

Burntisland Golf House Club

Match and Handicap Section

Review of the Course Stroke Index for Gents

January 2013

1. Introduction

The Match and Handicap section have conducted a review of the Gents Stroke Index (SI) of the golf course to determine if any modifications are required.

The review has been completed using the recommendations in the CONGU Unified Handicapping System, Appendix G (Appendix 1 in this report). It should be borne in mind that the Stroke Index is primarily used for match play situations and that there will, in all probability, be no perfect fit.

An initial review of the CONGU recommendations on SI resulted in an immediate flag that if we are to come close to compliance then significant changes will have to be made on selected holes.

In reviewing the SI and making any recommendations for change it is recognised that this will be an area which may divide opinion amongst the various committees and the current membership.

Appendix 2 shows the current card of the course and Stroke Index. Appendix 3 shows an analysis of the scoring for each hole (all handicaps included) over the last three playing seasons. The final column shows the ranking in terms of relative degree of difficulty of each hole.

2. Current Stroke Index

In carrying out this review the first step should be to determine how closely, or otherwise, the current SI relates to the CONGU recommendations.

2.1 Paragraph (a) and (b) of the CONGU system recommend that "Of paramount importance, for match play competition, is the even spread of the strokes to be taken and is best achieved by allocating the odd numbered strokes to the more difficult of the two nines, usually the longer nine". Ref Appendix 1.

The current SI does allocate the odd numbered strokes to the longer nine at BGHC, in our case the back nine. However it is interesting to note that recent scoring, over the last three seasons, does not support the view that the back nine is the more difficult.

There is also a view that someone receiving an odd number of strokes should get the majority on the first nine holes eg someone receiving three strokes should therefore get two on the first nine and one on the second nine. This is not a CONGU recommendation, however there is some merit in this approach.

The following table shows scoring relative to par over the last three seasons for each nine and has been split out against all handicaps and then against low, middle and higher handicaps to determine if there were any anomalies. The results are consistent across all handicaps.

Handicaps	2010 Season				2011 Season				2012 Season			
	All	-1 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 28	All	-1 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 28	All	-1 to 5	6 to 18	19 to 28
1 st nine	+7.5 8	+2.89	+7.89	+13.84	+8.06	+3.24	+8.07	+13.78	+8.38	+3.55	+8.42	+14.92
2 nd nine	+6.9	+2.23	+7.34	+13.02	+7.38	+2.28	+7.49	+12.96	+7.58	+2.87	+7.68	+13.49

	5											
--	---	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

In reviewing this table it is apparent that the first nine holes are consistently the more difficult, no matter the standard of golfer.

Therefore it would be consistent to allocate the odd numbered strokes to the first nine holes at Burntisland, if we are to align ourselves with the CONGU recommendations, whereas we currently allocate the odd numbered strokes to the second nine.

This would also tie in well with the view that a golfer receiving an odd number of strokes should get the majority on the first nine holes.

- 2.2 Paragraph (c) recommends that “The first and second strokes index holes should be placed close to the centre of each nine and the first six strokes should not be allocated to adjacent holes. The 7th to the 10th indices should be allocated so that a player receiving 10 strokes does not receive strokes on three consecutive holes”.

These are three separate but related recommendations.

With reference to the current SI, Appendix 2, it is apparent that we do not comply with the first of these recommendations on either the first or second nine holes. Nor do we comply with the second recommendation since SI 4 and 6 are at adjacent holes as are SI 1 and 5.

Further a player who receives 10 strokes will, currently, have two runs of three holes where he receives strokes consecutively ie holes 2, 3 and 4 and holes 11, 12 and 13. (In fact a golfer who receives only 8 strokes will have the same three hole run at 11, 12 and 13 where he receives strokes). Therefore we do not comply with the final recommendation in this paragraph.

- 2.3 With reference to paragraph (d) of the CONGU recommendations which states that “None of the first eight strokes should be allocated to the first or last holes” and goes on to say that “Unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary, stroke indices 9, 10, 11 and 12 should be allocated to holes 1, 9, 10 and 18 in such order as shall be deemed appropriate”.

