



# **EXPLANATION OF DECISION TO ADOPT RULE 14-1B OF THE RULES OF GOLF**

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## **EXPLANATION OF DECISION TO ADOPT RULE 14-1B OF THE RULES OF GOLF**

On November 28, 2012, the United States Golf Association (USGA) and R&A Rules Limited (The R&A) announced a proposal to amend the Rules of Golf, effective January 1, 2016, to prohibit anchoring the club in making a stroke. Both organizations indicated that final action on proposed Rule 14-1b would occur in the spring of 2013, and invited interested persons and organizations to comment on the proposal.

Acting through their respective, independent decision-making processes, the USGA and The R&A have both now approved the adoption of Rule 14-1b. It will take effect as part of the Rules of Golf on January 1, 2016, at the beginning of the next four-year Rules cycle. The text of the final Rule is the same as previously proposed. That text, as well as a Guidance Document for Players and Officials and other explanatory materials, can be found on the respective websites of the USGA and The R&A ([www.usga.org/anchoring](http://www.usga.org/anchoring) or [www.RandA.org/anchoring](http://www.RandA.org/anchoring)).

This statement explains the bases for the governing bodies' final decision to adopt Rule 14-1b and addresses the main questions and concerns voiced by those who opposed the adoption of the proposed Rule.

### **1. Overview of Review and Comment Process**

#### **A. Review Process**

This final decision was reached after a lengthy and comprehensive process in which extensive information and a broad range of viewpoints were assessed. The anchored method of stroke has been a subject of controversy within the golf community for quite some time. The controversy intensified during 2011 and 2012 as use of this method began to spike sharply upward. In February 2012, the USGA and The R&A announced that they would take a fresh look at whether anchored strokes should be prohibited under the Rules of Golf.

Since that time, there has been continuous coverage of the issue in the media, especially in the United States. The USGA and The R&A also received extensive direct and indirect input on the issue. Views were offered from interested persons across the game,

including golf associations, professional golfers and tours, elite and recreational amateurs, equipment manufacturers, golf instructors and club professionals, and others. In developing proposed Rule 14-1b during 2012, the governing bodies assessed the many considerations that had been raised. In announcing the proposal last November, the USGA and The R&A addressed the bases for the proposed Rule and responded to the points that had been raised by those questioning the need to address anchoring.

The USGA and The R&A also chose to publish a proposed Rule for public comment, which was unprecedented for a change to the playing Rules of Golf. Anchoring has been a highly debated topic on which many who love the game held strong views and wished to be heard. In this unique case, it seemed helpful to invite further input; and that has proved to be true.

#### B. Comments Received

Since announcing the proposal, the USGA and The R&A have received comments and heard opinions in a variety of ways. Approximately 2200 persons used the USGA's formal feedback mechanism, primarily by submitting comments through the USGA's website. Approximately 450 persons from 17 countries (including more than 100 persons living in the United States) used The R&A's formal feedback mechanism, primarily by submitting comments through The R&A's website; the majority of these comments were from Great Britain and Ireland. Others provided their thoughts through letters and emails to, or meetings and phone calls with, representatives of the USGA and/or The R&A.

The input received during the 90-day comment period was consistent with prior input. These comments, which often were passionate and eloquent, raised the same basic arguments for or against a prohibition on anchoring that were previously heard and were addressed in the governing bodies' communications announcing the proposed Rule. Certain recent comments also revealed some ongoing questions or confusion about why the USGA and The R&A believe that a prohibition on anchoring the club in making a stroke is an appropriate Rule and why we would decide to act at this time.

The comment period also indicated that golf organizations that play leading roles in the game have various positions on the proposed Rule. For example:

- The PGA Tour advocated that the proposed Rule not be adopted. Several other professional tours – the European Tour, the LPGA, the Ladies European Tour and the Sunshine Tour – provided their support for the proposed Rule itself and/or for following the Rules of Golf as established by the USGA and The R&A.
- The PGA of America, the Canadian PGA, and the National Golf Course Owners Association stated their opposition to the proposed Rule; in contrast, the Professional Golfers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland, joined by the PGAs of Europe, stated their support for the proposed Rule and for following the Rules of Golf as established by The R&A and the USGA.
- The International Association of Golf Administrators (IAGA), representing an estimated 4 million golfers and the leadership of 110 state, regional and provincial amateur golf associations in North America, as well as several national associations, stated their support for the governing bodies' rulemaking authority and for the importance of participants in the game following the Rules of Golf. The governing bodies also heard or received direct indications of support from national golf federations, such as the Mexican Golf Federation, Golf Canada and Golf Australia, as well as from the leaders of a substantial number of individual state and regional golf associations in the United States.

These conflicting positions, taken together with the many other views advanced in one form or another, confirmed what we already knew: many individuals and organizations throughout the golf community feel strongly about the anchoring issue, and there is no single outcome that will please all. The comments also reflect a broad consensus that, regardless of views on this particular Rule, the game has benefited and will continue to benefit from having the USGA and The R&A continue in their longstanding role as writers of the Rules of Golf.

We greatly appreciate the time, effort and thought that went into providing input on

the proposal. In particular, we noted those comments expressing doubt or uncertainty about the affirmative reasons for adopting the Rule, questioning the timing of this decision, or raising concern about the Rule's potential effect on participation in the game. We have concluded that the Rule should be adopted, and we take this opportunity to reiterate, expand and clarify our thinking in response to such comments.

## **2. The Underlying Rationale for Rule 14-1b and Its Benefits to the Game**

One concern raised in some comments opposing the proposed Rule was the absence of statistical evidence that anchored putting is a superior method of stroke. Their premise was that, without such "scientific evidence," the governing bodies cannot conclude that this technique of making a stroke may alter golf's essential challenge and provide an advantage to the player using it and therefore cannot hope to benefit the game by eliminating the anchoring technique. Although we understand that people often look for statistical data when engaged in a factual and policy debate, we believe that these assertions are misplaced in the present context and reflect a misunderstanding of the rationale for the Rule and the principles on which the Rules of Golf are based.

### **A. The Principles on Which the Rules of Golf are Founded**

The playing Rules of Golf are not established on an empirical or scientific assessment of the benefits or consequences of each method or act that might or might not be allowed. Rather, the Rules that govern how golf is played are based on judgments about what is appropriate and best for this unique game of skill and challenge.

The playing Rules are definitional: individually and collectively, they reflect what the game is and how it should be played. For example, a player may not pick up the ball and roll it into the hole. That is not because the rulemakers assessed through statistical or other empirical analysis whether players rolling the ball by hand are more successful than players using a club to strike the ball; rather, it is because rolling the ball with one's hand is simply not "golf." The same is true of making a croquet-style stroke on the putting green (Rule 16-1e), or pushing,

spooning or scraping the ball in making a stroke (Rule 14-1). These and similar Rules reflect a judgment that such methods of play are contrary to the essential nature of the game.

Although some Rules are purely definitional, others are also intended to restrict or prohibit practices that potentially might enable a player to avoid or diminish the essential challenges of the game. For example:

- The Rules prohibit or regulate many practices that relate to how a stroke may be played, such as by imposing a penalty if a player makes a stroke with someone holding an umbrella over her head (Rule 14-2a); while leaning on another club to steady himself (Decision 14-3/9); with a golf ball held in the hand against the grip (Decision 14-3/6); with a thumb inserted into a bandage (Decision 14-3/7); while a caddie stands directly behind him (Rule 14-2b); or while standing on a golf cart or another piece of equipment being used to build a stance (Rule 13-3).
- The Rules also impose penalties to regulate or prohibit various acts taken in preparation for a stroke, such as using a swing aid to make a practice swing (Decision 14-3/10); playing a practice stroke from the fairway during the round (Rule 7-2); asking for advice from someone other than one's partner or either of their caddies (Rule 8-1); knocking some leaves off of a tree during a practice swing if such act improves the area of intended swing for the stroke (Decision 13-2/0.5); or testing the condition of a bunker while the ball lies at rest in that bunker (Rule 13-4a).

