



Q&A: What are Slope Ratings and what is their Role?

SUMMARY STATEMENT ON THE NEW RATING SYSTEM: The Scratch Rating is still the most accurate measure of course difficulty. Slope is an equalising factor for the handicap golfer.

How is a Slope Rating determined?

Your State Association's expert course raters have determined a Scratch Rating for each set of tees at your course. (A Scratch Rating is the evaluation of the normal playing difficulty of a set of tees for a player with a handicap of zero.) Under the new rating system, the raters have also determined a Bogey Rating for each set of tees at your course. (A Bogey Rating is the evaluation of the normal playing difficulty of a set of tees for a player with a women's handicap of approximately 24 or a men's handicap of approximately 20.)

The Slope Rating is the measure of the difference between the Bogey Rating and the Scratch Rating. In effect, the Slope Rating is measuring the rate at which gross scores deteriorate from a set of tees as the ability of the players decreases.

Is the Slope Rating of a set of tees the true measure of its difficulty?

Slope is an equalising factor for the handicap golfer. A far more accurate measure of the difficulty of a set of tees is its Scratch Rating. However a Scratch Rating isn't able to paint a complete picture as it only considers difficulty from the perspective of the Scratch marker. The Slope Rating adds colour to the picture painted by the Scratch Rating by telling us the rate at which gross scores deteriorate as the ability of the players decreases.

So by itself the Slope Rating of a set of tees doesn't tell us all that much, it only paints a full picture when looked at in conjunction with the Scratch Rating for that set of tees.

How does a Scratch Rating work together with a Slope Rating for handicapping purposes?

For a player to play to their handicap from a set of tees, they need to return a net score which is equal to the Scratch Rating. The Slope Rating determines how many handicap strokes a player will receive on a set of tees in order for them to have a reasonable chance of returning a net score which is equal to the Scratch Rating.

- **EXAMPLE A:** On a set of tees with a Scratch Rating of 67, a player needs to have net 67 to play to their handicap. The Slope Rating will determine how many handicap strokes the player will receive from that set of tees in order for them to have a reasonable chance of returning a net score of 67.
- **EXAMPLE B:** On a set of tees with a Scratch Rating of 74, a player needs to have net 74 to play to their handicap. The Slope Rating will determine how many handicap strokes the player will receive from that set of tees in order for them to have a reasonable chance of returning a net score of 74.

Set-of-Tees A has a Scratch Rating of 72 and Slope Rating of 119. Set-of-Tees B has a Scratch Rating of 67 and a Slope Rating of 125. Which is the more difficult course?

Set-of-Tees A, even though it has the lower Slope Rating.

What is a high Slope Rating and what is a low Slope Rating?

The maximum possible Slope Rating is 155, and the minimum possible Slope Rating is 55. The neutral Slope Rating is 113.

On a set of tees with a high Slope Rating, Slope will increase the difference between the handicap allowance of a high-marker and the handicap allowance of a low-marker. On a set of tees with a low Slope Rating, Slope will decrease this difference.

Taking into account that 80% of handicap rounds are played on only 20% of courses (ie at the larger clubs), the average Slope Rating for rounds played in Australia is expected to be in the low 120s.

Is it possible for a set of tees to have a lower than average Scratch Rating and a higher than average Slope Rating?

Yes. For example, a set of tees might have a Scratch Rating of 67, and a Slope Rating of 125.

What sort of course design could result in this happening?

This could happen for example with a course that has hazards/obstacles in short landing areas, but is wide open in the longer landing areas. The rating impact of this would be as follows:

- Low rating points on the Scratch Rating because the Scratch player is driving over all of the trouble.
- High rating points on the Bogey Rating because the trouble is right where the Bogey golfer is driving to.
- Note that the overall Bogey Rating may still be quite low when compared to Bogey Ratings of other courses. However, the important thing when determining a Slope Rating is the difference between the Bogey Rating of a course and its Scratch Rating. And because the difference with this course will be relatively large, the Slope Rating would also be higher than average.

Is it possible for a set of tees to have a higher than average Scratch Rating and a lower than average Slope Rating?

Yes. For example, a set of tees might have a Scratch Rating of 73, and a Slope Rating of 117.

What sort of course design could result in this happening?

This could happen for example with a course that has hazards/obstacles in the longer landing areas, but is wide open in the shorter landing areas. (This type of course is sometimes called a 'risk-reward' course.) The rating impact of this would be as follows:

- Low rating points on the Bogey Rating because the Bogey player isn't driving the ball far enough to reach the trouble.
- High rating points on the Scratch Rating because the trouble is right where the Scratch golfer is able to drive to.
- Note that the overall Bogey Rating may still be quite high when compared to Bogey Ratings of other courses. However, the important thing when determining a Slope Rating is the difference between the Bogey Rating of a course and its Scratch Rating. And because the difference with this course will be relatively low, the Slope Rating would also be lower than average.

DSR (Daily Scratch Rating) is being added to the handicap system at the same time as Slope (23 January 2014). Will a DSR play the same role as a Scratch Rating when a player's score is being processed through GOLF Link?

Yes. If a DSR has been determined by GOLF Link, the player's score is processed against the DSR and not the Scratch Rating. Note: A DSR is the Scratch Rating adjusted for any daily variances from normal course or climate conditions (with score fluctuations being the evidence of this).