



ENGLISH GOLF UNION

...at the heart of golf

A Golf Clubs' Guide to Course Rating & Standard Scratch Scores

EDITION 1 – JULY 2009

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Foreword

By S R Buckley, Chairman of SSS & Handicapping

The purpose of this manual is to explain the principles of how the English Golf Union and the County Unions allocate a Standard Scratch Score (SSS) to a golf course.

The manual provides invaluable information to Clubs and in particular Greens Committees and Head Greenkeepers when reviewing their courses for future development. The perception sometimes is by narrowing the fairways or the introduction of a new bunker that they will affect the SSS, and this is not necessarily the case. It is hoped that this manual will aid Golf Clubs in their development of their courses and in particular changing them for the benefit of their SSS.

It should be stressed that the information provided falls short of that required to carry out a course assessment. Only EGU authorised persons may actually conduct this task. The EGU provide specific training to provide qualified Lead Assessors, and the County Unions and their rating teams are provided with an On-Course Reference Guide and access to a dedicated website that provides further technical information.

Acknowledgements

The English Golf Union would like to thank the following members of the EGU SSS & Handicapping Committee for all their hard work in developing the EGU Course Rating programme and for their contribution to handicapping in England:

Steven Buckley	Chairman
James Crampton	SSS & Handicap Manager
Brian Aisbitt	
John Davies	
Desmond Duffy	
Ian Foulner	
Stephen Keighley	

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Photographs by the EGU photographer Tom Ward and the Scottish Golf Union.

Introduction

By James Crampton, SSS & Handicap Manager

A Standard Scratch Score (SSS) is the basis on which unified and accurate handicapping of members is made. Its determination reflects not only the length of the course but its difficulty.

The assessment is based on the abilities of a Scratch Golfer, under average course and weather conditions, playing the designated measured course. The Scratch Golfer is expected for course assessment purposes to be able to hit a drive 260 yards, a 3 wood 240 yards, a 7 iron 150 yards and, on average, 2 putt each green.

The assessment is made by giving consideration to where the Scratch Golfer, using good course management, would wish to play the ball from, rather than from a set distance as used under the previous system. Difficulty is determined using ten Difficulty Factors: Terrain, Fairway Width, Rough Height, Fairway Bunkers, Out of Bounds, Trees, Water Hazards, Green Approach, Greens and Green Missed Recoverability. A course architect does not always intend players to play shots of maximum distance but rather to plot their way around the course and to avoid the hazards that are put in their way. Some of the best and most memorable holes are not long but test the player's course management skills. It would therefore seem logical to assess courses using this same philosophy. In addition, a Wind factor has been introduced that takes into account the increased playing difficulty that this has generally on the golf course. Inland, well protected courses will experience very little wind, whereas links courses are more exposed and, as such, will receive a higher rating.

It is the intention of the EGU to ensure that all courses within England have been assessed within the next five to ten years by the respective County Unions to which the Club is affiliated.

Definitions

Accuracy Table – The table which provides the probable target/landing area for the Scratch Golfer.

Application for SSS Form – Form used in association with a Course Rating form, which must be completed and sent to the English Golf Union. A copy on verification will also be sent to the relevant Club.

Basic SSS Table – A table indicating a course SSS based solely on the overall measured yardage.

CONGU Unified Handicapping System (UHS) - The body responsible for the handicapping and course rating systems adopted by the Home Unions and their affiliated Clubs.

Difficulty Factors (DF) – obstacles e.g. hazards, out of bounds, trees and water that can affect the score of the Scratch Golfer by adding to the difficulty of playing the hole.

Difficulty Factor Points – the number of points awarded to a particular difficulty factor based on their proximity to the Scratch Golfer's Target Area. This may range from 0-7 points.

Distance Point – the position of a permanent marker on a tee from which the length of the hole was measured.

Measured Course – a measured course is any course played over by an Affiliated Club, the measured length of which has been certified in accordance with the requirements of the CONGU Unified Handicapping System and for which a Standard Scratch Score has been allocated by a Union.

Rating Team - comprises at least three trained and experienced raters. Each County Union shall allocate a Lead Assessor who has gained a certificate of competency from the English Golf Union.

Scratch Golfer – is a consistent player who on average can be expected to drive 260 yards, hit a fairway wood 240 yards, a seven iron 150 yards and average 2 putts per green.

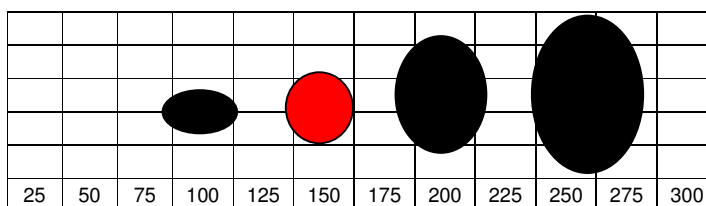
Standard Scratch Score (SSS) – the Standard Scratch Score is the score allocated to an 18 hole course in accordance with the requirements of the CONGU Unified Handicapping System.

Target Area/Landing Area (TA) - the area where the Scratch Golfer ideally wishes his ball to finish, and the likely landing area to achieve that objective respectively.

