

United States Golf Association

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**December 4, 2008
Notice to Manufacturers
Groove Rule Implementation Details**

As you know, the USGA, along with the R&A, announced a revision to the Rules of Golf covering grooves that will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2010. In the Aug. 5, 2008 Notice to Manufacturers, implementation of the revised groove rules for submitted clubs was stated as follows:

“These new groove rules become effective for all new clubs covered by this rule change that are manufactured on or after January 1, 2010.”

The purpose of today’s communication is to clarify details regarding this statement – particularly the definition of “manufactured on or after.” It is the USGA’s position that:

1. Any club fully manufactured prior to Jan. 1, 2010, will be considered conforming to the USGA Rules of Golf, provided that it meets the USGA Rules of Golf that appear in the 2008-2009 Rulebook - in other words, the current groove rules.
2. Additionally, any club that satisfies the following conditions will also be considered conforming to the USGA Rules of Golf.
 - a. The clubhead exists in its finished form and is ready for final assembly or sale as a finished component prior to Jan. 1, 2010.
 - b. The finished club is assembled and shipped to a retailer, or shipped directly to a consumer, prior to Jan. 1, 2011.
3. As stated in the Aug. 5, 2008 Notice, the final decision regarding the ongoing status of these clubs will be reviewed no sooner than 2020. If it is determined at that time (or later) that the rule change should apply to all clubs, there would be a minimum 4-year implementation period.

Please note that the above clarifications apply to clubs used for all rounds conducted under USGA Rules of Golf, other than for those rounds played in competitions employing a condition of competition requiring that clubs must contain grooves that conform to the 2010 groove specifications.

Procedures for determining the conformance of clubs to the new groove rules were published with the August 5, 2008 Notice and may be found on the USGA website at:
http://www.usga.org/equipment/notices/Groove_Measurement_Procedure_Outline_08-05-08.pdf

Attached are some Frequently Asked Questions on this topic. If you have additional questions, please contact Dick Rugge, Senior Technical Director, P.O. Box 708, Far Hills, NJ 07931, Fax 908-234-0708, e-mail: drugge@usga.org.

Frequently Asked Questions

These questions generally relate to the conditions that must be satisfied for a club to be considered conforming for all rounds conducted under USGA Rules of Golf other than for those competitions employing a condition of competition requiring that clubs must contain grooves that conform to the groove specifications to take effect on Jan. 1, 2010.

Question 1: Can manufacturers continue to produce models of clubs that conform to the pre-2010 groove specifications that were manufactured and marketed prior to January 1, 2010?

Answer: Clubs manufactured on or after January 1, 2010, must meet the new groove specifications in order to conform. However finished clubheads meeting the pre-2010 groove specifications may continue to be assembled into clubs until January 1, 2011, provided the finished clubhead was manufactured prior to January 1, 2010.

Question 2: What is the definition of ‘finished form’?

Answer: “Finished form” means that the clubhead is ready for final assembly into a golf club. In other words, all of the processes involved in manufacturing the head must be completed prior to January 1, 2010.

Question 3: Can a manufacturer continue to assemble custom-fitted clubs of models designed to conform to the pre-2010 groove specifications after Jan. 1, 2011 if the heads existed prior to January 1, 2010?

Answer: Custom-fitted clubs that are assembled by the manufacturer on or after Jan. 1, 2011 must meet the new groove specifications in order to conform.

Question 4: Can a manufacturer continue to distribute models that conform to the pre-2010 groove specifications which are assembled prior to January 1, 2011?

Answer: Clubheads that conform to the pre-2010 groove specifications, were manufactured prior to January 1, 2010, were fully assembled into clubs and shipped to a retailer, or directly to a consumer by January 1, 2011 will be considered conforming after January 1, 2011.

Additional Note: In accordance with previous agreements, clubs manufactured before March 31, 1990 that meet the criteria of USGA Decision USGA/4-1/100, such as the Ping Eye 2, will be treated by the USGA as conforming to the Rules of Golf and will continue to be acceptable for all USGA competitions.

Question 5: Can a golfer repair a model of club that conformed to the pre-2010 groove specifications beyond Jan. 1, 2011?

Answer: Yes, a golfer can repair a club beyond Jan. 1, 2011, provided that repair does not include any modification of the original grooves or other face markings. Modifications to the original grooves or other face markings must conform to the 2010 groove specifications in order for the club to continue to conform.

Question 6: Can a golfer replace a club within a set of old model clubs after (a) Jan. 1, 2010, and/or (b) Jan. 1, 2011?

Answer: Yes in both cases, provided that (a) the clubhead existed prior to Jan. 1, 2010 in its 'finished form' (see Q2 above), and (b) the club was fully assembled prior to Jan. 1, 2011.

Question 7: What is the status of a club that is marketed and sold with multiple shafts and which is designed to be assembled and adjusted by the golfer?

Answer: Provided the head was manufactured prior to Jan. 1, 2010, this package of components can be shipped to a retailer, or shipped directly to a consumer, prior to January 1, 2011. The golfer can continue to exchange shafts on this clubhead, including shafts purchased after Jan. 1, 2011, subject to a potential final rule implementation that might occur on or after 2024, as is the case with standard sets of clubs.