ESC was an optional procedure for 1998 and became mandatory on January 1, 1999 for all clubs issuing USGA Handicap Indexes.

The USGA is dedicated to refining its Handicap System to maintain a high state of integrity and credibility. Please call the USGA Handicap Department for any assistance you may need.