Principles of the System

The Scratch Golfer

The EGU system is based on the abilities of the Scratch Golfer. This golfer should be a consistent player who on average can be expected to drive 260 yards, hit a fairway wood 240 yards, a seven iron 150 yards and average 2 putts on each green. The key, however, is the accuracy and reasonable consistency the Scratch Golfer has in hitting a ball into an expected Target Area. This Target Area allows Rating teams to consistently assess hazards on the course in relation to the length of shot being played. The longer the shot, the greater the size of target area required. The following is an example of the Target Area a Scratch Golfer is expected to find two thirds of the time:



Example:

Target Area for a Scratch Golfer at 150 yards is 15 yards wide x 16 yards in depth (see Accuracy Table).

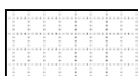
It is therefore imperative that the County Union Rating Team has a member that is a low handicap golfer or has experience of scratch golf. Although a large amount of the subjectivity has been removed from the system, there is always the possibility that raters will assess the difficulty of the course relevant to their own golfing ability. This must be avoided at all costs to ensure uniformity of course rating throughout the country.

The Standard Scratch Score reflects the difficulty of a golf course and therefore the expected score to be achieved by the Scratch Golfer in playing the course in ideal conditions. The aim of the EGU rating system is to identify the difficulty of a hole based on how a Scratch Golfer intends to play the course. The course is assessed on a hole-by-hole basis. Where a full drive is considered necessary, the hole should be assessed from 260 yards from the tee. Maximum available yardage for a second shot, particularly when playing a Par 5 hole, is 240 yards. Once the Target Area has been identified, the difficulty of the hole is assessed using ten Difficulty Factors: Terrain, Fairway Widths, Rough Heights, Fairway Bunkers, Out of Bounds, Trees, Water Hazards, Green Approach, Greens and Green Missed Recoverability.

ACCURACY TABLE		
Shot Length	Scratch Golfer	
	Width	Depth
70	9	13
80	10	14
90	11	14
100	11	14
110	12	15
120	12	15
130	13	15
140	14	16
150	15	16
160	17	17
170	18	17
180	20	18
190	23	18
200	26	19
210	29	19
220	32	20
230	35	20
240	38	20
250	41	21
260	44	22



250 yards from tee



Target Area

At the Target Area an assessment is taken on the surrounding difficulty factors and their proximity to the Target Area by use of the Accuracy Table. The Accuracy Table identifies the area a Scratch Golfer is expected to hit a ball into two thirds of the time. The closer the hazard to these target areas, the greater the allocation of difficulty points awarded. Generally speaking, hazards located away from these areas are disregarded in terms of SSS assessment. The illustration above shows that the two fairway bunkers are in a location that results in them being within the Scratch Golfer's expected Target Area and receiving maximum difficulty allocation.

Course Measurement and the Importance of Yardage

As yardage is the predominant factor in allocating a SSS, accurate measurement is essential. Measurement shall be along the horizontal plane from the Distance Point to the centre of the green of each hole. In the case of a dog-leg hole, measurement shall be along the centre line of the fairway to the axis and then to the centre of the green.

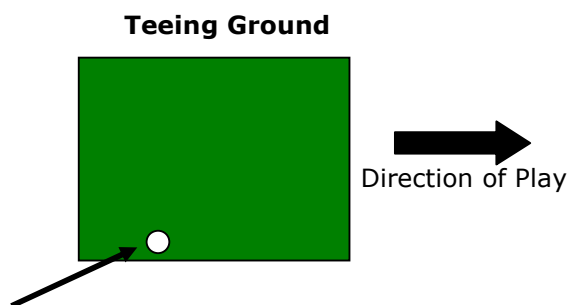
It is imperative that courses are measured in accordance with CONGU requirements. Measurement shall be conducted using appropriate measuring equipment:

- Surveying equipment
- An electronic measuring device (EMD)
- Global Positioning System (GPS)

An accuracy of +/-1 yard, or better, at a distance of 250 yards is required.

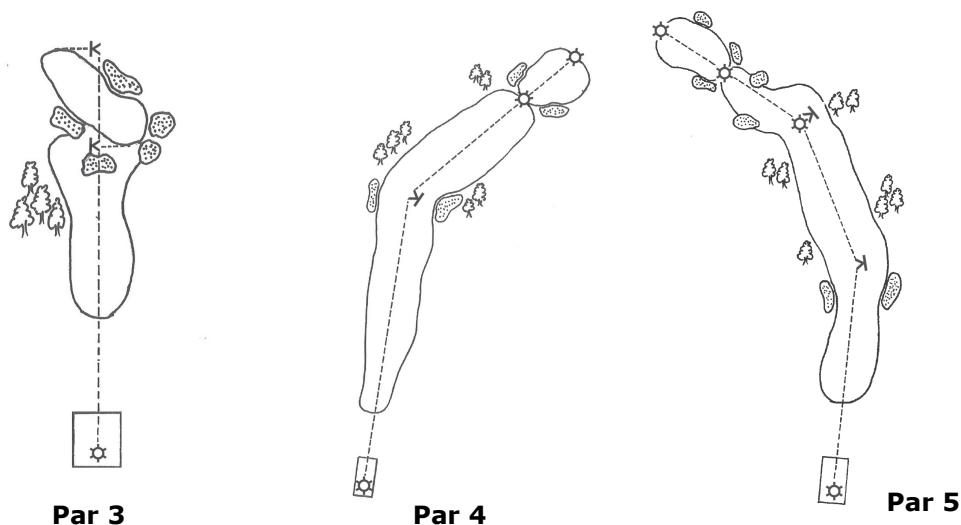
Measurement shall be performed by a person competent and experienced in the use of appropriate measuring equipment. Club officials who believe their course has not been measured recently should arrange for measurement to be undertaken. County Unions may be able to assist Clubs in the measuring of their course.

