

United States Golf Association

Golf House
77 Liberty Corner Road
Far Hills, NJ 07931

Date: April 11, 2005
To: Ball Manufacturers
Subject: Invitation to Make Prototype Golf Balls

The Joint Statement of Principles, which the USGA and the R&A published in May 2002, addressed the question of golf ball distance. Both the USGA and the R&A had determined that at that time there was no need to change any rules regarding golf ball distance. The USGA and the R&A continue to believe that no rule changes are needed under current conditions. However, we believe that it is our responsibility to be prepared to make rule changes, if future conditions demonstrate the need to do so.

To carry out the intent of the Joint Statement of Principles, the USGA and R&A needed to become more knowledgeable about the equipment governed by our Rules in addition to the substantial knowledge about golf club technology that the ruling bodies already had. Since late 2002, the USGA and R&A have been conducting research into how golf ball design and construction affects golf ball performance. The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of golf ball technology so that if the need to change rules arises, we will be guided by scientific knowledge and be able to act in a timely manner.

The research project has substantially increased the governing bodies' knowledge of golf ball technology and performance-related design considerations. We have identified multiple parameters that can be altered to affect ball distance. We believe that it is now appropriate to give golf ball manufacturers an opportunity to participate in the research project and thereby become involved in the rule change process if that becomes necessary. We believe that the best way to do that is to invite ball manufacturers to make prototype golf balls of their own design and construction that comply with modified Rules. These balls will be evaluated and tested by the USGA and the R&A under various conditions, both laboratory and on-course, to determine the effect that ball rule changes could have on the playing of the game.

For this project, the USGA and R&A considered specifying golf ball design parameters to achieve the reduced distance. However, we believe that it is better to allow manufacturers to use designs of their own choosing. Therefore, for this research project we would like to evaluate balls at two different reduced distances: 15 and 25 yards. The prototype balls should be made to conform to ODS limits (not including the 3 yard test tolerance), that are 15 and 25 yards shorter than the current 317 yards – that is 302 and 292 yards, respectively. It is intended that other current ball rule limits would apply.

We expect that testing balls made to conform to the reduced limits will enable an appropriate evaluation of how a reduced distance golf ball would affect playing of the game. To accomplish this we are requesting an initial sample of ten dozen balls. This may be followed by a subsequent request for additional, larger sample quantities. The USGA and the R&A are willing to contribute to the costs of producing prototype balls by paying a reasonable amount for samples. For your information, all companies that currently submit golf balls to the USGA and the R&A are receiving this invitation.

We recognize that the question of whether or not golf ball distance should be reduced is very controversial, but that question is separate from the ball research project. We welcome your separate comments regarding the need to reduce golf ball distance.

We believe that it is important for the stakeholders of golf to understand that these matters are being studied carefully by the ruling bodies so that decisions to change or not change rules are based on factual information. While we are not issuing any specific public communication about this invitation process, we will answer general questions about the research project that are posed to us by third parties. The USGA will maintain the confidentiality of any information that you supply to us that you identify as confidential.

If your company is interested in contributing to this project, please confirm your interest to us as soon as possible, along with an estimated time of sample availability.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have. Any suggestions or comments about this project are welcome.

Sincerely,

Dick Ruge
Senior Technical Director
United States Golf Association

77 Liberty Corner Road
Far Hills
NJ 07931

Telephone: 908-781-5490
Fax: 908-234-0138
e-mail: drugge@usga.org