USGA Handicap System to World Handicap System – Change Summary

**Limit of Upward Movement of a Handicap Index (Cap)**

**USGA Handicap System (pre-2020):** There was no restriction on the upward movement of a Handicap Index built into the calculation.

- The Handicap Committee at a golf club was responsible for monitoring extreme upward movement of any members’ Handicap Index and making modifications where appropriate.

**Rule Change for 2020:** A “soft cap” and “hard cap” is included within the Handicap Index calculation.

- The soft cap suppresses the upward movement of a Handicap Index by 50 percent if a 3.0 stroke increase takes place within 12 months.
- The hard cap restricts upward movement if, after the application of the soft cap, a 5.0 stroke increase takes place within 12 months.

**Reasons for Change:**

- A new term, “Low Handicap Index” is included within the Rules of Handicapping and is made visible to players. This value serves as the baseline for the soft cap and hard cap procedures.
  - A Low Handicap Index is established once a player has at least 20 acceptable scores in their scoring record. At that point, the soft cap and hard cap procedures begin taking effect.
  - A newly determined Low Handicap Index is considered each time an acceptable score is posted and a Handicap Index is updated.
- There is no limit on the amount by which a player’s Handicap Index can decrease, but the soft cap and hard cap ensure that a temporary loss of form does not cause a player’s Handicap Index to increase to a level inconsistent with their demonstrated ability.
- The automatic calculation prevents extreme upward movement of a Handicap Index and assists Handicap Committees as an anti-abuse safeguard.
  - When special circumstances exist, such as injury, the Handicap Committee has the ability to override the soft cap or hard cap.
- This procedure favors the consistent player, as players who have significant volatility in their scoring history over a 12-month period will be impacted by it more often.