Each hole shall be measured from the Distance Point to the centre of the green in the horizontal plane along the designed line of play, relative to each hole. Special importance should be given to the positioning of the Distance Points on each hole as this is influential in the overall yardage of the course and the subsequent SSS rating. Many Clubs will find that some Distance Points are positioned two yards from the back of each tee (a requirement under previous CONGU regulations). Distance points on all new courses or on any new hole shall now be placed not less than four yards from the back of each tee. On assessment of an existing SSS, the calculation shall provide for each hole being measured from four yards from the back of the tee.



Fixed Distance Point situated 4 yards from the back of the tee.

Examples of the measurement procedure for Par 3, 4 and 5s are illustrated below. In the case of a hole with a dogleg where the pivot point is not easily identifiable, a point of approximately 250 yards from the relevant Distance Point should be used.



Course yardage forms the basis of all SSS and is the main area where Clubs may look at increasing the difficulty and subsequent SSS of the course. The EGU Rating System uses a yardage formula to form the basis of an SSS and from which the difficulty of the course is then applied:

Total yardage/220+41.04

Yards		Basic SSS
From	To	
4061	4280	60
4281	4500	61
4501	4720	62
4721	4940	63
4941	5160	64
5161	5380	65
5381	5600	66
5601	5820	67
5821	6040	68
6041	6260	69
6261	6480	70
6481	6700	71
6701	6920	72
6921	7140	73
7141	7360	74
7361	7580	75

Example:

6500 yards = $6500/220+41.04= 70.59$

The Yardage table increases by 1 stroke per 220 yards. This table can be used as a guide to determine the final SSS of the course and allows Clubs to identify how much additional yardage they require in order to increase their SSS.

It also identifies the importance of an SSS in determining the difficulty of a course. Par cannot be used, as courses can have the same Par but vary enormously in their yardage.

Short Courses (3000-4060 yards)

Affiliated Clubs with courses between 3000-4060 yards are not rated under the rating system. Short courses, which may have significantly more Par 3s, can be particularly difficult for the Scratch Golfer. Research has shown that the Birdie/Par/Bogey +

profile of a Scratch Golfer changes significantly when the number of par 3s is increased. A Scratch Golfer will find making birdies on par 3s more difficult, especially when the length of the holes increases. An SSS is therefore allocated based on the yardage of the course and the number and average length of the Par 3 holes. The more Par 3s and the longer they are, the increased number of difficulty strokes that are applied to the yardage rating.

The Rating Procedure

A course must be rated as if during the normal playing season and in which normal playing conditions exist (generally July/August), or when most qualifying competitions are played. As this is not always possible, appropriate information about the normal length of the rough and speed of greens should be gathered from the Head Greenkeeper, Green Chairman or other informed person. The Competition Scratch Score (CSS) will provide appropriate adjustments when conditions vary from the established standard.

Rating of Multiple Tees

Course assessments are carried out for each set of tees. The Difficulty Factors may well change for the respective landing areas. County Rating Teams are given separate advice regarding yellow tees where the yardage is within a certain limit of the white tee markers.

Rating Teams

A County Union Rating team shall consist of at least three trained and experienced raters. Each County Union shall allocate a Lead Assessor who has gained a certificate of competency from the English Golf Union.

Each member of the Rating team must be equipped with the EGU On-Course Reference Guide and the required rating forms. Each team shall also be equipped with a Distance Measuring Device and/or yardage chart to determine yardages.

On-Course Procedure

The course shall be rated on a hole by hole basis. Each member of the team shall individually rate the Difficulty Factors of the hole once Target Areas have been agreed.

From the Tee

Agree the line of play and from where the Scratch Golfer would like to play his next shot, which may not be at the maximum of 260 yards. Note any change of elevation and any other obstacles that may influence play.

At Target Area

Identify the length of shot required from the tee and determine the Scratch Golfer's expected Target Area from the Accuracy Table. Evaluate all Difficulty Factors located in and within close proximity of the Target Area and allocate difficulty factor points accordingly. Agree the Scratch Golfer's Target Area for his next shot if a Par 5, or the Green Approach, if not. Determine the accessibility of the approach shot and allocate difficulty points. Where two or more Difficulty Factors are in close proximity, take care not to double count a difficulty rating i.e. significant bunkers that may prevent a ball running into a Water Hazard or Out of Bounds.

