

In 2009, the STMGA board approved a project to develop handicap allocations from the gold tees. Contrary to some rumors, the board also approved a re-evaluation of the handicap allocations from the white tees.

During the period from 4/10 through 6/10, almost 6000 scores were entered hole by hole (Over 100,000 entries). Contrary to some rumors the scores were from all cards turned in, not just from our Tuesday STMGA play.

The USGA has published many articles on handicap allocation definition and development including a whole section on their website. Of surprise to many of us was their stance that difficulty to par a hole was not a good criteria for handicap allocation. Their stance is that handicap allocation should be made based on the differential between low handicappers scores on a hole and high handicappers score. The larger differential the more the higher handicap player needed help to compete on an equal basis with the low handicapper. This made good sense to the STMGA handicap committee and we worked on developing those allocations over the summer following the USGA guidelines.

During that time the committee sent out several USGA articles to all STMGA members explaining the concept.

The project was completed late last fall and approved by all members of the handicap committee. John Barton and I met with Eddie Pratt and Tom Plankers to review the handicap allocations. I think we were both pleasantly surprised that they were well aware of the USGA position. Contrary to some rumors they took some time to review the data and told us they were ok with the results.

The new handicap allocations were presented at the 2010 annual meeting and shortly thereafter the handicap committee recommendations were approved by the board. I then informed Eddie and Tom of that approval.

We started using the new allocations Oct. 1 in our Tuesday play and in many of the other groups at Sea Trail. As Sea Trail still had a supply of old cards we printed out several hundred cards for each course and had them available for members to use at the front desk. Sea Trail finally issued new cards with gold and white handicap allocations this summer.

We began to hear grumbling from some members about the allocation.

- Some from those who were not familiar with USGA definition
- Some from those who did not agree with the USGA definition
- Some from those who thought we calculated it incorrectly
- Some who just didn't like the results.

The handicap committee members individually tried to educate those folks on what we had done. I believe some accepted it, but others held fast to the old concept of the toughest hole being the #1 handicap.

I personally invited any member who thought we calculated the holes incorrectly to sit down with me and review the data. None of the them has yet to take me up on that.

Some of the members—many of whom bought into the concept—voiced concern about one specific hole #8 maples being the #1 handicap hole from the white tees. Their feeling was that the data was slanted because that while the higher handicap players had a propensity to hit the ball in the water off the tee, the pond was a non-issue to the low handicap players. Once across the water, the hole is rather a mediocre par 4. It just didn't make sense to them that if two low handicap players were competing, a stroke should be given on that hole.

Hearing their concern and assuming it would come up for discussion today, I reached out to Michael Dann who is the handicap guru for the Carolina golf association. Michael is very familiar with the Maples course and thought that the data was more than likely distorted because of the pond. He told me of a course in Greenville, NC that ran into the same kind of issue.---a relatively non-descript par 4 with a pond in front which calculated to be the #1 handicap hole. Their committee resolved this by making the hole a low handicap hole to help the high handicap players, but not the #1 handicap hole. This made sense to me.

I reached out to one of the members who had voiced concern—Ron Dubas (also the president of STMGA when the allocations were approved)—and told him what I had found. Together we reviewed the options.

There are 4 holes on the front nine of the maples that have large differentials and the difference among these holes is minimal. We agreed that one of those holes #4 would be an ideal #1 handicap and that if we gave the #7 handicap rating to #8 it would still protect the high handicap player who would need a stroke to compete on an equal basis with the low handicapper.

Of course I had to get run this by Sea T rail and the Handicap Committee before going any further and that is what I did. Eddie Pratt agreed that it made sense to make the change and so did the Handicap Committee.

After this meeting I plan on asking the STMGA board to approve the change immediately as Eddie is in the process of ordering new cards.

To those of you who don't agree with the USGA definition of handicap allocation, I can't help you, but for those of you who feel that we didn't do the job in calculating the allocations or are just interested in looking at the data and the calculations, the invitation to sit down and review it is still open.