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R&A PROPOSES NEW RULES FOR GOLF CLUBS

St Andrews, Scotland, 27 February 2007 – The R&A is proposing changes to golf's equipment rules that seek to restore the historic importance of driving accuracy in the game.

The proposed rules changes to club face groove markings are based on extensive research into the effect of such markings on spin generation for balls hit from the rough. Club face markings have been observed to significantly increase spin from the rough compared to previous eras when there was a greater premium on driving accuracy.

Announcing the proposed club face markings rule change, R&A Director of Rules and Equipment Standards, David Rickman said:

“We invest heavily in the science that informs our decision making and there is clear evidence that certain club face groove markings increase the amount of spin that highly skilled players can achieve from the rough, especially when striking thin urethane-covered golf balls”.

“By limiting the amount of spin that can be generated for shots from the rough, we hope to place greater emphasis on accuracy and the skill required to recover from the rough. It is a matter of re-establishing a proper balance to the game and ensuring that skill remains the dominant element of success”, added Rickman.

The new limits proposed for groove cross-sectional area and groove edge sharpness would apply to all clubs (except driving clubs and putters) manufactured after 1 January 2010, but the rules could be introduced for competitions restricted to highly skilled players (via a condition of competition) from 1 January 2009. A five month consultation period with equipment manufacturers now gets underway that will also help determine when the new rules would come into effect for ordinary handicap golfers.

However, a concessionary period of at least 10 years is anticipated, recognising the costs involved in changing equipment.

Also announced today, The R&A is to consult golf equipment manufacturers on changes to the Rules that would permit new adjustable features in woods and irons. These proposals offer the potential of extending the playing benefits of club fitting to all golfers without diminishing the challenge of the game. Adjustable features, in addition to weight adjustment that is permitted for all clubs, have been allowed in the Rules of Golf for putters since 1992.

Consultation periods with manufacturers on both sets of proposed rules changes are time limited to allow adopted rules to feature in the 2008 revision of the Rules of Golf.

Ends

Further information:

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Notes to editors: _

1. Proposed new rule on club face markings and spin generation

This proposal is to update the specifications contained within Appendix II, 5a of the Rules of Golf in relation to club face markings. Most of the current Rules would remain unchanged and there are two additional specifications proposed for clubs other than driving clubs and putters.

- The total cross-sectional area of a groove divided by the groove pitch (width plus separation) would be limited to 0.0025 square inches per inch (0.0635 mm²/mm);
- Groove edge sharpness would be limited to an effective minimum radius of 0.010 inches (0.254 mm).

2. Proposed new rule on adjustability in woods and irons:

All clubs may incorporate mechanisms for weight adjustment. Other forms of adjustability may also be permitted upon evaluation by The R&A.

The following requirements apply to all permissible methods of adjustment:

- the adjustment cannot be readily made;
- all adjustable parts are firmly fixed and there is no reasonable likelihood of them working loose during a round; and
- all configurations of adjustment conform with the Rules.
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The penalty for purposely changing the playing characteristics of a club during a stipulated round (Rule 4-2a) applies to all clubs including a putter.

3. The R&A is golf's world rules and development body and organiser of The Open Championship. It operates with the consent of more than 125 national and international, amateur and professional organisations, from over 110 countries and on behalf of an estimated 28 million golfers in Europe, Africa, Asia-Pacific and The Americas (outside the USA and Mexico). The United States Golf Association (USGA) is the game's governing body in the United States and Mexico.