Currently we do comply with the first of these recommendations but not the second one. Hole 18 is currently SI 9, however none of holes 1, 9 or 10 have indices 10, 11 or 12. However since our hole 1 has historically been one of the “easier” holes on the golf course it is understandable why we are not in compliance with this particular recommendation

- 2.4 Paragraphs (a) through (d) are the main CONGU recommendations and set the basis for the complete SI for the course. Para (e) suggests that the remaining indices should be allocated “in turn to holes of varying length” and further that “there is no recommended order for this selection, the objective being to select in index sequence holes of varying playing difficulty”.

We are broadly in compliance with this recommendation.

- 2.5 From the above analysis it may be seen that the current Gents Stroke Index for the course does not come close to complying with the CONGU recommendations.

Also our SI 1 hole (hole 12) is consistently the easiest hole (least over par and most birdies) on the golf course, which does appear to be somewhat of an anomaly.

In summary we are not close to complying with the CONGU recommendations with regards to Stroke Index. Whilst this does not necessarily mean there should be a change, it must however, at least, give rise to consideration of change.

3. Recommendations

Due to the fact that the course SI as currently stands is so far from complying with the CONGU recommendations it is suggested that we should not merely tinker with changing a few holes here and there. We should in fact complete a thorough review and try and become substantially more aligned with the CONGU recommendations.

If we are to move closer to the CONGU recommendations with regards to the course Stroke Index then some changes will clearly be required. The following recommendations are based on the CONGU system and take account of hole by hole playing difficulty over the past three seasons. It is very difficult to fully comply with all the CONGU recommendations given the peculiarities of our course (eg three pars 3 holes in the space of four holes in the middle of the first nine), however what is suggested does move the SI significantly more in line with the CONGU system.

Will there be any benefits in this proposed change if adopted? This is almost impossible to quantify or answer fully and it may be viewed that what we have works at the moment. However it is unarguable that the proposed changes to the SI do improve the spread of strokes and reduces the impact of the “ three strokes in a row “ situation compared to what we have now.

3.1 The first recommendation is that we allocate the odd numbered strokes to the more difficult of the nines which in our case would be the first nine holes.

This is based on evidence over the last three seasons that the first nine is the more difficult of the two nines at BGHC and is consistent with CONGU.

3.2 Provided this is accepted then stroke index 1 should be allocated to hole 7, thereby placing it marginally closer to the centre of the first nine in line with CONGU. This also makes some sense given that hole 7 is consistently in the top two or three most difficult holes in competitive stroke play over the last three seasons.

3.3 Stroke index 2 should be allocated to hole 11 which has consistently been the most difficult hole on the golf course. It might be argued that hole 16 should be allocated SI 2 since it is slightly closer to the centre of the nine, is longer and plays into the prevailing wind. However it is felt that it would certainly be a disadvantage to someone giving only two strokes to have to give one at the 16th hole so late in the game. Although allocating SI 2 to hole 11 moves it marginally away from the centre of the second nine it make more sense than allocating SI 2 to either of holes 13, 14 or 15.

Therefore hole 11 remains the recommendation for SI 2.

3.4 In order to comply as closely as possible with the remainder of para (c) in CONGU we would then recommend that allocation of indices 3 through 6 should be as follows; SI 3 to hole 2, SI 4 to hole 16, SI 5 to hole 8 and SI 6 to hole 14.

3.5 Further, in order that we improve the situation where a player receiving 10 strokes does not receives strokes at three consecutive holes we would allocate indices 7 through 10 as follows; SI 7 to hole 3, SI 8 to hole 12, SI 9 to hole 9 and SI 10 to hole 18. Whilst this “three strokes in a row” still occurs it is now only once and not twice during the round and is confined to the first nine which is a distinct improvement.

3.6 Indices 11 and 12 should ideally be allocated to holes 1 and 10 in order to follow the CONGU recommendations, (SI 9 and 10 having already been allocated to holes 9 and 18 respectively) “unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary”. The competitive statistics show that hole 1 is one of the “easier” holes on the course and this is confirmed by also being in the top four for most birdies in the past three seasons. We would therefore recommend that a better fit is to allocate SI 11 to hole 6 and that SI 12 is allocated to hole 10.

3.7 This leaves indices 13 through 18 to be allocated to “holes of varying playing difficulty“ if we are to comply as closely as possible with the CONGU recommendations. The “easiest“ six holes on

the course over the past three seasons (which have not already been allocated a SI) have been, in order (easiest first), 15, 5, 1, 13, 17 and 4.

