



United States Golf Association
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Notice to Manufacturers

Proposed Implementation of an Indoor Ball Test Range

Previously, the USGA announced a delay in implementation of the Indoor Test Range (ITR) to allow for evaluation of concerns that ball manufacturers raised regarding the test.

The USGA has listened to the manufacturers and evaluated their concerns. The USGA has decided to change the method to be used with the Indoor Test Range from Optimization to Actual Launch Condition (ALC) testing.

With ALC testing, each golf ball's specific launch conditions are measured by hitting it with an actual club on a mechanical golfer ("Iron Byron"). The launch condition parameters, including velocity, launch angle and backspin, are measured with a launch monitor immediately after the ball is struck. These specific, measured launch conditions are then used with the ITR to determine each ball's actual test distance. The indoor range is therefore used to more accurately test the ball in a manner similar to the mechanical golfer.

Benefits:

- Test accuracy and consistency are improved
- Test results are not affected by the weather
- Testing is available year-round
- Balls are tested under launch conditions similar to those produced by actual golfers
- The test can be replicated with a mechanical golfer

Implementation of the ITR with ALC is planned to occur in two steps:

Phase I

Phase I will implement the ITR using current test set up conditions: the current calibration ball, the current wooden-headed golf club mounted in the mechanical golfer, and the same set up launch conditions (10 degrees launch angle, 42 rev/sec backspin, and 235 feet per second ball velocity). No change is made to the current ODS limit of 291.2 yards with a 5.6 yard test tolerance. It is intended that Phase I be completed by March 1, 2002 or as soon thereafter as possible.

Phase II

Phase II will include an update of the calibration ball, test club, and launch conditions. These include launch angle, backspin and ball velocity. The USGA expects that the ODS limit will be changed to reflect the changed test conditions, but does not expect to alter the list of conforming balls as a result of the launch condition update. The USGA invites ball manufacturers to participate in helping to select a ball, a club, and launch conditions that more appropriately reflect today's conditions.

Calibration ball choice will be made using the following criteria:

1. The ball should have similar launch conditions to the balls commonly played at the U.S. Open, on the PGA Tour, and at other highly competitive events.
2. The ball should have minimal ball-to-ball variation of launch conditions.
3. The ball should have appropriate durability.
4. The ball should conform to all USGA rules.
5. The manufacturer of the ball should be willing to continue to make and supply these balls to the USGA and other ball manufacturers in the future at an appropriate, pre-determined cost.

The golf club will be chosen with similar criteria:

1. The club should have a significant history of play at the U.S. Open, on the PGA Tour, and at other highly competitive events.
2. The club should be able to produce minimal club-to-club variation of ball launch conditions.
3. The club should have appropriate durability.
4. The club should conform to all USGA rules.
5. The manufacturer of the club should be willing to supply the club in sufficient quantities to the USGA and other ball manufacturers at an appropriate cost so that the test conditions can continue to be replicated.

Work on Phase II begins immediately with this notice and invitation to ball manufacturers to participate in the selection process. Phase II will be completed when discussions have taken place, submissions have been made, evaluations have been completed, and final decisions reached. No specific timetable is offered at this time other than to begin the process. The USGA believes that it is important to complete this phase in a timely, prompt manner because the underlying principle of Actual Launch Condition ball distance testing is to test the ball in a manner similar to the way highly skilled players are hitting drives today. The USGA expects this process to be accomplished expeditiously.

The USGA expects to update its information on ball launch conditions, ball performance, and other relevant factors every several years and may make appropriate changes in the test to assure that the test continues to reflect current conditions.

The USGA invites comments about each phase of the proposed ball testing method change. Ball manufacturers wanting to participate in the ball, club and launch condition selection process should indicate their interest. Comments should be sent to the USGA, attention Dick Rugge, Senior Technical Director, P.O. Box 708, Far Hills, NJ 07931, Fax 908-234-0138, or e-mail: drugge@usga.org.