

When players are competing from different tees, why do you make a second adjustment?

Many players question the application of Section 3-5 of the handicap manual, where players are competing from different sets of tees, or men and women are competing from the same set of tees. This is a difficult concept to understand but we will try to explain this.

First we need to define what the Slope Rating does, as many players think the different Slope Ratings automatically take care of the difference in the two sets of tees. This is a myth. The Slope Rating is used to convert a Handicap Index to a Course Handicap, which allows the player to receive the number of strokes he needs to play to the level of a scratch golfer for that particular set of tees. In other words, it is the number of strokes he needs to play down to the Course Rating for that particular set of tees.

Example:

Bob and Steve are playing against each other. They each have a 15.8 Handicap Index. Steve plays from the White tees which has a USGA Course Rating/Slope Rating of 68.5/121. If one was to look at a handicap table we would find that Steve's Course Handicap is 17.

Bob plays from the Green tees, which has a USGA Course Rating/Slope Rating of 64.6/107. Bob's Course Handicap is 15.

What do they each need to shoot to "play to their handicap?" To find this number we use what is called a target score, which is the Course Rating added to their Course Handicap. In our example the target scores would be as follows:

$$\text{Target Score (Steve)} = 68.5 + 17 = 86$$

$$\text{Target Score (Bob)} = 64.6 + 15 = 80$$

If Steve shoots 86 playing exactly to his handicap his Net will be 69. If Bob shoots 80, again playing to his handicap, his Net will be 65. Bob wins every time. This is because the course rating is 3.9(rounded to 4) strokes different from the White tees to the Green tees. So if players compete from different tees a second adjustment needs to be made to equalize their handicaps by adding the difference in the Course Rating to Steve's handicap or subtracting the difference in Course Rating to Bob's handicap. **They should both end up with the same Net score if they play to their handicaps.**

To adjust "off the low rating" give Steve a Course Handicap of 21 (17+4), which will now produce the following results:

	Gross Score	Course Handicap	Net Score
Steve	86	21 (17+4)	65
Bob	80	15	65

Or adjust using "off high rating", and give Bob a Course Handicap of 11 (15-4), which will now produce the following results:

	Gross Score	Course Handicap	Net Score
Steve	86	17	69
Bob	80	11	69

Either way we have reached our desired goal, where both players have scored to their Course Handicap and their net scores result in a tie. It is recommended that the adjustment be made to the smaller group of players. Example: A tournament has 48 players; 40 are playing from the harder rated tees and 8 are playing from the easier rated tees. An adjustment is made to the course handicap of the 8 players playing the easier rated tees and no adjustment needs to be made to the larger group of players.

Nowhere in the above information did we mention the word par. Players often try to throw par into the mix when trying to figure if scores are equal. Par is of little relevance in the handicap system and is a terrible indicator of predicting score. For example, one course may be 5500 yards long and have a par of 72 and another may be 7200 yards long and have a par of 72. It is highly unlikely that scores on these two courses would be equal for any level of golfer.

In the example, we have used both Course Rating and Slope Rating. The point is that Slope Rating by itself has little meaning within the Handicap System. There must be a Course Rating standard to connect/attach to the Slope Rating in order for there to be any meaning. If there is one thing to remember from all of this, it is that the Slope Rating is used to convert a Handicap Index to a Course Handicap, which allows the player to receive the number of strokes he needs to play to the level of a scratch golfer for that particular set of tees.