3.8 Based on the above we would recommend that stroke indices are allocated as follows; SI 18 to hole 15, SI 17 to hole 5, SI 16 to hole 17, SI 15 to hole 1, SI 14 to hole 13 and finally SI 13 to hole 4.

3.9 Whilst the above recommendations may seem radical there are only five holes (9, 11, 12, 13, and 14) where the current SI changes by five or more strokes. However we believe that the changes better reflect the degree of difficulty, in the main, on these holes than the current SI does.

3.10 If these recommendations are accepted the full proposed SI allocation would then become;

Hole	Proposed SI	Current SI
1	15	16
2	3	4
3	7	6
4	13	10
5	17	18
6	11	12
7	1	8
8	5	2
9	9	14
10	12	13
11	2	5
12	8	1
13	14	7
14	6	11
15	18	17
16	4	3
17	16	15
18	10	9

3.10 The Match and Handicap Section fully endorse the above recommendations and put these forward for discussion and possible implementation from season 2014 onwards.

APPENDIX 1

Stroke Indices

(CONGU Unified Handicapping System, Appendix G)

Rule of Golf 33-4 requires Committees to “publish a table indicating the order of holes at which handicap strokes are to be given or received”. To provide consistency at *Affiliated Clubs* it is **RECOMMENDED** that the allocation is made as follows:

- (a) Of paramount importance for match play competition is the even spread of the strokes to be received at all handicap differences over the 18 holes.
- (b) This is best achieved by allocating the odd numbered strokes to the more difficult of the two nines, usually the longer nine, and the even numbers to the other nine.
- (c) The first and second stroke index holes should be placed close to the centre of each nine and the first six strokes should not be allocated to adjacent holes. The 7th to the 10th indices should be allocated so that a player receiving 10 strokes does not receive strokes on three consecutive holes.
- (d) None of the first eight strokes should be allocated to the first or the last hole, and at clubs where competitive matches may be started at the 10th hole, at the 9th or 10th holes. This avoids a player receiving an undue advantage on the 19th hole should a match continue to sudden death. Unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary, stroke indices 9, 10, 11 and 12 should be allocated to holes 1, 9, 10 and 18 in such order as shall be considered appropriate.
- (e) Subject to the foregoing recommendations, when selecting each stroke index in turn holes of varying length should be selected. Index 1 could be a Par 5, index 2 a long Par 4, index 3 a shorter Par 4 and index 4 a Par 3. There is no recommended order for this selection, the objective being to select in index sequence holes of varying playing difficulty. Such a selection provides more equal opportunity for all handicaps in match play and Stableford and Par competitions than an order based upon hole length or difficulty to obtain Par.

Note 1:

Par is not an indicator of hole difficulty. Long Par 3 and 4 holes are often selected for low index allocation in preference to Par 5 holes on the basis that it is easier to score Par on a Par 5 hole than 4 on a long Par 4. Long Par 3 and 4 holes are difficult Pars for low handicap players but often relatively easy Bogeys for the player with a slightly higher handicap. Difficulty in relation to Par is only one of several factors to be taken into account when selecting stroke indices.

Note 2:

When allocating a stroke index it should be noted that in the majority of social matches there are small handicap differences thereby making the even distribution of the lower indices of great importance.

The above recommendations for the 'Handicap Stroke Index' provision are principally directed at match play situations and have proved to be suitable for that purpose. The 'Handicap Stroke Index', however, is also used widely for Stableford, Par and Bogey competitions. In these forms of stroke play competition the need to have a uniform and balanced distribution of strokes is less compelling. There is a cogent case for the Index in such competitions to be aligned to the ranking of holes in terms of playing difficulty irrespective of hole number. Such a ranking facility is available through many of the licensed handicap software programs currently used by *Affiliated Clubs*.

Clubs that conduct a significant number of Stableford, Par and Bogey competitions may wish to provide separate stroke indices for match play and the listed forms of stroke play. To avoid confusion this would be best done on separate scorecards.

If a golf club conducts Stableford, Par or Bogey competitions in which men and ladies compete in the same competition, albeit from different tees, it is recommended that a common 'Handicap Stroke Index' be provided. Such an action will facilitate the management of the competition and subsequent handicap adjustment.