At the Green

Evaluate the contours of each green and the green speed, and rate accordingly. Green surrounds must also be assessed to determine the degree of difficulty (GMR) the Scratch Golfer faces if he misses the green. Identify the impact rough (heather, gorse etc), slopes and contours around the green will play and depth of greenside bunkers. See the Green Missed Recoverability section to identify the green surrounds for evaluation. After a hole has been rated, discuss as a team and agree a final figure with the team leader, who shall submit the final rating to the County Union.

Where a Rating team is undecided as to what difficulty points are to be awarded, it is permissible to give an 'in between' figure. This also applies to where there is differing opinion as to how a Scratch Golfer will play a particular hole. Rating teams should assess both options and use an 'in between' value to identify the hole difficulty value.

Post Rating

The final rating should be submitted to the County Union. After approval, the County Union will send an electronic copy of both the application for a SSS form and the rating forms to the English Golf Union. Clubs should not be notified of the result of the assessment until it has been ratified by the English Golf Union. Disputes should be directed to the English Golf Union, who may authorise either another County Union Rating team or an English Golf Union Rating team to rate the course. Golf Clubs wishing to contest the County Union rating will be required to cover any costs associated with a further rating.

Re-Rating

In the event of a significant change to a golf course, it will require to be rated again by the County Union and a new SSS calculated and submitted to the English Golf Union. When all courses in a County Union have been rated under this system, and in order to take account of course changes and evolution, courses should be re-rated on a rolling programme of re-assessment. Attention should be given in the first instance to those courses where only a modest number of DF points would cause the decimal SSS to be rounded up to the next whole number, i.e. more likely to go up 1 stroke.

Health & Safety

The safety of those undertaking the task of Course Ratings within the County Union is paramount and as such the English Golf Union recommends that the following procedures are adopted both before and during the rating process:

- A date and time for the rating should be agreed with the Club at a time when there is minimal traffic on the course. Competition/Society days are to be avoided.
- All ratings procedures should commence from the 1st/10th tees and continue in the correct sequence.
- The Club should ensure that the 1st/10th tee is closed for a period of at least 1 hour **after** the rating has commenced.
- The Rating team should be in possession of Club telephone numbers in case of emergency.
- All Course Raters should have contact numbers for the County Union Secretary/County Office.
- At least two members of the Rating team should be in possession of mobile telephones. If the Club require them to be switched off, pin numbers should be made known to other Rating team members.

- Rating teams should be aware of H&S procedures of the Club and abide by all Rules and Regulations. They should use all paths, entry, exit points, where identified.
- If the Rating team are to use a buggy, ensure that buggy routes are observed and that all Club procedures are adhered to.
- In the case of inclement weather (lightning), while on the course, Rating team members should shelter in appropriate locations and where possible leave the course.

The above points should be considered as recommendations for establishing the minimum requirements for the safety of Rating teams. Counties may well wish to consider taking additional measures as they see fit.

Difficulty Factors

Terrain

Terrain is considered by the Rating team when the change in elevation is considered to be sufficient enough to increase the difficulty of the shot encountered by the Scratch Golfer. Generally speaking, a slight downhill shot is considered preferable to that of a shot whereby the intended target is partially visible/blind or uphill. The rating system allows a difficulty value to be applied for:



- No change in elevation or less than 10ft up or down
- Change in elevation between 10 and 20ft up or down
- Change in elevation between 20 and 40ft up or down
- Blind shot

This is only relevant to tee shots on Par 4s and 5s and second shots on a Par 5. Par 3s and approach shots into greens are covered under the Green Approach category.

Some courses, especially Links courses, have undulating fairways that may also cause difficulty to the stance of the Scratch Golfer, and here additional Difficulty Factor points may be applied.

Fairways and Fairway Widths

A Golf Club will generally have cutting procedures included in their Course Policy document, which identifies the shape and width of their fairways during the playing season. Any significant change can influence the assessment of the course, both in its difficulty and its overall measured length. This is especially evident on dog-leg holes in which changes in cutting policies can increase or reduce the angle of the dog-leg and the overall measured length.



In assessment terms a fairway is measured at the point at which the Scratch Golfer is looking to position the ball for the next stroke. Once this area has been identified, the fairway width is measured and the allocation of difficulty points awarded. This is dependent on the length of the tee shot compared against that of the fairway width. The longer the tee shot and narrower the

fairway, the greater degree of difficulty, and the increased number of Difficulty Factor points awarded.

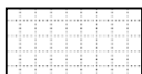
The following table identifies the possible increase/reduction in SSS based on the fairway width at the Scratch Golfer's Target Area (based on 14 holes, Par 3s excluded).

Figures assessed against an average fairway width of between 25-30 yards at Target Area of 260 yards

Fairway Width	Less than 20 yards	20-24 yards	25-30 yards	31-39 yards	More than 40 yards
260 yards from tee	Approx increase of 0.30 in SSS	Approx increase of 0.15 in SSS		Approx reduction of 0.15 in SSS	Approx reduction of 0.30 in SSS

There will obviously be less impact on the SSS if the Scratch Golfer is required to play tee shots of lesser length. The shorter the tee shot, the fewer Difficulty Factor points are awarded to holes with wide fairways.