Such acts are penalized for two interrelated reasons: because they are deemed to diverge from golf's essential character as a game in which the player's basic challenge is to play the ball as it lies and the course as it is found and to do so without assistance of various kinds, and because such acts might assist the player in his or her play. The inquiry underlying these types of playing Rules is not whether such acts provide a demonstrable, actual advantage to every player or to the average player or to most players or to a certain minimum percentage of players. Nor is the issue whether such acts provide an actual benefit to a given player in all situations or in many situations or with any particular degree of demonstrated probability, or

whether any such benefit is major or minor. And, needless to say, the USGA and The R&A did not undertake statistical or scientific studies to determine the performance results of such acts before adopting Rules that subject them to penalty.

Rather, in evaluating whether a particular act or technique of play should be subject to penalty under the Rules, the focus is on whether such act or technique is inconsistent with the essential nature of golf and, where relevant, on whether it might assist the player in his or her play. What matters is defining the game and assessing the potential for advantage. Making such judgments – based on history, tradition, philosophy, experience and prediction – is at the heart of the rulemaking process for the playing Rules of Golf. Empirical analysis of such acts and their potential advantages has never been thought to be a condition for adopting a playing Rule.

#### B. Freely Swinging the Entire Club is the Essence of the Traditional Method of Golf Stroke

In adopting Rule 14-1b, the USGA and The R&A have concluded that freely swinging the entire club is integral to maintaining the traditions of the game and preserving golf as an enjoyable game of skill and challenge. The essence of the traditional method of golf stroke involves the player swinging the club with both the club and the gripping hands being held away from the body. The player's challenge is to direct and control the movement of the entire club in making the stroke.

This traditional form of golf stroke has prevailed throughout the centuries since the game began. It is true to say that one can find isolated or episodic examples of anchored methods of stroke dating back into the early 1900s, just as one can find early examples of almost any method of stroke that creative players might invent or try, such as putting in a croquet style (seen as early as the 1900s or before). But it is only recently that a non-trivial and recurring use of anchoring methods emerged, first with the long putter in the 1980s and then with the belly putter at the turn of the 21st century – an extremely short time in the history of this 600-year old game and not reflective of any established tradition.

The concept of intentionally immobilizing one end of the golf club against the body, in a manner equivalent to creating a physical attachment point to use as a fixed fulcrum or pivot

point around which the club can be swung, is a substantial departure from that traditional understanding of the golf swing. Reduced to its most basic elements, golf involves a player swinging a club at a ball to move it toward and ultimately into a hole. The player's most basic challenge is to direct and control the movement of the entire club in making that swing. Anchoring the club while making a stroke also involves a challenge, but it is a different one, in which the player uses the immobilization and stability of one end of the club as an essential component of the method of stroke. It is not the same as freely swinging the club.

A revealing point that emerged from the input received on the proposed Rule is that a great many golfers appear to agree that, ideally, golf would be played without an anchored stroke. A good number of those who oppose Rule 14-1b on collateral grounds, e.g., that it comes too late or may have undesirable effects at this particular time, say that the governing bodies should have prohibited anchoring at an earlier time; and many others acknowledge that, at a minimum, it would have been a reasonable choice to do so. The concept that a free swing is, or should be, the essential manner in which a golf stroke should be played is deeply ingrained in the traditions of the game.

Seeking to avoid this conclusion, a few comments suggested that an anchored method of stroke must also be considered acceptable and traditional because it satisfies the definition of a "stroke" in the Rules of Golf. But such a conclusion does not follow from this premise. The question at hand is not whether playing the ball with an anchored club constitutes a "stroke" under the Rules; it certainly does, as it involves a "forward movement of the club made with the intention of striking at and moving the ball." Rather, the question is whether anchoring is a method of making a stroke that should be allowed. There are all manner of non-traditional methods of playing the ball that would constitute a "stroke," yet are not permissible under the Rules. For example, playing the ball in a croquet style on the putting green or in a billiards style is a "stroke," but the Rules provide that a player who does so must, in stroke play, both count the stroke and apply a two-stroke penalty for using an improper method in making the stroke. The same will be true under new Rule 14-1b, which provides that "in making a stroke" the player must not anchor the club. An anchored stroke will continue to constitute a "stroke," but

Rule 14-1b will establish that it is not a permitted method of stroke and therefore is subject to penalty.

### C. Anchored Methods of Stroke Clearly Provide a Player with a Potential Advantage

In defining the essential nature of an appropriate method of stroke, Rule 14-1b is also based on the related determination that anchoring provides a player with a potential advantage as compared to making a stroke with a free swing of the entire club. This potential advantage is the main reason why golfers use anchoring: intentionally securing one end of the club in place against the body is designed to help to avoid or alleviate some of the inherent obstacles to a successful stroke made with a free swing. For example,

- It enables the player to move and control only a portion of the club, rather than the entire club.
- It creates a type of fixed fulcrum or pivot point around which the club may be swung, potentially making the swing more simple, stable and repeatable.
- It is intended to help prevent undesired movement and rotation of the anchored end of the club and the hands, forearms and clubface during the stroke.
- It provides extra support and stability by securing the club as if attached to the player's body, which may alleviate the effects of nerves and assist in playing shots under pressure.

These and similar potential advantages of anchoring are not merely theoretical concepts, but rather reflect the actual experience and judgment of a great many persons who play, teach and observe the game. Players who use anchored methods of stroke have said that they do so for precisely these types of reasons; and players who view anchoring as inappropriate have likewise cited such potential advantages in observing that anchoring may alter and diminish the challenge of the putting stroke. Opponents and proponents alike agree that anchoring may reduce the moving parts and sources of variability or error in the swing, enable use of a fixed pivot point, alleviate the effects of nerves and pressure, and otherwise provide potential benefits resulting from immobilizing one end of the club against the body.

And instructors who teach and endorse anchored methods of putting cite these same intended benefits, and some of them increasingly advocate that anchoring is a preferred method that should be taught to and adopted by beginning and junior players from the outset.

These observations – made by experts and non-experts alike – directly support the conclusion that anchoring provides a potential advantage that may help avoid or reduce some of the basic challenges inherent in the free swing. Indeed, multiple organizations that opposed Rule 14-1b argued themselves that anchoring helps players putt better; and a number of those arguing “no proof of advantage” have, simultaneously and inconsistently, urged that eliminating anchoring might have such a negative effect on some who use it that they might play less golf or even quit the game. All of these perspectives serve to underscore the common understanding of the potential advantages inherent in the anchored method of stroke.

A few comments erroneously suggested that the governing bodies previously acknowledged that an anchored stroke provides golfers with no advantage. This suggestion ignores the express rationale stated by the USGA and The R&A last November, and appears to reflect confusion arising from prior discussion about whether there are statistical performance data that demonstrate the benefits of anchoring. The USGA and The R&A have explained that the relevant inquiry under the Rules of Golf is not about empirically proving an actual, overall competitive advantage from use of anchoring (i.e., it is not a question to be addressed by statistically evaluating actual performance outcomes of differing methods of stroke). But the USGA and The R&A emphasized, and reiterate today, that Rule 14-1b is based on a judgment that anchoring the club, rather than freely swinging it, might assist the player by altering and reducing the challenge of making a stroke. The Rule’s purpose is to ensure that all players face the same challenge of controlling the entire club in making a stroke and to eliminate anchoring’s potential advantages.

Other comments suggested that anchoring must not be an advantageous method, because otherwise far more players would be using it. This suggestion is misplaced in several respects. First, there appear to be many golfers who strongly believe that anchoring is not a proper way to play and, to date anyway, have not considered using it. Second, this suggestion

ignores the large recent increase in use of and support for the anchoring method. Ten years ago, few would have imagined the degree of usage that has been seen in the past two years; ten years from now, without Rule 14-1b, it is possible that many more golfers would use this method, especially with the emerging trend of teaching the anchored stroke to beginning and junior golfers. This technique is still very new in the context of the history and worldwide scope of the game, and the fact that most golfers have not yet tried or adopted an anchored putting stroke does not undermine its potential for advantage.

