



5 August 2008

NOTICE TO MANUFACTURERS

CLUB FACE MARKINGS AND SPIN GENERATION

I am writing further to my memorandum dated 27 February 2007 (see attached) proposing a change to Appendix II, 5c of the Rules of Golf to limit groove volume and edge sharpness in all clubs other than driving clubs and putters. Having had an opportunity to fully evaluate and consider all of the comments received from manufacturers and other interested parties, I would confirm that it has been decided to adopt this proposal, but with certain amendments noted herein, with effect from 1 January 2010.

The comments received have been extremely valuable in our consideration of the proposal and although these were varied in nature, there were many constructive comments on its detail. The R&A is satisfied that by making a series of amendments to the original proposal, the final proposal will achieve its aims, whilst being more acceptable to manufacturers and golfers alike.

In the Statement of Principles issued jointly by The R&A and the USGA in May 2002, it was emphasised that we wished to prevent an over-reliance on technological advances rather than skill and to ensure that skill is the dominant element in determining success throughout the game. This new Rule has been arrived at with due regard to the results of our research into spin generation and these important principles.

New Rules

The new Rules on club face markings, to come into effect on 1 January 2010, will include the following two additional specifications for clubs other than driving clubs and putters:

- The total cross-sectional area of a groove divided by the groove pitch (width plus separation) is limited to 0.003 square inches per inch (0.0762 mm²/mm);
- Groove edge sharpness is limited to an effective minimum radius of 0.010 inches (0.254 mm). This limit only applies to clubs with lofts of 25 degrees and above.

For more detailed information, please refer to the Impact Area Markings Measurement Procedure attached to this Notice.

Amendments to the Original Proposal

In response to various comments received, the following amendments to the original proposal have been determined:

1. The new Rules are effective 1 January 2010, not 1 January 2009.
2. The volume (area / pitch) limit is 0.003 square inches per inch, not 0.0025 square inches per inch.
3. The groove edge sharpness limit does not apply to clubs with lofts below 25 degrees, but such clubs (with the exception of drivers and putters) are subject to the area divided by pitch limitation.
4. The method of making a conformance decision on a club, as detailed in the attached document, includes tolerances and allowances which will ensure that decisions are robust and correct.
5. A very gradual phasing-in period is being adopted, differentiating (for the first time) between those playing on the major professional tours and other 'expert players'.
6. For golfers playing in non-elite competitions, a minimum guarantee of 15 years continued use for current clubs (until 2024), with this being subject to review not before 2020.

Implementation

The new Rules will be phased in gradually, adopting the following process:

- With effect from 1 January 2010, it is intended that only the major professional tours (that is the members of the International Federation of Tours and other equivalent organisations, such as the ladies' professional tours) will adopt a Condition of Competition requiring the use of clubs that conform to the new Rules. The use of this Condition will be very restricted in the initial phase.
- With effect from 1 January 2014, the Condition of Competition will be made available to more competition organisers and include all competitions involving 'expert players' (that is lower level professional events and elite amateur events). It would only be at this time, that the Condition would start to have an impact beyond the major professional tours.
- All clubs (with the exception of drivers and putters) manufactured after 1 January 2010 will be subject to the new specifications on club face markings. Clubs manufactured before 2010, which conform to the current Rules but not the new Rules, can continue to be used throughout the game, except where a Committee has introduced a Condition of Competition to the contrary (see above). The final decision as to whether golfers playing in non-elite competitions will ever have to stop using these older clubs will be taken in the future, but certain minimum time scales are guaranteed - firstly, the situation will not be reviewed before 2020 and secondly, any change of Rule would have a minimum 4 year lead in period. Of course, some existing clubs will conform to the new regulations and may continue to be used indefinitely. The above provisions confirm that other 'old clubs' (that is pre-2010 models that do not conform to the new Rules) may continue to be used by the vast majority of golfers until at least 2024, if not longer.

For the avoidance of doubt, in recognition of the fact that many existing clubs will not conform to the new specifications, Committees of other competitions (that is all those not covered by the Condition of Competition on grooves) are authorised and will be encouraged to waive these new specifications for applicable clubs manufactured prior to 1 January 2010.

As per our usual practice manufacturers are encouraged to submit samples of existing and new clubs to The R&A so that their grooves can be evaluated against the new Rules.

If you have any questions regarding any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely



DAVID RICKMAN

Director of Rules & Equipment Standards