

## From the Ghin Newsletter about Handicaps:

### **What should I shoot?**

Do you find yourself asking, "Why do I rarely shoot my course handicap?" The answer is: it is perfectly normal for this to happen under the USGA Handicap System.

This is because the USGA Handicap System is based on the **potential ability** of a player rather than the average of all their scores. In fact, years of research by the USGA shows us that on average a player should only shoot their course handicap 25 percent of the time. They should shoot three strokes higher than their course handicap on average, and in their last 20 scores have a best score of only 2 strokes better than their course handicap.

A player's Handicap Index reflects their playing potential due to the fact that it is based only on their best scores for a given number of rounds. The most accurate Handicap Index would be one based on the best 10 differentials out of the last 20 scores. Since those 10 worst differentials are not included in the calculation of a player's Handicap Index, it only reflects their best days.

The bottom line is there is no need to worry if you don't shoot at or near your course handicap on a given day. Every golfer with a Handicap Index is in the same boat because USGA Handicap Indexes are based on the **potential ability** of a golfer, not the average of all their scores.

### **Why is there an "R" after my Handicap Index?**

One of the most common questions we get at the WSGA office is "why does my Handicap Index have an 'R' next to it?" The simple answer is that your Handicap Index has been automatically **reduced** (not restricted) due to exceptional tournament scores, which the USGA defines as being at least 3 strokes better than your Handicap Index.

You may then ask yourself, "If I haven't played in a tournament since last summer, this must be a mistake." In actuality, a tournament score will stay in your scoring record for at least one year or even longer, if it is still part of your 20 most-recent scores. If you have two exceptional tournament scores in your record at any given time, you may be eligible for an automatic reduction.

This time of year, golfers often see their Handicap Index reduced. The main reason is that many Northwest golfers are shooting higher scores as they start to shake off the winter rust. It might also be due to the fact that golf courses are playing longer with cold and wet conditions. As Handicap Indexes increase due to these higher scores, a tournament score from last summer may now become an "exceptional tournament score" as defined above in paragraph one.

Many golfers dread seeing the "R" after their Handicap Index, and believe it means they are "sandbagging" or cheating the system. However, the "R" simply means that you have shown a scoring potential that is better than your current Handicap Index.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the reduction of your Handicap Index please feel free to contact the Washington State Golf Association Membership Services Department at 800-643-6410, option 1.

## From the Ghin Newsletter:

### **Do You Travel South and Play Golf during the Winter Months?**

If you are one of the many WSGA members that go to California, Arizona or any other area that is still observing an "active" golf season, you should be posting your golf scores from rounds played, whether your WSGA membership is active or inactive.

If you are in an area that uses GHIN for their Handicap computational service (ex: Northern/Southern California), you will post just as you do when playing a course in Washington or Northern Idaho. If where you are playing does not use GHIN (ex: Arizona and Southern Nevada), you will post your score by selecting the IGN (International Golf Network) option in the guest score posting area on the local computer at the golf facility. These scores will be routed back to your WSGA Member Club.

**If your WSGA membership is "inactive", you will not be able to post via the internet, but instead you will need to post at the local computer at the golf facility. Reminder: posting your score at the facility where your round was played is always the preferred way to post your score.**