Moreover, it is essential to understand that the inquiry under the playing Rules of Golf is not whether this method of stroke would necessarily advantage every player, most players, many players, the average player or some other identified set of those who might use it, nor whether it would necessarily provide a benefit on every stroke or in every circumstance or condition of play, nor whether the benefit might be large or small. What matters is that the purpose and inherent nature of this method of stroke create the potential for it to assist an individual player, in some part of his or her play, by reducing variables and alleviating inherent obstacles that otherwise exist in the traditional free swinging method of stroke. That is exactly what almost all of those who use and teach this method of stroke attest, and why its use and advocacy have been on the rise.

Finally, some comments suggested that anchoring cannot harm the game because, even if it provides an advantage, any golfer can use the method and seek to gain that advantage. But that suggestion cannot be the proper standard for judging whether an act should be prohibited under the Rules of Golf, for it amounts to a view that Rules governing play are not needed at all. This same argument would mean that croquet putting, building a stance, improving a lie, cleaning a ball lying through the green, teeing a ball in the fairway, and countless other acts need not be subject to penalty, because all golfers would be equally free to take such actions. The purpose of Rule 14-1b and other playing Rules is to define the nature and challenge of the game. If an act is deemed contrary to how the game should be played, the fact that all players would be equally free to perform that act is irrelevant. The purpose of Rule 14-1b is to ensure

that all players face the same challenge of controlling the entire club in making a stroke and to eliminate the potential advantages of anchoring.

D. Empirical Data on Putting Performance Outcomes are Irrelevant and Insufficient

The preceding analysis shows why the calls for “scientific” or statistical evidence proving the superiority of the anchoring method of stroke are misplaced. The playing Rules of Golf define the sport and rest on considerations such as tradition, experience and judgment, not on science or statistics.

Although the request for statistical proof is unfounded, we also note that those asking to see statistical evidence of anchoring’s superiority are asking for analysis of data that do not exist and could not realistically be gathered from across the game as a whole. Rule 14-1b will apply to all players in golf, which is played by tens of millions of people of all ability levels in scores of countries and under an enormous variety of differing conditions. No one has gathered data that would reflect the outcomes of various styles of putting strokes across all parts of the game, whether in casual play, club events, elite amateur competitions, or otherwise throughout golf. Nor would it be realistically possible to seek to gather empirical data that would sufficiently reflect the actual putting performance of players of all levels and under all conditions throughout the world.

Indeed, such putting performance data do not exist for even the professional levels of the game. The only even arguably relevant data of which we are aware come from a single professional tour – the ShotLink data generated from play on the PGA Tour. These data are used to produce a putting statistic known as “strokes gained – putting,” as well as a number of other putting statistics, which are intended to help assess, by normalizing for various conditions, the comparative putting success of all Tour players. But even those data do not enable the type of comparative performance analysis that would, as some comments suggest is necessary, prove or disprove that anchored putting is a superior technique.

The “strokes gained – putting” data attempt objectively to identify and rank actual putting outcomes by player in Tour events, but they do not identify the reasons for a player’s

relative success. For example, they do not measure inherent ability, recent or current injury or physical condition, current form, extent of practice, effect of conditions, or countless other factors that may affect any individual player's performance at any given time; and they also do not reflect the reasons why particular players have chosen to use, or not use, a longer putter and an anchored method of stroke. These data report what happened during play on the Tour, not why; they do not show cause and effect. Thus, one cannot simply say that if, in the aggregate, players who anchor the club perform better, or worse, than players who do not anchor, then it proves that anchoring does, or does not, provide an advantage for all players overall or to the average or typical player.

Moreover, if one were trying to assess actual performance outcomes, a more relevant question would be whether using an anchored stroke enables an individual player to putt more successfully than without anchoring – not whether players using anchored putters have, in general, putted better than those using non-anchored putters. And, indeed, the question under the playing Rules would be not whether a given player's aggregate putting performance is better or worse with the anchored method, but whether he or she obtains an advantage in making any stroke. For example, if anchoring might enable a player to putt better under severe pressure or on shorter putts or in other particular conditions or situations, that would be directly pertinent to a question of "advantage" from using that method, whether or not his or her total putting statistics differed materially based on method of stroke.

Answers to such questions cannot be gleaned from the PGA Tour data or any other data set of which we are aware or that is likely to be compiled. There is no ready baseline or control group against which to compare a given player's results with anchored strokes or from which one can evaluate how each player putts, in actual competition, with different methods while controlling for all other material factors and conditions. And, at all events, the ShotLink data relate to a few hundred players on the PGA Tour, who are not representative of all of the different types of golfers worldwide. Those requesting statistical proof as a prerequisite for an anchoring Rule are not only asking for an analysis that is unnecessary under the principles on which the playing Rules are founded, they are in effect proposing a test that could not be met.

Finally, determining the permissibility of anchoring on a statistical analysis of performance data would be inherently problematic in defining the set of playing Rules, because the issue might never be brought to a definitive conclusion. Any analysis of performance data is, by definition, a snapshot at a particular period in time. For example, the number, type and skill level of players using anchoring has recently changed significantly, and various techniques of teaching, practicing and making such strokes are still evolving. If, over time, such changes and other ongoing developments affected the perceived performance results, would the playing Rules then change along with those changing data? We suspect that most of those who today are asking for statistical proof would, regardless of what such new data showed, continue to argue against a Rule eliminating anchoring. But in any event, we do not believe that the permissibility of a method of stroke should hinge an ongoing empirical assessment of the degree of success certain players may have had in using it. A method of stroke is permissible, or not, based on a judgment concerning whether it conforms to the essence and traditions of the game and whether it may alter or reduce the game's challenge by providing a potential advantage to any player.

#### E. Rule 14-1b Will Benefit the Game as a Whole

A final suggestion made in a few comments is that Rule 14-1b can provide little benefit to the game because its only effect will be to require a small number of players to forgo anchored strokes. We disagree with any such suggestion.

The USGA and The R&A have made the judgment that anchoring creates an unacceptable risk of changing the nature and reducing the challenge of making a golf stroke. The game will benefit over the long term by revising the Rules of Golf to clarify the essential nature of a permissible golf stroke and to ensure that all players are confronting the same basic challenge when they play the game. Rule 14-1b also will prevent any further development of possible new or improved forms of anchored stroke that deviate from the free swing, as well as prevent the further extension of anchoring into non-putting parts of the game, which has already been seen to occur with chip shots from off the green.

Furthermore, any suggestion that the Rule will serve only to disadvantage those who currently use the anchored method of stroke ignores the interests of those who do not. The Rules of Golf establish the framework for the way in which the game is played. If some players use a method that provides a potential advantage, the interests of those with whom they compete may be affected. Certainly we heard comments from many players at every level, from the professional tours to amateur players to recreational golfers, that the use of anchoring introduces an inappropriate element into the game. Their views and interests matter too, as do those of future golfers. Preserving the essential character of the sport is a clear benefit to golfers and to the game as a whole.

Rule 14-1b also should enable the game to bring to a close the longstanding controversy about anchored putting. The very use of this method of stroke has generated doubt and uncertainty among the participants themselves about whether each player is facing the same challenge and playing the same game. This has been sufficiently pronounced that there have even been highly unfortunate suggestions, from both those who anchor and those who do not, that anchoring is almost a form of “cheating.” We do not believe that this word has any place in the debate, for anchored strokes have been fully permissible under the Rules of Golf, but we note that such controversy is counterproductive and unseemly in a game that cherishes its reputation for sportsmanship. The game will be served by clarifying and resolving this issue.

