



USGA and The R&A Publish Research on Driving Distance in Golf

FAR HILLS, N.J. and ST. ANDREWS, SCOTLAND (February 15, 2017) - The USGA and The R&A have published their annual review of driving distance, a research document that reports important findings on driving distance in golf.

Introduced last year, the review examines driving distance data from seven of the major professional golf tours, based on approximately 285,000 drives per year. Data from studies of male and female amateur golfers has also been included for the first time.

Key facts noted in the paper include:

- Between 2003 and the end of the 2016 season, average driving distance on five of the seven tours has increased by approximately 1.2%, around 0.2 yards per year.
- For the same time period, average driving distance on the other two tours studied decreased by approximately 1.5%.
- Looking at all of the players who are ranked for distance on the PGA TOUR and PGA European Tour, the amount by which players are “long” or “short” has not changed – for instance, since 2003 the 10 shortest players in that group are about 6% shorter than average, while the 10 longest players in the group are about 7% longer than average. The statistics are not skewed toward either longer or shorter players.
- The average launch conditions on the PGA TOUR – clubhead speed, launch angle, ball speed and ball backspin – have been relatively stable since 2007. The 90th-percentile clubhead speed coupled with the average launch angle and spin rate are very close to the conditions that The R&A and the USGA, golf’s governing bodies, use to test golf balls under the Overall Distance Standard.

Mike Davis, executive director/CEO of the USGA, said, “We appreciate the collaboration we have received, industry-wide, to access and review this data to benefit the entire golf community, which can be used to both educate golfers and advance the game.”

Martin Slumbers, chief executive of The R&A, said, “In the interests of good governance and transparency it is important that we continue to provide reliable data and facts about driving distance in golf.

“Driving distance remains a topic of discussion within the game and the review provides accurate data to help inform the debate.”

The 2016 report can be viewed at usga.org via [this link](#) and RandA.org.

The USGA and The R&A published the Joint Statement of Principles in May 2002, which confirmed their commitment to the fundamental notion that skill, not technology, should be the primary determinant of success in the game. The Joint Statement acknowledged the benefits of equipment technology for golf, but noted that any further significant increases in hitting distances at the highest level were undesirable.

Since then, the USGA and The R&A have continued to monitor equipment technology’s effect on the game, and considered the effects of other factors, such as course setup, athleticism and coaching. When appropriate, new Rules have been introduced after discussions with equipment manufacturers and other stakeholders, in accordance with the Equipment Rulemaking Procedures produced in 2011.