Fairway rating for a Par 5 will be assessed at both the drive and second shot landing areas with the greater of the Difficulty Factor being applied.



Scratch Golfer's Target Area



Bunkering, Out of Bounds, Water Hazards, Slopes and Trees that are in the location of the players intended Target Area may also result in the effective playing width of a fairway being reduced and additional Difficulty Factor points being awarded.



Clubs may consider widening the fairways at the Target Areas for the handicap player, generally at approximately 200/220 yards, without the fear of influencing the course rating and SSS.

Rough

As identified earlier all Difficulty Factors are assessed based on their proximity to the Scratch Golfer's intended Target Areas. Rough relevant to the Scratch Golfer's tee shot and Par 5 second shot areas are assessed under the following categories. (Rough located on Par 3s and for green approach shots are identified under other categories).

- Very light rough not affecting play of club selection
- Rough less than 2" minimal affect on play of shot
- Rough between 2" and 3" affecting play of shot
- Rough between 3" and 4" resulting in Scratch Golfer unable to reach ideal Target Area
- Rough resulting in Scratch Golfer 'pitching out'
- Severe rough, brambles/ferns/heather resulting in likely lost/unplayable ball

Each category is assessed based on the proximity to the Scratch Golfer's Target Area with the greater figure applying to the overall rating. The further from the Target Area, however, the fewer difficulty points. This will always allow for the most severe rough being identified. Clubs looking at increasing the severity of the course should bear in mind that increasing the height of the rough by approx 1" would only increase the difficulty of the course by less than 0.2 of a stroke. This should be compared to the consequences of increased rough height, slow play, lost balls and disgruntled members and visitors.

Fairway Bunkers

Fairway bunkers are evaluated with regards to their significance to the Scratch Golfer's playing of the hole rather than their yardage from the Scratch Golfer's respective Target Areas.

Fairway bunkers are evaluated based on the following categories:

- No bunkers or of no significance
- Bunkers present but of little significance
- Bunkers present and could be significant
- Strategically placed bunkers likely to result in loss of half a stroke
- Strategically placed bunkers likely to result in loss of a stroke



Rating teams are also required to identify the depth of the deepest of the bunkers resulting in a total fairway bunker rating.

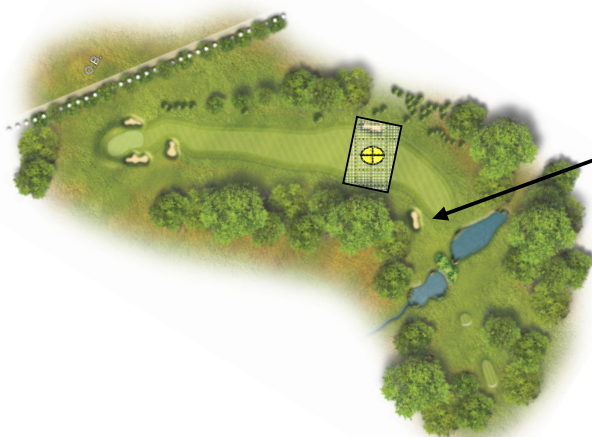
The depth of the bunker is considered to be the depth of the sand and any face that must be cleared in order to extricate the ball from the bunker, and falls within the following categories:

- <2ft
- 2ft-4ft
- 4ft-6ft
- 6ft+

Bunkers that are outside the Scratch Golfer's Target Areas should be considered for difficulty point allocation if the Rating team considers that they may influence the Scratch Golfer in the playing of the hole. This may include wind or ground conditions that might dictate whether the Scratch Golfers place their shots in different areas or shorter distances.

It is imperative that Clubs wishing to add fairway bunkers are aware of their impact in connection with SSS allocation. The addition of one fairway bunker placed in a position that causes difficulty to the Scratch Golfer will increase the SSS by less than 1/10 of a stroke. If it is decided to include bunkers, the following should be considered:

- The assessed driving distance for a Scratch Golfer is 260 yards
- SSS rating only takes the most significant bunkers into consideration



Bunkers situated in areas that do not affect the playing of the hole for the Scratch Golfer shall be disregarded for rating purposes.

Clubs may wish, however, to locate bunkers in areas that are either testing to the handicap golfer or for aesthetic reasons.

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Out of Bounds

Out of Bounds is assessed when it affects the Scratch Golfer owing to its proximity to the intended Target Area(s). As per other Difficulty Factors, the difficulty allocation increases the closer the Out of Bounds is to the Target Area, using descriptions below:

- More than 25 yards from edge of target area
- Within 25 yards of target area
- Within 20 yards of target area
- Within 15 yards of target area
- Within 10 yards of target area
- Within target area