These recommendations supplement those made by the R&A contained in their Publication "Guidance on Running a Competition".

©CONGU 2007

APPENDIX 2

© 01883 344244

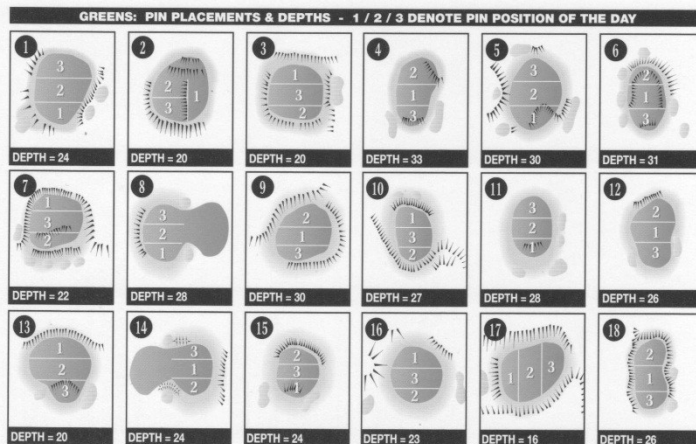
COMPETITION											Please indicate which tee used		
DATE	TIME	COMPUTER NO	Handicap	Strokes Rec'd	PAR 70	SSS 70					PAR 69	SSS 68	
NAME (BLOCK LETTERS)											PAR 70	SSS 70	
Hole	Marker's Score	Name	White Yards	Stroke Index	Par	Yellow Yards	Score	W = + L = - P = 0 Points	Ladies Yards	Par	Stroke Index		
1		Farm Cottage	303	16	4	298			277	4	9		
2		Low Binn	534	4	5	527			502	5	1		
3		Whinnyhall	223	6	3	208			175	3	15		
4		Grangehill	363	10	4	352			329	4	7		
5		The Pond	146	18	3	141			123	3	17		
6		Inchkeith	161	12	3	143			142	3	13		
7		Langbank	349	8	4	288			237	4	5		
8		Black Rock	393	2	4	338			310	4	11		
9		Crow Wood	347	14	4	337			327	4	3		
OUT			2819		34	2632			2422	34			
PLEASE AVOID SLOW PLAY AT ALL TIMES													
10		Kingswood	342	13	4	334			325	4	8		
11		Hawthorns	378 350	5	4	334			290	4	6		
12		The Quarry	491	1	5 4	455			431	5	2		
13		Dodhead	369	7	4	325			308	4	14		
14		The Delves	361	11	4	338			317	4	12		
15		High Binn	317	17	4	301			285	4	10		
16		The Gully	400	3	4	364			350	4	4		
17		The Bottle	151	15	3	118			113	3	16		
18		Coronation' 53	365	9	4	314			255	4	18		
IN			3174 3146		36 35	2883			2674	36			
OUT			2819		34	2632			2422	34			
TOTAL			5993 5965		70 69	5515			5096	70			

STABLEFORD POINTS OR PAR RESULT

HANDICAP NETT

Holes won
Holes lost
Result

Marker's Signature Player's Signature



APPENDIX 3

			2010	2011	2012	RAN
--	--	--	------	------	------	-----

						K
Hole	Par	SI	Av Score	Av Score	Av Score	
1	4	16	4.60	4.63	4.67	15
2	5	4	5.92	6.09	6.17	4
3	3	6	4.07	4.13	4.17	3
4	4	10	4.75	4.75	4.84	10
5	3	18	3.57	3.59	3.63	16
6	3	12	3.77	3.80	3.74	11
7	4	8	5.12	5.17	5.23	2
8	4	2	4.98	5.01	5.03	5
9	4	14	4.80	4.89	4.90	7
10	4	13	4.96	4.91	4.88	8
11	4	5	5.34	5.32	5.45	1
12	5	1	5.51	5.63	5.63	19
13	4	7	4.71	4.79	4.86	9
14	4	11	4.66	4.74	4.73	13
15	4	17	4.54	4.57	4.63	17
16	4	3	4.83	4.97	4.96	6
17	3	15	3.75	3.76	3.74	12
18	4	9	4.64	4.70	4.70	14

The Rank has been averaged out over the three seasons, Rank 1 being the most difficult.