



Distance Insights Project Update

February 14, 2019

In May 2018, the USGA and R&A Rules Limited (The R&A) announced the Distance Insights project – scoped at its inception to provide the most comprehensive understanding of the past, present and future impact of distance in golf.

The ongoing aim of the project is to explore thoroughly, the following three questions:

- What are the key contributors to distance in golf?
- What have been and might be the key impacts of distance on the game?
- What does distance mean to golf's key stakeholders?

The following is a summary of work completed to date, and an update of what can be expected in 2019.

Organization of the Work

The USGA and The R&A have approached the project through six primary workstreams:

- **Historical research:** encompassing more than 100 years of data on course length, par, architectural design, golf participation, equipment evolution, and trend data from the game worldwide
- **Playing research:** including data related to distance, accuracy, scoring, skill, training, and the golfer experience, such as pace of play and the cost to play the game
- **Equipment:** studying changes to golf equipment and Equipment Standards over time to include loft and length, clubhead speed, launch conditions, annual driving distance data, and Rules changes; also including analysis of players and the evolution of biomechanics and fitting
- **Golf courses and sustainability:** including golf course financial analysis, course closures, changes in physical, environmental and economic footprint, and the evolution of agronomic and maintenance practices
- **Stakeholder engagement:** including global survey data on current perspectives of distance in golf, as well as in-person and online interviews across multiple stakeholder groups in the game
- **Playing rules:** assessing historical changes in the game, and the role of the playing Rules through time, including Terms of Competition and Local Rules

Stakeholders / Audiences Engaged to Date

As highlighted at the project's inception, the team of the USGA and The R&A has viewed the Distance Insights project through a wide lens and looked at the breadth of the game that includes recreational, competitive amateur, and professional golfers; the worldwide professional golf tours; golf course owners and operators; golf equipment manufacturers; golf course architects; golf course superintendents; golf professionals; and related golf industry stakeholders.

Research Methodology

In September 2018, the USGA and The R&A provided options through which the global golf community was invited to participate in the project:

- **Global stakeholder perspectives research:** an online survey, made available globally and in 10 languages, was opened in September 2018 and closed in November 2018, with over 65,000 responses from 115 countries secured during this time. Conducted by SMS, Inc., an independent research firm, the scope of data gathering also included phone interviews and online forum discussions.
- **External data submissions:** also in September 2018, any organization or individual wishing to submit research related to the topic of distance in golf was invited to share this data with the USGA or The R&A for review and consideration. While the due date for submissions expired on December 20, 2018, external commentary and perspectives continue to be welcomed on an ongoing basis.

In complement to the above, the USGA and The R&A conducted primary research, including the use of several external research groups with areas of specialty and expertise that span the game worldwide.

Current Project Status

At present, the bulk of principal fact-gathering for the project is complete, although some additional primary research will likely be added to bolster the quality and thoroughness of the report as it is compiled over the coming months. The USGA and R&A working groups are also finalizing relevant commissioned studies and reports from several independent research groups. One such example is global perspectives data gathered from the 65,000 respondents who participated in the online global survey, for which translations are currently being prepared and analyzed.

The USGA and The R&A are now actively engaged in compiling and analyzing the volume of information gathered to date. We expect this will take some time given the complexity of the inputs and importance of the project and will do everything we can to expedite the process.

Work has also begun on the reporting phase. We are developing the framework for the final report, which is expected to include sections focusing on golf's environmental footprint, playing integrity of the sport, and rich data and insights.

Timeline and Action Plan

The USGA and The R&A estimate it will take several months to compile, organize and analyze all relevant data and research to determine if work completed to date has sufficiently supported the scope of the project, and has achieved its overarching vision: to provide the most comprehensive view of distance in golf to support a sustainable future for the game.

It is anticipated that the Distance Insights project report will be delivered in late 2019.

At the conclusion of the Distance Insights project, the USGA and The R&A will carefully evaluate the findings of the report to determine appropriate next steps.