USGA Handicap System to World Handicap System – Change Summary

**Exceptional Score Reduction (ESR)**

**USGA Handicap System (pre-2020):** When a player posted two or more Tournament Scores (T-scores) within a 12-month period that were at least 3.0 strokes better than their Handicap Index, they were eligible for an automatic Handicap Index reduction.

- The amount of the reduction was determined by the number of T-scores posted by a player within the last 12-months, as well as the difference between the Handicap Index and the average of the two best T-score Handicap Differentials.

**Rule Change for 2020:** When a player posts a score that produces a Score Differential of 7.0 strokes or more below their Handicap Index, they are subject to an Exceptional Score Reduction.

- When the Score Differential is between 7.0 and 9.9 strokes below their current Handicap Index, a -1.0 reduction is applied to the most recent 20 Score Differentials. When the Score Differential is 10.0 strokes or more below their Handicap Index, a -2.0 reduction is applied to the most recent 20 Score Differentials.

- Scores posted after the exceptional score do not contain the -1.0 or -2.0 adjustment (unless they are also exceptional), which allows the reduction to gradually work itself out of a Scoring Record.

**Reasons for Change:**

- To simplify the automatic reduction process.
  - Section 10-3 of “The USGA Handicap System” was nearly five pages long. The Exceptional Score Reduction procedure is covered in less than one page in the Rules of Handicapping.
  - This new procedure is straightforward and intuitive. When a player posts an exceptional score, they will receive an automatic adjustment of -1.0 or -2.0.

- Handicap research shows that players who have shot 7.0 strokes below their Handicap Index are more likely to do so again in the future.

- Under the USGA Handicap System, only rounds played in events designated by the Committee as T-scores could lead to an automatic reduction.
  - There has historically been confusion as to which competitions should receive the T-score designation, and as a result, it had been applied inconsistently.
  - By considering all scores in the Exceptional Score Reduction procedure, a player’s Handicap Index is more responsive to exceptional performances in competitive and recreational play.

- Since T-scores under the USGA Handicap System were retained for 12-months and compared to the Handicap Index at each revision, it was possible for T-scores that were not exceptional at the time they were made to become exceptional at a later date. This can no longer take place in 2020.