### **3. The Fact that Some Golfers Will Now be Required to Change a Method of Stroke Does Not Mean that it is Too Late to Adopt Rule 14-1b**

A second major argument heard during our review is that, although it would have been acceptable and perhaps even desirable for the USGA and The R&A to prohibit anchoring as soon as it first arose, it is too late to adopt Rule 14-1b now because too many golfers have come to use and prefer this method of stroke. We understand the view that the current level of controversy and need to adapt might have been mitigated (though certainly not avoided) if anchoring had been prohibited at an earlier time and that, with the benefit of 20-20 hindsight, some might wish that we had done so. But we cannot accept that anchoring must be

considered a permanent fixture in golf for the decades and centuries to come, regardless of what experience has revealed or may reveal about its effects on the game. Rules are evaluated on an ongoing basis and revised as necessary to promote the long-term best interests of the game, and players have always adapted as necessary to bring their play into conformance with the evolving Rules.

A. Prior Consideration of Potential Rule Changes Did Not Decide the Anchoring Issue

As an initial matter, those who believe that the USGA and The R&A previously approved anchoring are mistaken. In 1989, the USGA announced that the long putter, the use of which had only recently come into general view, conformed to the Rules of Golf. The R&A did not issue a press release at that time, but had reached a similar conclusion. The Rules change proposal considered at that time was not whether to address anchoring as a method of stroke, but whether to adopt a limit on putter length so as to eliminate the long putter from the game. The USGA and The R&A found that there were a number of reasons for not doing so, such as that the long putter may help some players with back problems and that restricting putter length might have inequitable effects on players of different heights. The fact that the USGA and The R&A were aware that long putters frequently were used in an anchored manner and took no action to prohibit it did not, contrary to suggestions in some comments, mean that the governing bodies in effect “approved” that technique. A newly emerging method of play does not need advance approval, but rather may be used unless and until it is deemed to be in breach of the Rules of Golf. Such an approach to the Rules protects both the players and the game: it allows players to play without fear of retroactive penalties, and it allows the USGA and The R&A to study and react to an issue as time, experience and the needs of the game permit or require. When the proposal to regulate putter length was addressed in 1989, there were some who hoped to discourage the method of holding those putters against chest or chin and some who were focused on the very existence and use of long putters, but the only conclusion reached at the time was that the proposal to limit putter length would not be adopted. That conclusion remains in place going forward, for Rule 14-1b has no effect on equipment and all conforming long and mid-length putters will remain available for play.

Since that time, the USGA and The R&A have continued to assess the use of long putters, but until now have not adopted a Rule change to eliminate the clubs or address the anchored stroke. This inaction did not reflect affirmative approval, much less permanent acceptance. In fact, concerns about the use of longer putters and anchored strokes persisted, but there was no clear consensus in a number of respects, including about what type of Rule change might best address the issue. An underlying factor was the very minor levels of usage at relevant points in time. In 1989, there was a perception that long putters were used rarely and only by players with extreme putting difficulties or with physical issues, and thus that use of this putting style was essentially harmless in the context of the game as a whole. Although concerns deepened in the 2000's, following the visible emergence of anchored belly putting, the low levels of usage around the world continued to suggest to some that anchoring these clubs was only a peripheral technique presenting no real long-term threat to the traditional way of playing the game. It was the recent upsurge in the use of anchored strokes that decisively changed this perception. It was no longer possible to dismiss the use of anchored longer putters as incidental or unlikely to affect the game as a whole.

In sum, the fact that the USGA and The R&A did not previously adopt a Rule to prohibit anchored strokes when their use emerged did not signify affirmative USGA/R&A approval or a determination that anchoring would be permissible on an ongoing or permanent basis. No one who chose to use this technique was promised that a Rule prohibiting anchored strokes would never be adopted. Golfers who have followed the game to any material extent have been aware, for quite some time, that longer putters and their anchored use have remained controversial and that there have been regular calls for or speculation about a potential Rule change. The fact that a Rule was not adopted at an earlier time reflected no decision or assurance that a future Rule would not be considered or adopted. Any contrary suggestion is untenable, for insisting that any emerging issue of play either be resolved by immediate Rule change or be set aside and permanently ignored would, as explained below, place an untenable burden on the rulemaking bodies and be to the severe detriment of the game.

## B. The Rules of Golf are Continuously Assessed and Revised

This history regarding the governing bodies' consideration of longer putters and anchoring is consistent with the overall history and philosophy of rulemaking in golf. The practice of monitoring, analyzing and discussing ongoing developments in the game, in connection with possible future revisions to the Rules, is inherent in the rulemaking process. The USGA and The R&A continuously review the Rules of Golf and revise them every four years precisely so that the Rules can be regularly updated, as appropriate, in response to developments in the game. As stated in the Foreword to the 2012 Edition of the Rules of Golf, the Rules "should be faithful to their historical principles," "must be clear, comprehensive and relevant to today's game," and "need regular review to ensure these goals are met," so that the latest set of Rules reflects "the latest stage of this evolution." The rulemakers have always reserved the right to add new Rules or to eliminate or modify existing Rules, with the goal of protecting and enhancing the long-term interests of the game.

The history of the Rules of Golf belies any notion that potential changes are or must be made as soon as an issue is identified or else be set aside forever. For example, some commenters pointed to the 1968 Rule change prohibiting croquet-style strokes on the putting green (Rule 16-1e) as an alleged example of more prompt action to revise the Rules, following publicity about Sam Snead's success with that stroke in prominent events. Yet this method of stroke was first used as far back as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more than 50 years before it was prohibited under the playing Rules. Even in the context of the era in which the croquet stroke issue was reviewed, the Rule change did not occur right away, as this form of stroke had been seen on the PGA Tour at least as early as 1963. Both professional and amateur golfers were already using that method of stroke, and therefore were required to transition to another putting method (in that case, within only a few months), but that did not prevent the USGA and The R&A from adopting the Rule in furtherance of the best interests of the game.

Many other Rules, practices or issues in golf have been controversial or debated for decades or longer before a definitive Rule change occurred. For example, the Rule limiting a player to a maximum of 14 clubs (Rule 4-4) was adopted in the 1930s, after centuries of play

without any such limit and only after many years of controversy that arose when some players began to use as many as 30 or more specialized clubs in a round in an attempt to assist their play. The fact that such players would need to alter their developed methods of play to comply with this new limitation did not prevent the rulemakers from proceeding in the manner they determined was best for the game going forward.

As another example, decades of discussion and controversy preceded the Rule changes that eliminated the stymie in match play. The USGA began discussing that issue at least as early as the 1930s, and controversy about this historic and unique element of the game began many decades earlier. The USGA modified, but did not eliminate, the stymie by a Rule change in 1938, and it did not finally eliminate the stymie, in conjunction with The R&A, until 1952. The long controversy and lack of earlier action did not prevent a Rule change from being implemented when a consensus ultimately arose that eliminating the stymie would be in the game's best interests.

More recently, discussion has been ongoing for a considerable time about slow play, use of video evidence, score card penalties and other such Rules issues. As all of these historic and current examples illustrate, declining to address an issue of potential concern when first identified has never been understood to end the USGA's or The R&A's review under the Rules of Golf or to mean that such issue must be set aside going forward. A contrary view would conflict with any normal rulemaking, standards-setting or legislative process. The purpose of ongoing review is to observe and incorporate the lessons of experience. Many years of study, analysis and debate may be needed to refine the issues, identify and assess potential solutions, and develop consensus. Although there may be situations – such as the current one - in which hindsight suggests to some that an issue could or should have been addressed at an earlier time, it often takes time to confirm the need for action and to build understanding and agreement on a prospective change in the Rules, and it is fully appropriate for the governing bodies to act at that later time.

### C. It is Not Unfair to Ask Players to Comply with Prospective Changes in the Rules

The USGA and The R&A understand and sympathize with those who dislike losing the option of using an anchored method of stroke and who may need to spend time adjusting their method of play by January 1, 2016. But such a result is neither unfair nor unusual, in the context of sports or otherwise.

Under this new Rule, no act is being retroactively subjected to penalty; only future play will be affected. Moreover, all players are or should be aware that the Rules are subject to revision, that Rule changes occur regularly, and that adapting to those evolving Rules is inherent in the game. No golfer acquires a permanent entitlement to a given set of existing Rules because he or she may have benefited from them in the past or perceives a future benefit from them. It has always been the case that the Rules change, and players adapt. The fact that some golfers must alter their playing methods or strategies cannot prevent the governing bodies from adopting a Rule change that is needed to preserve and enhance the game's long-term interests.

