



Overview of the Rules of Amateur Status Modernisation Initiative

The R&A and the USGA are pleased to announce proposals for significant changes to the Rules of Amateur Status. These changes result from a multi-year modernisation initiative that has identified a clear need to bring the Rules up to date to reflect today's global amateur game and ensure that the Rules are easier to understand and apply.

Background: In 2017, The R&A and the USGA agreed in principle to undertake a modernisation initiative for the Rules of Amateur Status that would analyse the current Rules, research the history of each Rule and establish which of the current provisions remain important to protect the amateur game.

The principal concerns that have been raised in relation to the current Rules can be summarised as follows:

- The Rules don't reflect the fact that the elite amateur game is a progression for the many young players who aspire to be successful tournament professionals.
- Too many players who are unsuccessful in the pursuit of their goal lose their amateur status through participation on cash prize tours without making any impact on the professional game.
- The line between cash and non-cash prizes has become increasingly blurred to the point where the logic of the distinction is questionable.
- There are too many barriers for elite amateur golfers seeking funding to participate in elite amateur competition, which is often quite expensive.
- The Rules that cover the use of golf skill and reputation for personal benefit are very difficult to understand and have been made even harder to administer by the widespread use of social media.

Purpose of Review: The stated purpose for the review was to determine whether the Rules of Amateur Status are needed in the modern game and, if so, produce a code that:

1. Is in the best interests of the game.
2. Reflects the modern game.
3. Is easily understood and applied.

An initial analysis of "open golf" – meaning that the Rules of Amateur Status would be eliminated entirely – highlighted the following principal concerns:

- The detrimental impact on handicap golf that unlimited prizes could produce, in terms of pressure it would place on both the Rules of Golf and the Rules of Handicapping.
- The inevitable eradication of historic amateur competitions, with the removal of the concept of an amateur golfer resulting in such championships ceasing to exist.

- The negative impact that the loss of such elite amateur events would have on the development of young golfers, given the important platform and clear and well understood pathway they provide for the majority of elite players wishing to make their way in the game.

The consideration of “open golf” was important in reinforcing the key role the Rules play in protecting the integrity of the amateur game at all levels. The modern amateur game remains self-regulating and the limit on prizes plays an important role in minimising pressure on the Rules of Golf and the Rules of Handicapping.

Ultimately, and in line with the purpose of the review, The R&A and the USGA concluded that retaining the Rules of Amateur Status is in the best interests of the game.

Proposed New Rules: The proposed Rules would continue to maintain a distinction between amateur and professional golf and provide a standardized condition of eligibility – amateur status – for amateurs who compete in golf competitions.

They would continue to recognize that golf is largely self-regulating and the Rules exist to help protect the integrity of the game by minimizing pressure on the Rules of Golf and the Rules of Handicapping by limiting the value of prizes an amateur golfer is allowed to accept based on performance in competition.

As part of the modernization effort to provide a code that is in the best interests of the amateur game and reflects the modern game, while being easier to understand and apply, it is proposed that the new Rules would:

- Eliminate the distinction between cash prizes and other prizes.
- Remove competitions such as long-drive events, putting competitions and skills competitions that are not played as part of a tee to hole competition from the scope of the Rules.
- Eliminate all sponsorship-related restrictions.
- Provide a shorter minimum period awaiting reinstatement.

In simple terms, the only acts that would result in a golfer losing his or her amateur status are accepting:

- A prize in excess of the prize limit (which means that playing in a competition with excessive prizes, whether as an amateur or professional, would not, of itself, impact on a player’s amateur status).
- Payment for giving instruction.
- Employment as a golf club professional or membership of an association of professional golfers.

Feedback and Implementation Process:

- The R&A and USGA have engaged with the golf community in feedback sessions throughout the review process including: national federations and state golf associations,

worldwide professional golf associations (PGAs), worldwide Tours, NCAA, and elite-level amateurs.

- A public feedback period is open from February 22 – March 26, 2021.
- After this period ends, we will continue to evaluate the Rule changes, make any appropriate changes and obtain final approval from our respective Amateur Status Committees and boards.
- The new Rules of Amateur Status are scheduled to go into effect in January 2022.
- To provide greater insight into the draft of the proposed Rules of Amateur Status, it is accompanied by explanations which detail the current Rule, the proposed new Rule, and our rationale for why changes are being proposed or why a Rule or part of a Rule would remain the same. Topics covered include:
 - Prizes
 - Expenses
 - Promotions and Advertising
 - Instruction
 - Professionalism
 - Reinstatement
- To provide feedback, please contact The R&A by email at:
AmateurStatusFeedback@randa.org