

United States Golf Association
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September 22, 2008
Notice To Manufacturers

Interim Interpretation of Spring Features in Clubheads

On May 28, 2008, the USGA sent a Notice to Manufacturers regarding a proposed revision to the interpretation of spring features in clubheads. At the time, we proposed that this revision would be implemented 30 days after the conclusion of the comment period. As stated in the May 28, 2008 Notice:

“During the past several years, the USGA has evaluated and determined that some submitted clubs did not conform to the Rules of Golf because the USGA considered the designs to include spring features having the intent of, or the effect of, unduly influencing the clubhead’s spring effect. The USGA made these decisions after performing substantial research-based evaluations on each such submitted clubhead.

The USGA added additional language to the 2008-2009 Rules of Golf that included a reference to this topic. As stated in Appendix II, 4c:

c. Spring Effect and Dynamic Properties

The design, material and/or construction of, or any treatment to, the clubhead (which includes the club face) must not:

(ii) incorporate features or technology, including, but not limited to separate springs or spring features, that have the intent of, or the effect of, unduly influencing the clubhead’s spring effect

The USGA recognizes that the current method of evaluation can result in decisions that are not always clearly understood by submitters and also can create lengthy delays in the conformance decision process. To reduce the time needed to make a conformance decision on a club incorporating a spring feature or technology that has the intent of, or the effect of, unduly influencing the clubhead’s spring effect, and to improve the clarity of the decision, the USGA is proposing to replace the current design evaluation decision method with a measurement method. The measurement would be used to determine whether a submitted club incorporates a prohibited spring feature or technology.”

The USGA subsequently received comments from manufacturers regarding this proposed revision. The comments received have led to further analysis and consideration, and as a result, the USGA has not yet reached a final decision about adopting or modifying this interpretation revision. However, the USGA will employ an interim method to identify those clubs which require additional analysis for potential violations of Appendix II, 4c, while quickly determining conformance status for all others.

The following interim method will be implemented immediately:

1. In addition to the existing CT testing protocol, the USGA will measure clubs for CT in places on the face at locations other than the identified face center.
2. Those clubs which have CT readings less than or equal to 257 microseconds (239 with an 18 microsecond test tolerance allowed) at locations on the face other than the center will be considered conforming to the USGA Rules of Golf provided that the club meets all other rules currently in effect.
3. Any clubs which have CT readings greater than 257 microseconds (239 with an 18 test tolerance allowed) at locations on the face other than the center will have no change to the process currently used to determine conformance for clubs that may have features or technology, including, but not limited to separate springs or spring features, that have the intent of, or the effect of, unduly influencing the clubhead's spring effect. These clubs will be subject to further analysis and evaluation by the USGA, including analysis of the club design to determine if they incorporate the types of design features described above, prior to the USGA issuing a conformance decision
4. It is important to note that this additional analysis and evaluation of a submitted club can be extensive. It may take as much as a year or longer for this process to reach a conclusion. Additional detailed information regarding clubhead designs may be requested from the submitter by the USGA so that a decision can be made. Design features of the club, descriptions of the club features, and other kinds of information and analysis will be considered for conformance decisions.
5. Plain in shape will continue to be a factor considered in making conformance evaluations, whether or not a submitted club meets the stated CT limits throughout the face.

At this time, there is no timetable for a final decision regarding the original proposed interpretation revision. Questions regarding this announcement should be sent to the USGA, attention Dick Rugge, P.O. Box 708, Far Hills, NJ 07931, Fax 908-234-0138, e-mail: drugge@usga.org.