⊕ 260 yards from the tee



Scratch Golfer's Target Area

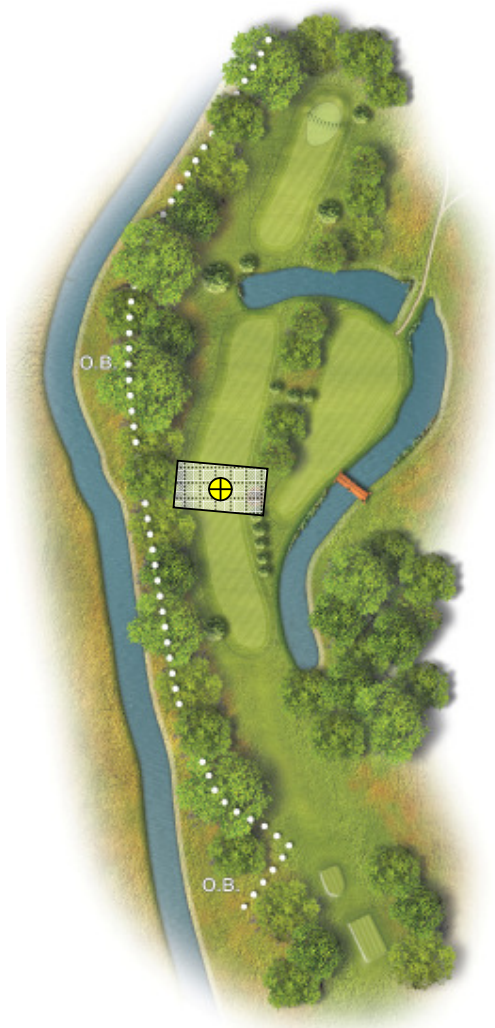
In the example opposite the Out of Bounds boundary lies within 15 yards of the player's Target Area at a point of 260 yards. Difficulty Factor points will be applied. This only applies to areas adjacent to tee shots of Par 4 and 5s and second shots on Par 5s.

Out of Bounds adjacent to the green is allocated points based on:

- Within GMR
- Outside GMR but within 25 yards from the edge of the green

Sometimes the close proximity of Out of Bounds to the edge of a green dictates that the Rating team should increase the Difficulty Factor points applied.

In addition to the above the system allows further difficulty points to be allocated if the Out of Bounds affects both the drive and second shots of both Par 4s and Par 5s.



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Trees

Trees are firstly assessed based on their proximity to the Scratch Golfer's Target Area:

- More than 20 yards from the edge of the target area
- Within 20 yards of target area
- Within 15 yards of target area
- Within 10 yards of target area
- Within target area

Differing varieties of trees can be found on a course and can vary significantly in their density. The system covers this by allowing additional difficulty points based on their density and recoverability:

- Trees/Gorse/Rhododendrons/Significant Bushes and Shrubs unlikely to interfere with shot
- Scratch Golfer unlikely to get on or near the green
- Scratch Golfer requiring to 'pitch out'
- Trees/Gorse/Rhododendrons/Significant Bushes and Shrubs resulting in likely lost/unplayable ball



Additional Difficulty Factor points may also be allocated where trees are present and significant to the Scratch Golfer along both sides of the fairway or where they cause a 'squeeze' effect to the player.



Where severe rough, brambles/ferns/heather occurs amongst trees and could result in a lost ball, an unplayable ball or a difficult (almost impossible) recovery to avoid double counting the rating team is required to allocate Difficulty Factor points in either the Trees or Rough sections, whichever is the greater.

Water Hazards

Water Hazards are rated under a similar process to that of Out of Bounds, in which they are rated based on their proximity to the Target Areas:

- More than 25 yards from edge of target area
- Within 25 yards of target area
- Within 20 yards of target area
- Within 15 yards of target area
- Within 10 yards of target area
- Within target area

Water Hazards adjacent to the green are allocated points:

- Within GMR
- Outside GMR but within 25 yards from the edge of the green

Sometimes the close proximity to the edge of a green dictates that the Rating team should allocate greater Difficulty Factor points. This is especially relevant in the example opposite, where the water is the dominant feature to this Par 3.



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Unlike Out of Bounds there may be some holes where a Water Hazard crosses a fairway impeding the Scratch Golfer in the playing of the hole and requiring them to 'lay up'. Additional difficulty points may be allocated to take this into account. The resultant increase in shot length and subsequent difficulty is assessed under the Green Approach Difficulty Factor.

Holes in which the Scratch Golfer is playing a short shot into the green where there is an adjacent Water Hazard would not receive the same difficulty.

⊕ 120 yards to the green

Green Approach

This section identifies the difficulty of the shot into the green from the relevant tee shot or second shot, if a Par 5, position identified by the Rating team in an earlier section of the system. Difficulty points are allocated dependent on both the length of shot to be played and the accessibility of the green under the following categories:

Green Visibility

- Clear access
- Restricted access – identified as a shot to the green which is partially blocked because of trees/overhanging branches or significant encroachment of a greenside bunker
- Elevated/Partially in view – a shot to the green when approx $\frac{3}{4}$ of flagstick or only part of the green surface/green surrounds are visible

Green Size

- Small – up to 400 sq yards
- Medium – between 400-600 sq yards
- Large – 600 + sq yards



The increased length of the shot, the smaller the green, and the more restricted the access, the greater the difficulty points awarded.

Tee shots on Par 3s and third shots to all Par 5s are covered under this category.

