

# 95% - Is it Fair?

From 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020, England and all the other nations under CONGU® transitioned to the World Handicapping System taking us from an incremental system to one which averaged the best 8 of our last 20 scores to calculate handicaps. Amongst other things, we're having to get used to new terminology. We no longer have a handicap but a Handicap Index which will change depending on the course being played, giving a Course Handicap and a further adjustment may be necessary depending on the format of the event we're playing in giving us a Playing Handicap and this is where many players are perplexed. They can understand the concept of adjusting a handicap because of the difficulty of the course for a bogey golfer relative to a scratch golfer but why adjust further because of the type of competition, especially when playing in a single strokeplay competition? Answer: to achieve Equity in a competition for the allocation of prizes.

Take a scratch player and look at their typical scoring pattern. A scratch golfer is likely to have a very tight range of scores usually playing close to their handicap. This is why they're scratch

golfers - they're consistently returning low scores. Yes, they may have the odd round where they return an outrageously bad score (for them) but these won't count in the best 8 of 20 calculation and they don't happen very often.

Selecting a real scratch player at random and scrutinising their record, finds that the best score differential was -1.8 from the Handicap Index.

A bogey player's scoring pattern is much wider than that of a scratch player. They simply don't have the consistency required to score low regularly and often have 'blow up' holes. They can also play 'out of their skin' and return scores that they usually only dream of but these are few and far between. It is this irregular scoring pattern that keeps them as bogey golfers.

Selecting a real bogey player at random and scrutinising their record, finds that the best score differential was -4.7 from the Handicap Index, nearly three times the scratch golfers best.

Now run a club competition open to all players. Generally, only 2% of the field will be scratch or very low handicapped

golfers and this tips the balance heavily in the favour of a bogey golfer winning the competition if Course Handicap was used. As the field increases, the odds increase that one or more bogey golfer will shoot their best round and the scratch golfer has little or no chance of winning.

Analysis of thousands of actual scores indicates that 95% of Course Handicap for single strokeplay events provides the most balanced chances of winning for all golfers.

The justification for 100% for single matchplay is because the low handicapped golfer is competing against just one high handicapper. The lower handicapped player would typically win slightly more than 50% of the time with the higher handicapped golfer being unbeatable when having one of their dream days. Again, thousands of actual scores support the analysis.

One parting note. The 95% adjustment was applied when calculating CONGU® handicaps we just didn't know it!

*Christine Bishop*  
England Golf Regional  
Handicap Advisor

