



THE R&A AND USGA ANNOUNCE NEW RULES OF AMATEUR STATUS FOR 2012

*Significant changes include allowed unlimited hole-in-one prizes
First-ever unified, worldwide code for amateur status*

24 October 2011, St Andrews, Scotland:

Amateur golfers will be allowed to play for unlimited hole-in-one prizes under revisions to the Rules of Amateur Status announced today by The R&A.

Until now, prizes for holing a tee shot in amateur golf have been subject to the same restrictions as other competitions, including longest drive and nearest the hole. However, a Rule change which acknowledges the special nature of a hole-in-one during a round of golf means that restrictions on the prizes offered have been lifted.

The new Rules of Amateur Status, supported by Rolex, also include changes for elite amateur golfers aimed at easing the difficult transition from amateur to professional golfer. It follows a far-reaching four-year review of amateurism in golf, which even questioned the need for a set of rules, and has resulted in the first-ever uniform, worldwide code for Amateur Status.

Announcing the changes effective from 1 January 2012, The R&A's Director of Rules and Equipment Standards, David Rickman said: "We felt the time was right to carry out a fundamental review of the Rules of Amateur Status. We were conscious that many sports had done away with amateur status rules and we felt that was an appropriate question for us to ask.

"We concluded that it is very important that golf retains its amateur regulations, mainly because of the self-regulating nature of the game, both in terms of the playing rules and handicapping. We felt that uncontrolled financial incentives could place too much pressure on these important features."

A new ruling (Rule 3-2b) excludes hole-in-one prizes from the general prize limit and allows high value prizes, including cash, to be awarded. This exception, which brings The R&A into line with the United States Golf Association (USGA) Rules of Amateur Status, is specific to prizes for holes-in-one achieved while playing a round of golf and neither separate events nor multiple-entry events qualify.

Suzann Pettersen, Major winner and R&A - Working for Golf Ambassador, said: "I think this is a really good change. Anyone who makes a hole-in-one knows there is a degree of luck. "Most professional tournaments offer hole-in-one prizes and it adds some real interest for players and fans. It is great to think that club golfers can now experience that same excitement."

Those who will notice the biggest changes to the rules are elite amateurs preparing to make the difficult transition to the professional game. Players will now be able to enter into an agreement with an agent or sponsor as long as they do not receive any financial gain while still an amateur. Rules have also been relaxed on subsistence payments paid through national golf unions.

Rickman explained: "The rules on contracts now reflect the modern game and adopt a much more realistic and common sense approach. "Similarly, the rules on subsistence expenses should help the support of deserving talent wherever it may emerge across the golfing world."

Tom Lewis, who recently turned professional after an amateur career that included winning the Silver Medal at this year's Open Championship as well as being part of the victorious 2011 Walker Cup team, welcomed the changes. He said: "It is an important change because some players are forced into turning pro early just because of financial difficulties. "It will make a real difference as they will now be able to turn professional for all the right reasons and also at the right time for them. It is probably the most important decision they will make in their career. "All the experience I gained as amateur has helped prepare me for life as a professional and I am pleased that I made the decision to play in the Walker Cup before joining the professional ranks."

The R&A and USGA have historically had different Rules of Amateur Status and while the differences have reduced over the years, until now there had been two separate codes. As part of the fundamental review, the two governing bodies have developed a modern flexible code that meets the differing demands of golfers across the globe, thereby enabling a single joint code to be established.

Rule 1-3 Amateurism is amended to re-state why there is a distinction between amateur and professional golf and why certain limits and restrictions are needed in the amateur game.

Rule 2-1 Rules on professionalism are consolidated and re-formatted into new Rule 2-1.

Rule 2-2 Professionalism; Contacts and Agreements

National Golf Unions or Associations – New Rule 2-2 (a) is added to allow an amateur golfer to enter into a contract and/or agreement with his national golf union or association, provided he does not obtain any financial gain, directly or indirectly, while still an amateur golfer.

Professional Agents, Sponsors and Other Third Parties – New Rule 2-2 (b) is added to allow an amateur golfer, who is at least 18 years of age, to enter into a contract and/or agreement with a third party solely in relation to the golfer's future as a professional golfer, provided he does not obtain any financial gain, directly or indirectly, while still an amateur golfer.

Rule 3-2 (b) Hole-in-One Prizes – New Rule 3-2 (b) excludes from the general prize limit prizes (including cash prizes) awarded for achieving a hole-in-one while playing a round of golf. This exception is specific to prizes for holes-in-one (not longest drive or nearest the hole) and neither separate events nor multiple-entry events qualify.

Rules 4-3 Subsistence Expenses – New Rule added to allow an amateur golfer to receive subsistence expenses to assist with general living costs, provided the expenses are approved by and paid through the player's national golf union or association.

The R&A website features lots of useful background information explaining the new Rules and we would especially encourage you to view the video material which presents and explains the changes in a straightforward and accessible way. Please link to www.randa.org.

About The R&A

Based in St Andrews, The R&A organises The Open Championship, major amateur events and international matches. Together with the United States Golf Association, The R&A governs the game worldwide, jointly administering the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status, Equipment Standards and World Amateur Golf Rankings. The R&A's working jurisdiction is global, excluding the United States and Mexico. The R&A is committed to working for golf and supports the growth of the game internationally and the development and management of sustainable golf facilities. The R&A operates with the consent of 143 organisations from the amateur and professional game and on behalf of over thirty million golfers in 128 countries.

About the USGA

The USGA conducts the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open, as well as 10 national amateur championships, two state team championships and international matches. Together with The R&A, the USGA governs the game worldwide, jointly administering the Rules of Golf, Rules of Amateur Status, equipment standards and World Amateur Golf Rankings. The USGA's working jurisdiction comprises the United States, its territories and Mexico. The USGA is a global leader in the development and support of sustainable golf course management practices. It serves as a primary steward for the game's history and funds an ongoing "For the Good of the Game" grants program. Additionally, the USGA's Course Rating and Handicap systems are used on six continents in more than 50 countries.