Nor is this approach to prospective rulemaking unique to golf. Countless rule changes in other sports have required participants to abandon or modify techniques that they had developed, practiced and used to their perceived advantage. Examples of this include

- the rule changes in American football that restricted the “bump and run” technique and eliminated or altered many other established techniques of using the head, hands or body in blocking, tackling or running;
- the lowering of the pitching mound and changes in the size of the strike zone in baseball;
- the creation of the three-point shot in basketball and various rule changes limiting the use of hands and altering other defensive techniques;
- the restrictions imposed on underwater swimming after the start and each turn in a swimming competition;
- changes to the Laws of cricket dealing with fast, short-pitched bowling (which the umpire can now determine to be dangerous and unfair);

- changes to the Laws of rugby union allowing players to be lifted in the lineout, and the like.

Such changes were made in the perceived best interests of those sports, even though they may have negatively affected some participants by requiring them to abandon or alter previously successful or preferred techniques – and unlike with regard to Rule 14-1b, participants typically were required to do so the very next year, not more than two and one-half years in the future.

Even beyond sports, it is inherent in any form of rulemaking or legislation that prospective change may upset the status quo. Laws, rules and standards are regularly revised, when experience, circumstances or perspectives change and a consensus develops that forward-looking interests require such revision, even though affected persons may need to adjust their behavior accordingly. If a judgment is made that an issue is not yet a sufficient problem to address but it later turns out to be a real problem or if views evolve and a consensus arises where one previously was lacking, it is natural and entirely appropriate to take action. When it is determined that laws and regulations should change going forward, it is understood that the prospective behavior of some or many individuals often will need to change as well.

#### D. Rule 14-1b Will Not Cause a Major Dislocation within the Game

As explained above, we do not believe that the need for some golfers to adjust their putting techniques is a reason to avoid taking action that otherwise will benefit golf going forward. In urging that it is too late for the USGA and The R&A to adopt this Rule, some have suggested that prohibiting anchored strokes would disadvantage an entire generation of golfers who grew up playing the game with anchoring allowed. Although we do not believe that the particular number of golfers affected by this decision would be a decisive factor in any event, we believe that any such suggestion substantially overstates the real world effect of the Rule.

Although a very small number of current players may have anchored from their earliest golfing days, the vast majority of those who have used an anchored stroke picked it up at a later time in their golfing careers, typically after having played for an extended period with non-

anchored methods. Indeed, the principal method of anchoring today is belly putting, which did not emerge visibly in the game until about a decade ago. We perceive that many, if not most, golfers who use anchoring today have adopted that method of stroke only very recently – and many who have used the stroke have not done so exclusively but rather have continued to use non-anchored methods of putting as well. In short, the historical record does not support an implication that a generation of golfers has grown up using anchored putting or that Rule 14-1b would have a major disruptive effect on large numbers of golfers.

Overall, although increasing notably in the past two years, use of anchored putting remains at a modest level across the game as a whole. Use of long and belly putters on the PGA Tour and European Tour more than doubled in 2011 and 2012 as compared to prior years, reflecting the leading edge of the recent upsurge in anchoring, but use of this method appears to have been, and to remain, much lower among non-elite players. For example, recent surveys have suggested that anchoring is currently used, at most, by only approximately 2-4 percent of all golfers in both the United States and Europe. Sales data also suggest that, until 2011, longer putters represented only a minimal percentage of all putter sales.

Moreover, golf is a worldwide game with an estimated 60 million current players, more than half of whom are outside the United States. As reflected through the comment process, use of the anchored method of stroke appears considerably lower outside of the United States. Golf is still developing in many countries around the world and anchored putting remains uncommon in most of those places. In effect, the game is still at the beginning stages of the anchored putting issue insofar as much of the golfing world is concerned. Although we recognize that a meaningful number of players will need to adapt their putting methods to the new Rule, fears of a major dislocation within the existing game are unfounded.

Indeed, far from it being too late to act, this is an appropriate time in which a Rule change can be implemented so as to avoid the possibility that a much larger number of additional golfers might begin to use this stroke on an ongoing basis. In 1989, when the governing bodies declined to regulate the length of putters, use of the anchored long putter was relatively rare. Then, 10-15 years later, anchored belly putting emerged as a new trend in

the game, but still at minor levels and in a manner that appeared to remain primarily on the periphery of the game. Then, only a decade later, the usage levels spiked up 2-3 times higher on some of the professional tours, and noticeably at other levels of the game as well. At each prior inflection point, there seemed to be reason to doubt that further concerns would arise, and each time that prediction proved to be wrong. Now anchoring is moving into the mainstream and has begun to be advocated, including to beginning and junior golfers, as a superior method of putting that mitigates the effect of nerves and pressure and enables a more repeatable and easier-to-control stroke. By acting now, we ensure that the issue is dealt with before anchoring takes firm root around the world and usage grows potentially much larger.

A few comments pointed to a very recent decline in the use of long and belly putters on the PGA Tour, suggesting that perhaps the anchoring issue is becoming of less concern because usage has fallen (although remaining in the 10% range) since the peak levels at the end of 2011 and in 2012. As an initial matter, we note that it would not be surprising if use of anchored putting diminished to some extent following the February 2012 announcement that the USGA and The R&A were taking a fresh look at whether anchoring should be disallowed under the Rules and, subsequently, following the November 2012 announcement of proposed Rule 14-1b. More important, whatever the reason for this recent decline on the PGA Tour, the ultimate issue under the Rules of Golf is not about measuring the degree of usage of the anchored stroke. The USGA and The R&A have not determined that the anchored stroke is unacceptable if used by a certain minimum percentage of golfers, but acceptable if used by fewer than that. Rather, the recent large increase in use of this method was relevant only in ending the perception, to whatever extent previously held, that anchoring was only a peripheral issue with little effect on the game. For the reasons cited above – and not because any particular level of use had been exceeded – we concluded that, for the good of the game, a decision one way or the other was needed on the merits of the issue. We now have concluded that Rule 14-1b is needed to ensure that all players face the same challenge of controlling the entire club in making a stroke and to eliminate anchoring’s potential advantages. In these circumstances, the understandable desires of a modest number of current golfers not to lose the option of using

an anchored stroke cannot permanently overshadow the interests of all other current golfers, the golfers of tomorrow, and the long-term good of the game.

E. Golfers Can Readily Adapt to Making Strokes Without Anchoring

We recognize that golfers who use the anchored method of putting will need to adopt, practice and play with a different method. For many, this adjustment may mean little more than moving the club and gripping hand slightly off the body and continuing to use a longer putter, or choosing to putt, as in the past, with a standard-length putter in a non-anchored fashion. Others may want or need to spend more time choosing and practicing one or more other methods. But with more than two and one-half years until the January 1, 2016 effective date, all players will have a more than ample opportunity to adopt and practice a putting method that conforms to the new Rule. Golfers often change all or substantial parts of their full or partial swings in less time than that, and they will be able to do the same with regard to the putting stroke. The new Rule is intentionally narrow and a great many of methods of play, common as well as unconventional, remain available for golfers to use.

(i) Golfers May Continue to Use Long and Belly Putters Without Anchoring

Rule 14-1b does not change the equipment Rules. A player may use any conforming belly-length or long putter in any manner that does not constitute anchoring the club while making a stroke. This is an entirely feasible option. At all levels of the game, players have been seen to use belly-length or long putters without anchoring, and that option will remain for those who prefer those clubs.

We emphasize this point because some commenters expressed concern that what they erroneously called the “long putter ban” would prevent them from using a long putter for various reasons unrelated to anchoring – e.g., because they have back issues that make it easier to putt with an upright posture; because they prefer to grip the club in the split-handed style in which the top hand is inverted and the bottom hand swings the club in a pendulum motion; and similar reasons. But under Rule 14-1b, all golfers can continue to do so. A player may use the same long putter, stand in the same upright manner, grip the club in the same split-handed

way, and make the same pendulum-style stroke. He or she will only need to move the top gripping hand slightly off the chest rather than locking the club or hand against the chest, and to keep the forearm just clear of the body as well.

