

Understanding the Soft Cap and Hard Cap under the World Handicap System™

Why do the soft cap and hard cap exist?

The soft cap and hard cap are part of the Handicap Index® calculation. They avoid a temporary loss of form from causing a player's handicap to rise to a level inconsistent with their recent demonstrated ability.

Caps also promote equity - without them, players with sharp rises in their handicap would be more likely to score at or below their Handicap Index than more consistent players.



How do caps work?

Each time a Handicap Index is calculated, the player's new 8 of 20 average is compared to their Low Handicap Index™. If the average is more than 3.0 strokes higher, the soft cap slows any increase beyond 3.0 stroke by 50%. The hard cap then stops further upward movement beyond 5.0 strokes after the soft cap is applied.

In this example, the player's Handicap Index decreased by 0.5 strokes due to the soft cap.

Low Handicap Index	New 8 of 20 average	Amount of increase beyond 3.0 strokes	Impact of soft cap (50% of 1.0)	Handicap Index (after soft cap)
10.0	14.0	1.0	0.5	13.5

→ After the Handicap Index is calculated and a new Low Handicap Index from the past 365 days is identified, both are shown in the player's scoring record.

What else should I know?

- In many cases, the soft cap has minimal impact on the Handicap Index and may not affect the Course Handicap™. For these players, one or two good scores are usually enough to remove the cap's effect.
- It's important to apply net double bogey and most likely score guidelines correctly. Incorrect application can contribute to a cap being triggered.
- A cap should only be overridden by the Handicap Committee in special circumstances, such as injury or illness.