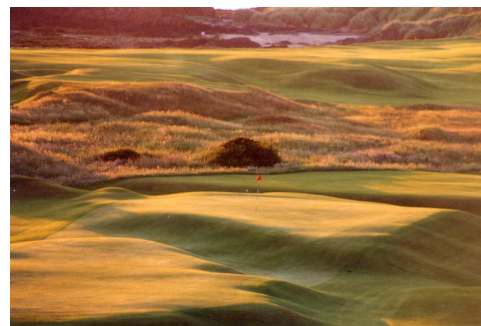
Greens

Greens are assessed based on their speed and contours. A Rating team must either gain the relevant information on the speed of the greens from the Club or measure them themselves by use of a stimp meter. The quicker the greens, the more difficult they become. This is identified by the awarding of difficulty points based on the following:

- Slow (0-6ft)
- Medium (6ft 6" – 8ft)
- Fast (above 8ft 6")

Generally speaking, most members' courses (except those by the sea) fall under the Medium speed category. Once speed has been identified, the Rating team also assesses the greens contours. The faster the greens, the more pronounced the contours on the greens will be and shall be identified from one of the following categories:

- Flat green
- Slight undulations/gentle slopes
- Moderately sloped/moderate undulations
- Severely sloped or tiered greens



Green Missed Recoverability (GMR)

Rating teams must identify the recoverability of a Scratch Golfer on occasions when the green is missed; a ball may end up in a variety of positions, including rough, trees, bunkers or on varying degrees of contours or slopes. Water Hazards and Out of Bounds, which can also be found near a green, have been covered under different sections of the manual. An assessment of all areas around a green should be made, based on an area around the green applicable to the approach shot length. Flag position on the green can dramatically influence the difficulty of the approach shot and subsequent difficulty points that are awarded. For all rating purposes a central pin position is used when assessing shot difficulty. The GMR area is defined as 10% of the approach shot length, or a minimum of 10 yards from the edge of the green.



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Example: 150 yard shot to the green the GMR = 15 yards from the edge of the green

As a ball can only find one of these areas, the Difficulty Factor giving the greatest value is applied to the hole rating.

Areas are assessed under the following categories:

Rough

- None/Very light
- Rough less than 2"
- Rough between 2"-3"
- Rough between 3"-4"
- Greater than 4" or Heather/Brambles/Ferns

Slopes/Contours

- Flat
- Gentle Slopes
- Moderately Sloped
- Highly Sloped
- Significant drop of approx 6ft and over

Trees

- Very good chance trees will not interfere with shot
- Scratch Golfer is faced with some difficulty but may well be able to get the ball to the centre of the green
- Scratch Golfer may only be able to move the ball to the edge of the green
- Scratch Golfer unable to get the ball back on to the green
- Trees/Gorse/Rhododendron/Significant bushes and shrubs resulting in likely lost/unplayable ball

Bunkers

Bunkers are assessed based on their number and depth within the GMR area.

- One bunker
- Two bunkers
- Three or more

- Between 2 and 4ft in depth
- Between 4 and 6ft in depth
- Greater than 6ft in depth

The depth of a bunker is assessed, as fairway bunkers, on the depth of sand and the height of the face/bank of the bunker that a ball would be required to clear.

As bunkers are generally considered the most common feature around a green, Rating teams will find that the majority of the time difficulty points awarded to the GMR area will come from the bunker section. Any green that has two or more bunkers of which one is at least 4-6ft deep will receive maximum GMR difficulty points. Additional points may be awarded when bunkers cover approx 50% of the green surround.



Wind

In order to deal with the wind strength, changeable wind direction and variations encountered around the coasts and inland courses of England, the EGU decided to directly allocate a stroke adjustment figure to course ratings.

True links courses may receive the maximum allocation of 0.6 of a stroke, with exposed hilltop and hillside courses receiving 0.4 and 0.2 respectively.

Inland/parkland courses are rated at 0.

Intermediate allocations may be chosen. These stroke allocations for wind are to reflect average wind speeds during the playing season. The Competition Scratch Score (CSS) will deal with the effects during play on days when the wind is stronger or more benign than usual.



Course Alteration and SSS Increase

Clubs wishing to develop their course for SSS purposes should concentrate predominantly on increasing yardage where possible. Including additional hazards or enlarging/repositioning existing ones may not dramatically affect the overall SSS.

Changes to SSS based on yardage	
50 yards	Increase of 0.24 of a stroke
100 yards	Increase of 0.45 of a stroke
150 yards	Increase of 0.68 of a stroke
200 yards	Increase of 0.91 of a stroke

Yardage increase is dependent on measuring the course in accordance with CONGU requirements.

Sometimes, however, Clubs do not have the option of increasing yardage but still wish to increase SSS. This is especially the case for short courses where Par can be significantly higher than the SSS. If no other options are available, Clubs should look at reducing the Par of the course by reducing any short Par 5s to Par 4s. This can be done in many cases by switching the White and Yellow tees around on the relevant hole. As yardage is the predominant difficulty to most golfers, this can not only narrow the gap between Par and SSS but also greatly increase the difficulty of the course.

Suggested Course Alterations

While yardage is the predominant factor in increasing the SSS of the course, other factors may be introduced that can both change the playing characteristics of the hole and also alter the SSS.