Likewise, belly-length putters may continue to be used without anchoring. Golfers throughout the game have done so successfully, as seen most prominently when Angel Cabrera used a non-anchored belly putter to win the 2009 Masters Tournament. Again, the player will need only to move the club just off the body so that it is not anchored.

In short, for each type of currently used anchored stroke that will be subject to penalty under Rule 14-1b, the player in effect needs only to move the club and hand (and, if relevant, the forearm) away from the body by a small degree such that the club is not anchored and a free swing occurs. The method of stroke will not be identical, for the player will need to control and swing the entire club. But these non-anchored methods with longer putters are analogous in stance, grip and putting motion. No one needs to abandon his or her preferred clubs or to adopt an entirely different way of putting. It will be a matter of adjustment by degree.

(ii) Many Other Common and Alternative Putting Methods Remain Available

Many other methods of putting with standard-length putters also will remain available to all players. The variety of permissible gripping styles, putter types, and swing methods is considerable, including various ways in which a player may seek to lessen the movement of his or her body during the stroke. For example, players who hold the club and gripping hand away from the body may rest one or both elbows or forearms against the body to achieve a measure of stability, so long as they do not create an anchor point as defined in the Rule. Also allowed are less conventional gripping methods, such as have been used by leading professionals, in which the end of the club is held in contact with the forearm or in which a hand is used to grip the club against a forearm. The latter methods are considered to be merely part of gripping the club, rather than anchoring, and are permitted because the entire club remains free to be swung in making the stroke. As these examples illustrate, Rule 14-1b was drafted narrowly so that it achieves its objectives while leaving these and many other options for use by players.

We are confident that golfers can promptly and readily adapt to this Rule, which will not become effective for more than two and one-half years. Players regularly change all aspects of their methods of stroke, both putting and otherwise, in considerably less time than that. Indeed, our impression is that most golfers who adopted an anchored stroke did so fairly promptly after first trying out that method. Player after player has said that he or she began using an anchored stroke in play on the course after no more than a few weeks (and sometimes after only a few days) of experimentation and practice. Just as golfers did not need years to transition from making non-anchored strokes with a shorter putter to making anchored strokes with a longer putter, they should not need years to transition to a non-anchored style. The 2016 effective date provides more than enough time for whatever transition steps are deemed desirable or necessary.

Putting without anchoring the club has been a common practice for centuries. It has been used, at one time or another, by virtually everyone who has ever played the game. Golfers know how to play the game without placing the end of a club into their stomachs or holding it fast to their chests; indeed, that is how virtually all strokes from off the putting green are made. The difference between putting with the club anchored and putting without it anchored will not require a re-learning of the fundamentals of striking the ball. Many players have used both methods, in practice and/or in play, and have often moved back and forth. In fact, the similarity of the motions of the belly putting stroke and non-anchored putting strokes has led some instructors to advocate practicing with anchored belly putting even if the player putts during the round using a non-anchored standard-length putter. Players who spent decades, and in many cases their entire careers, using non-anchored standard-length putters have subsequently switched to anchored putting, with relatively little intervening practice time if not almost immediately, and the same can occur in the other direction.

In the end, the concern about needing to use a non-anchored method of putting rests not on a view that players cannot use other methods, but that some players may not perform as well - i.e., that some players have benefited from anchoring and may now lose those advantages. Whether a given player will end up putting the same, better or worse with an

adjusted method will depend on that player. Some may find that the loss of the stability or other potential benefits of anchoring make it more difficult to putt as well using a non-anchored method, and some may not. The Rule's purpose is to ensure that all players face the same challenge of controlling the entire club in making a stroke and to eliminate anchoring's potential advantages; it therefore may affect some players' ultimate performance in some circumstances. But such golfers will be able to continue to play and enjoy the game.

We note again that many commenters who opposed the Rule acknowledged that it would have been appropriate for the USGA and The R&A to have eliminated longer putters or the anchored stroke at some time in the past. We view this as an implicit recognition that anchored strokes are not essential to the ability of golfers to play and enjoy the game of golf. If anchored putting had been prohibited soon after it first emerged, then by definition golfers would have used and would now be using one or more of the countless ways in which a putter and other clubs are held away from the body and swung freely. They will be able to do the same in 2016 and going forward.

F. "Grandfathering" is Not a Viable or Fair Solution

Out of concern for golfers who will need to abandon anchoring as either their preferred method or one of their available options, a few comments suggested that a compromise might be to create a "grandfathering" exception for current players who anchor the club when putting. We understand the spirit underlying this idea, but such an approach seems unworkable and, more important, would itself create unfairness. In the context of a game played by tens of millions of people, at many different levels of play and often over much of a lifetime, any effort to grandfather existing players would be an administrative nightmare. It also would be likely to create a protracted dispute about the fairness of permitting a small set of players to compete, perhaps for decades, using a potentially advantageous method that almost all other players would be prohibited from using. We think that such an approach would indefinitely prolong, and likely exacerbate, the very controversy that helped to prompt this review and that Rule 14-1b can bring to a close after a period of transition.

#### G. Rule 14-1b is a Prospective Rule that has No Bearing on Prior Play or Success with Anchoring

A final concern, heard mainly from a few in the professional ranks, is that Rule 14-1b is unfair to golfers who have used this stroke in the past because an asterisk might, figuratively, be placed next to their prior successes. Our position remains adamant in this regard: Rule changes address the future and not the past. It has been entirely within the Rules for players to anchor the club in making a stroke. There should not be a shred of criticism of such players or any qualification or doubt about their achievements. It is unfortunate that some of those opposing the Rule are the ones to have suggested this notion of an “asterisk,” for doing so may inadvertently give potential credence to a baseless position.

The Rules of Golf are continuously revised and updated, meaning that players often have succeeded with equipment or practices that were prohibited by subsequent Rules changes. Prominent examples of this include Bob Jones winning the Grand Slam in 1930 using a concave-faced wedge that was ruled non-conforming the following year, and Sam Snead winning the 1967 Senior PGA Championship using the croquet putting style that subsequently was disallowed. These great champions are rightly celebrated as legends of the game, without any suggestion that such later prospective Rule changes lessened their accomplishments. The same will be true here regarding any player who used and won with an anchored stroke prior to the effective date of Rule 14-1b.

#### **4. Rule 14-1b will Promote, Not Hinder, the Health of the Game**

A third main concern raised in the comments was that Rule 14-1b may harm participation levels in the game. This argument is based explicitly on the assumption that anchoring does, in fact, provide a significant advantage to those who use it. The concern is that some recreational golfers, if unable to continue to use an anchored stroke, may play less often or, in a few cases, even quit the game altogether. This concern is rooted in the perception that golf is struggling economically and cannot afford any change that might negatively affect any golfer; it thus was suggested that if Rule 14-1b would cause even one golfer to play one less round of golf, the Rule should not be adopted or it should be limited only to professional and elite amateur competitions. We disagree with both the premise and the conclusion.

#### A. Concerns about Participation Rates in Golf are Not a Basis for Declining to Prohibit Anchoring

As a starting point, we do not agree that the game overall is in decline. Although golf participation rates have recently declined in places such as the United States and parts of Europe because of deep economic recessions and slow recoveries, the game is growing in other countries and regions around the world, and in some places is growing at dramatic rates. Especially in areas of the world where participation rates have been challenged, the USGA and The R&A are keenly focused on enhancing the long-term health of the game by addressing potential obstacles to play – such as the expense of the game and the lengthy time that it takes to play. Such obstacles to play are the key issues affecting participation, not whether or not golfers are allowed to anchor their putters. Indeed, in most areas of the world in which golf is growing, anchoring is little observed.