Fairway Bunkers

It is imperative that bunkers are placed in such a position that they will affect the playing of the hole for the Scratch Golfer. Locating them in other areas that may be 'in play' to the handicap golfer may lead to them being disregarded in terms of SSS assessment.



Scratch Golfer's intended Target Area i.e. 260 yards



Placement of new bunker

Positioning the bunker adjacent to or in the Scratch Golfer's Target Area would result in the bunker being considered a 'strategically placed bunker' (see fairway bunkers) and result in a high number of Difficulty Factor points. The depth of the bunker is also taken into consideration. Bunker depth ratings apply to bunkers varying between 2ft - 6ft+ in depth.

Placing a new bunker of maximum Difficulty Factor points on two separate holes would lead to a change in SSS of 0.14, or equivalent to 30 yards in increased length. Clubs should also

consider that including bunkers adjacent to the Scratch Golfer's intended Target Area may lead to a change in tee shot length. This in turn may increase the number of Difficulty Factor points awarded to the Green Approach shot and make for a more testing shot for the Scratch Golfer.

Water Hazards

Other hazards that are commonly used to increase difficulty are Water Hazards and especially those adjacent to the putting green. It must be understood, however, that the inclusion of a single Water Hazard adjacent to a green, as per the Par 3 below, would lead to minimal adjustment to the SSS - equivalent to approx 10 yards in extra hole length.



So, although the inclusion of such a hazard would not change greatly the SSS, it would dramatically change the characteristics of the hole, to create a genuine 'feature' hole.

The Difficulty Factor points awarded to Water Hazards, especially those running across or alongside fairways, are explained in an earlier section of the manual.

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Clubs wishing to develop their course should do so only under guidance of professionally qualified golf course architects, rather than transient Green Committees or individuals wishing to 'leave their mark' on the course. When course development is discussed, the Head Greenkeeper or Course Manager should be included in the project from as early a stage as possible.

Reference Guide

European Institute of Golf Course architects - www.eigca.org

Sports Turf Research Institute - www.stri.co.uk

Appendix 1 – Example of working sheet as used by County Union Rating Teams

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Hole Yardage										Hole Yardage									
Terrain - 8.0										Terrain - 8.0									
Points										Points									
Fairway - 8.1										Fairway - 8.1									
Length of Drive - Width										Length of Drive - Width									
Length of Lay-Up (Par 5)										Length of Lay-Up (Par 5)									
Points - Sloped (+1/+2)										Points - Sloped (+1/+2)									
Rough - 8.2										Rough - 8.2									
Distance from TA										Distance from TA									
Points										Points									
Fairway Bunkers - 8.3										Fairway Bunkers - 8.3									
Points										Points									
Depth Table Points										Depth Table Points									
Out of Bounds - 8.4										Out of Bounds - 8.4									
Distance from TA										Distance from TA									
Points - Bordering Hole (1-4pts)										Points - Bordering Hole (1-4pts)									
Trees - 8.5										Trees - 8.5									
Distance from TA										Distance from TA									
Points - Squeeze +1/+2										Points - Squeeze +1/+2									
Density Table Points										Density Table Points									
Water Hazards - 8.6										Water Hazards - 8.6									
Distance from TA										Distance from TA									
Points - Bordering Hole (1-4pts)										Points - Bordering Hole (1-4pts)									
Green Approach - 8.7										Green Approach - 8.7									
Length of Shot										Length of Shot									
Blind - Small										Blind - Small									
Restricted - Medium										Restricted - Medium									
Elevated - Large										Elevated - Large									
Points - Narrow Green (+1)										Points - Narrow Green (+1)									
Greens - 8.8										Greens - 8.8									
Speed - Slopes/Contours										Speed - Slopes/Contours									
Line of Putt +1										Line of Putt +1									
GMR - Highest Score To be Used In Final Rating - 8.9										GMR - Highest Score To be Used In Final Rating - 8.9									
GMR distance (yds)										GMR distance (yds)									
Rough - Slopes/Contours										Rough - Slopes/Contours									
Trees - Bunkers										Trees - Bunkers									
Depth Table Points										Depth Table Points									

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Appendix 2 – Rating Form for detailing of the difficulty points allocated at each hole.

<i>Hole Number</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	Total	
A Measured Length																				
Length Adjustment (Yrds from back of tee)																				
<i>Difficulty Factors</i>																				
Terrain																				
Fairway																				
Rough																				
Fairway Bunkers	Points																			
	Depth																			
Out of Bounds																				
Trees	Points																			
	Density																			
Water Hazards																				
Green Approach	Visibility																			
	Size																			
Green	Speed																			
	Contours																			
GMR	Rough																			
Use Highest Figure Only	Contours																			
	Trees																			
	Bunker																			
A Gross Rating Total																				
B Yardage/220+2.28																				
Net Rating (A-15)/100																				
Location/Wind Factor	Inland/Parkland		Exposed Parkland					Hillside				Links				Wind Allocation				
Point Allocation	0 - 0.1		0.2 - 0.3					0.4 - 0.5				0.6								
																TOTAL VALUE				

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Decision of English Golf Union	
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