We do not share the view that the health or growth of the game will be adversely affected by disallowing anchored golf strokes. Our best judgment is that the recent increases in use of anchoring have occurred mainly because some golfers of all ability levels believe that it may help them to play better, not because frustration has made it their only resort. We recognize that some golfers are expressing great concern over the need to make a transition because they prefer anchored putting and fear that they may struggle to play as well without it. But there is a difference between possibly not playing as well and playing less or not at all; and there is a difference between expressions of possible future intent made well in advance of the Rule's effective date and actual behaviors that will only later occur as players adapt to the Rule. We very much hope that no one would play less because of the prohibition on anchoring the club and we believe that golfers' love of the game will continue to bring them to the course. Taking all of this into consideration, we have no reason to believe that this Rule would have any significant effect on participation levels.

Moreover, we monitor and update the Rules of Golf to protect the essential character and challenge of the game for all players in the future. Our mission in writing the Rules of Golf is not to make the game easier to play or to maximize participation at any point in time, but rather to preserve and strengthen the elements that have made golf a special sport that will

thrive long into the future. Although it would be unfortunate if anyone were to play less or stop playing because of this Rule, no one should assume that the only golfers who care about this issue are those who use anchored putting strokes. On the contrary, a great many sentiments were heard and expressed to us in the course of this review from those who believe that anchoring is undermining the game. All who are concerned about the health of the game need to consider these sentiments as well. Based on our review, we conclude that the long-term health of the game will be enhanced by reinforcing the core traditions of the golf swing and the challenge that attracts people to the game.

B. “Bifurcation” of the Rules or the Introduction of an Anchoring Condition of Competition Would Be Counterproductive and Harmful to the Game

Various comments expressing concern about participation levels also raised the question of possible “bifurcation” in implementation of Rule 14-1b. The suggestion is that the Rule should apply only to professionals, and perhaps to elite amateurs, leaving all other golfers free to anchor the club in making a stroke. The thesis is that, whereas the professional game involves serious play in which it is appropriate to require a free swing of the club to preserve the essential competitive challenge of the game, recreational golfers play golf simply to have fun and do not care about the essential nature or challenge of the game. On this view, more recreational golf might be played if the Rules allowed methods of play that make the game easier, and therefore multiple sets of equipment and playing Rules should be established, with more demanding Rules for the professionals and elite amateurs and less demanding Rules for everyone else.

We disagree with the underlying premise that more people would play golf if only equipment and playing Rules were relaxed to enable golfers to hit longer, straighter shots, to make more putts, and/or to post lower scores. The need for skill and the challenge of the game are what define golf; they are in fact what have caused so many people to love and play the game for the past 600 years. This enthusiastic embrace of the game as a stout test of skill and challenge prevails as strongly today as ever: in a recent study in the United States, commissioned by the National Golf Foundation, passionate recreational golfers – that is, the

U.S. golfers who play most of the rounds and who spend most of the money in golf – indicated that the challenge of the game is among the top reasons, if not the top reason, why they are so passionate about golf. In addition, research among non-golfers, as well as lapsed golfers, indicates that the top three reasons that people in the U.S. do not take up golf, or quit the game, are reasons of expense, time, and the perception that golf is exclusionary and unwelcoming – not the difficulty of playing the game. These data undermine the argument that changing equipment and playing Rules to make golf easier would grow participation in the recreational game. Golfers and potential golfers are in fact attracted by the challenge of the game; and calls for making the playing and equipment Rules easier would only compromise and possibly destroy the appeal of the game.

The argument that multiple sets of Rules are needed to accommodate players of differing skill levels is refuted by golf's long history and traditions. The history of golf is actually a history of movement toward unification of playing and equipment Rules – and this is more than ever true today, as golfers of different abilities from myriad geographies and cultures seek to play the same sport on a national and international basis, and soon in the Olympics.

Moreover, the game has long used two great innovations – multiple teeing grounds and the USGA Handicap and Course Rating Systems and other handicap systems – to enable golfers to play within their own physical abilities and yet also to compete against one another across ability levels, while playing each shot and each round by the same set of Rules. Creating multiple sets of Rules would undermine both these great traditions and the needs of modern golfing populations, as well as threaten the value and integrity of the Handicap System.

Our task as rulemakers is not to make the game easier or to make it harder, but rather to preserve and enhance the game's special and eternal qualities. The USGA and The R&A are committed to the principle that a single set of Rules for all players of the game, irrespective of ability, is one of golf's greatest strengths. An integral part of the game's appeal is that golfers of all levels can play the same courses with the same equipment and under the same Rules, enabling even the casual golfer to compare his or her performance to that of the most elite players and, at times, to play as good a shot as the elite player. We regard the prospect of

having permanent separate rules for elite competition as undesirable. Most of those commenters who expressed views about the proposed Rule indicated that they strongly share that view.

We also disagree with those who suggested that, while a unified set of Rules is generally desirable, there would be no harm in allowing bifurcation solely on the single issue of anchoring. Defining the parameters of how to prepare for and make a permissible stroke is at the core of the game and is reflected in many different Rules. To create a Rule that enabled one set of players (non-elite amateurs), perhaps 30-40 times a round, to make strokes in a manner that is deemed to provide a potential advantage, while prohibiting another set of players (professionals/elite amateurs) from doing so, would be to start well down the road of creating two different games. This Rule is a central example of the importance of defining golf as a single game with a single set of Rules.

For the same reasons, we disagree with the suggestion that anchoring be implemented, either permanently or temporarily (e.g., for an extended period such as 10 or 20 years), through an optional condition of competition that could be adopted at the discretion of any individual club or Committee in charge of an individual competition. Conditions of competition are intended to address specific narrow topics that relate to how a particular competition is conducted, not to permit a competition-by-competition variation in core Rules on how to play the game. An optional condition of competition that would allow a most fundamental aspect of golf - how a stroke must be made - to become a permanent or decades-long matter of choice and to differ from competition to competition and possibly from club to club would create chaos and confusion, and undermine the integrity, traditions and global appeal of the game. And to the extent that the suggestion of an optional "condition of competition" was intended to apply anchoring only to elite players, whether permanently or temporarily (so that the effective date of the anchoring prohibition would be delayed for recreational and other non-elite players), it would essentially create bifurcation by a different name.

We recognize that Rule 14-1b changes the current Rules and will require some players to change their method of stroke. We understand the concerns of different segments of the golf industry that certain of their customers are upset at this change and are expressing their dissatisfaction (albeit while many other customers are applauding the change). But we believe that the solution is to help those disappointed golfers overcome their concerns, not to divide golf into two or more different games based on revenue concerns arising during a broad economic slowdown. The transitional concerns can readily be managed and overcome if all in the leadership of golf work together to achieve that objective.

The USGA and The R&A wholeheartedly endorse the need to address obstacles to participation and enjoyment of the game. To that end, the governing bodies are pursuing and supporting many substantial initiatives for the good of the game, such as:

- We are keenly focused on issues of sustainability, arising from issues such as water availability and usage, growing energy consumption, and increasing labor costs.
- We are pursuing studies to assess the effects of hitting distances on the cost and enjoyment of the game.
- We have launched major new initiatives to address pace of play and the time that it takes to play a round of golf.
- We are pursuing Rules simplification and Rules education to make the game more accessible.
- And we are strong supporters of and partners with many other leading golf organizations in their efforts as well.

In these and other ways, the USGA and The R&A are committing their resources, leadership and best efforts to remove barriers to participation and to serve the good of the game. Dividing golf into two or more different games would not serve those important objectives.

## **5. Comments on Additional Aspects of Rule 14-1b**

Four additional topics raised about the proposed Rule deserve brief discussion.

### **A. Enforcement Considerations**

#### **(i) Determining Whether a Club is Anchored**

A small number of concerns were raised about potential issues in the administration and enforcement of Rule 14-1b. For example, some suggested that it might be difficult to determine whether a player is intentionally holding the club or a gripping hand, or a forearm used to create an anchor point, against his or her body. Examples offered include when the player is wearing baggy clothes or raingear, when the player's physical size or build causes his or her arms naturally to rest close to the body, or when a given player holds the club extremely close to the body and perhaps touching his or her shirt. The overall concern is that players might be able to evade the Rule or that, to prevent such evasion, other players or officials might be forced to intervene to enforce the Rule and thereby possibly create discord. We believe that any such issues will prove readily manageable.

The Rules of Golf place principal responsibility for compliance on the player. They assume the player's integrity. There is no reason to proceed from a different perspective in the context of Rule 14-1b. The issue here is solely about what happens during the "stroke," i.e., "the forward movement of the club made with the intention of striking at and moving the ball." Players will know whether, in making their stroke, they are intentionally holding club, hand or forearm in a manner contrary to the Rule. We anticipate that any effort to abuse the Rule would be rare and, in such a case, would be observed and addressed by other players or officials. Any concern about inadvertent brushing of club, hand or forearm against the body during the stroke is addressed by Rule 14-1b's intent requirement, which is consistent with various other Rules which are tied to the player's intent.

#### **(ii) Understanding the Meaning of "Anchor Point"**

We also heard questions and observed some confusion about the Rule's prohibition on strokes made with indirect anchoring of the club, i.e., with a forearm intentionally held against

the body to create an “anchor point.” We continue to believe that this portion of the Rule draws an appropriate line, but we recognize that additional education and guidance will be helpful in advance of the effective date of the Rule.

To reiterate, the main thrust of Rule 14-1b is to prohibit direct anchoring of the club, where the club or a gripping hand is intentionally held against the body during the stroke. To illustrate this, under the Rule a player may no longer hold a long putter against his or her chest while the stroke is made. But we also do not want the player to be able simply to move the gripping hand off the chest while continuing to hold the forearm against the body during the stroke, because the club would still be effectively anchored. Accordingly, Rule 14-1b provides that a player may not make a stroke using an anchor point, which exists when two things are true: (1) the player intentionally holds a forearm against the body; and (2) he or she grips the club so that the gripping hands are separated and work independently from one another (i.e., the top hand effectively secures the club in place as if attached to the body, while the bottom hand is held down the shaft to swing the lower portion of the club around the stable point of attachment).

That is the narrow issue addressed by the prohibition on using an anchor point during a stroke. There is no general ban on contact between the player’s forearms and body. Other than when an anchor point exists, a player may intentionally hold one or both forearms against the body in making a stroke. Specifically, that means that anyone putting with his or her hands together in gripping the club may rest the forearms against the body in any manner without penalty. The “anchor point” provision precludes only a very specific type of stroke in which a forearm is intentionally held against the body as an indirect means of anchoring the club.

#### B. Disabled Golfers

Some questions and concerns were raised about the potential effect of Rule 14-1b on golfers with disabilities. The USGA and The R&A have previously published “A Modification of the Rules of Golf for Golfers with Disabilities,” which is intended to help make golf accessible for players with various types of serious disability, and we intend to review that document in

connection with this new Rule. For example, those modified Rules recognize that amputees face special issues in attempting to play the game. Because a basic assumption underlying Rule 14-1b – that a golf swing involves gripping a club with the hands and swinging it – will not apply to some amputees, revisions to that portion of the modified Rules may be necessary. The USGA and The R&A will be assessing these and other issues, and we continue to welcome comments and suggestions.

### C. Effective Date

We received a number of comments about the proposed January 1, 2016 effective date. Virtually no one suggested that a 2016 effective date is too soon. Rather, a fair number of comments were made to the effect that there is no need to wait that long and that golf would be better off if the new Rule were implemented more promptly. Such sentiments were heard in part from the professional game, based on a concern that players who continue to use anchoring until 2016 might be criticized for not immediately moving to a non-anchored stroke. More generally, others opined that affected golfers at all levels can promptly adapt to the new Rule and do not need multiple years to do so, and that it would be useful to implement the Rule sooner to help the game move on and bring the anchoring controversy to a close.

These are reasonable points. It has never been our view that golfers would need nearly three years or any such extended period in which to transition to playing with a non-anchored stroke. We agree that an earlier effective date would be reasonable from that perspective and might have other benefits. On balance, however, we think that it is better to follow our normal practice of revising the playing Rules only every four years (with interpretive Decisions issued every two years). And although we believe that golfers could move to a non-anchored stroke much more promptly, we also acknowledge the anxiety that some have expressed over the need to adapt. Given these considerations, we concluded that Rule 14-1b should first take effect when the next four-year Rules cycle begins on January 1, 2016.

#### D. Relationship with Other Potential Rule Changes

Some questioned why the governing bodies are addressing the subject of anchoring rather than the topic of driving distance, arguing that the latter issue is more important. But we do not believe that there is any linkage between those topics. Distance and anchoring are both important issues, and dealing with one is independent of dealing with the other. We continue to take the question of distance very seriously. Since issuing their Joint Statement of Principles in 2002, The R&A and the USGA have continued to monitor the distance issue as part of our ongoing and regular process of joint meetings on equipment standards, we have pursued reduced-distance ball studies, and we intend to conduct further studies as well. We will be prepared to take action on distance if we conclude that action is justified. But that debate has nothing to do with the question of anchoring. We have concluded that action is needed on this issue and therefore we have adopted Rule 14-1b.

#### **6. Conclusion**

Throughout this process, the USGA and the R&A have focused squarely on their longstanding mission to assess and, as appropriate, revise the Rules of Golf in the best interests of the game. Following the recent upsurge in use of and controversy surrounding anchoring, both organizations concluded that there was a need to resolve this issue. We heard and considered a great many views from across the game from the time we announced our review through the announcement of the proposed Rule. We then sought further comments to make sure that we had a full understanding of the breadth and depth of views. We thank those who took the time to provide us with their views.

In announcing our proposal, and again today in announcing this final decision, we have tried to state clearly and in detail the reasons for our actions and to provide our analysis of the comments received. We have done this not because we necessarily expected to change the minds of those who have felt strongly that anchoring should continue to be allowed. Rather, we have done this so that our reasoning could be examined, and so that those who disagree with our final decision would know that they had been heard, could understand our rationale, and hopefully could accept that our decision to adopt this Rule is reasoned and motivated only by

our best judgment about the interests of the game, even if they would themselves have decided differently.

We understand the concerns expressed by those who feel disadvantaged by this decision. We hope that, when the Rule takes effect more than two and a half years from now, the lengthy transitional period and the vast variety of clubs, methods of stroke and playing styles that remain available will enable all golfers to move forward and continue to enjoy the fun and challenge of the game as before. We know that not everyone will agree with our final decision. But we do hope that the care and love for the game that all have expressed through their participation in this process will facilitate acceptance of Rule 14-1b when it takes effect. Golf is a single, worldwide game of fun, skill, challenge, honor and integrity, which is best served by adherence to a single set of worldwide Rules.

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### About the USGA

The USGA conducts the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open, as well as 10 national amateur championships, two state team championships and international matches. Together with The R&A, the USGA governs the game worldwide, jointly administering the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status, Equipment Standards and World Amateur Golf Rankings. The USGA's working jurisdiction comprises the United States, its territories and Mexico.

The USGA is a global leader in the development and support of sustainable golf course management practices. It serves as a primary steward for the game's history and funds an ongoing "For the Good of the Game" charitable giving program. Additionally, the USGA's Course Rating and Handicap systems are used on six continents in more than 50 countries.

For more information about the USGA, visit [www.usga.org](http://www.usga.org).

### About The R&A

R&A Rules Ltd is the rules-making company of The R&A. Based in St Andrews, The R&A organises The Open Championship, major amateur events and international matches. Together with the United States Golf Association, The R&A governs the game worldwide, jointly administering the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status, Equipment Standards and World Amateur Golf Rankings. The R&A's working jurisdiction is global, excluding the United States and Mexico.

The R&A is committed to working for golf and supports the growth of the game internationally and the development and management of sustainable golf facilities. The R&A operates with the consent of 143 organisations from the amateur and professional game and on behalf of over thirty million golfers in 128 countries.

For more information about The R&A visit [www.RandA.org](http://www.RandA.org).