



DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS

Playing different tees means you are playing a different course

In recent months our Handicap Department has been besieged by phone calls/emails concerning handicap adjustments when different tees are employed.

On the one hand, this is a very good thing because it means that more and more clubs are getting away from the “we play all our tournaments from the White tees” rut. Instead, they are broadening their horizons by letting some of the field (typically seniors) move forward.

(They might find that participation levels are up and that pace of play has improved too!)

On the other hand, those moving forward can't understand why a handicap adjustment is necessary when competing against the White tee golfers. “But I play all my golf from Gold, why are they taking strokes away from me?” they cry.

Let's break it down and pit father and son, mano a mano, in a net competition *without* any sort of adjustment.

In this example, both play all their golf at the same course and both carry identical Handicap Index of 15.1. The difference? Junior always plays the White tees (70.7/131). Dad never strays from Gold (66.8/116).

Let's start by looking at what sort of scores both typically shoot in order to achieve a 15.1 Index.

Junior's average score is a 92. But remember, a handicap does not represent a golfer's “average” ability. Rather, it represents a golfer's “potential”

ability as measured by his best 10 of 20 most recent rounds. And Junior's best 10 must average 89 in order to be issued a 15.1. **A score of 89 results in a differential of 15.8.** 96% of 15.8 begets a 15.1 Handicap Index.

We'll call this 89 his “target” score. . . the score he must record in order to be deemed to have played to his handicap.

What about Dad? His average score is an 86. His “target” score is 83. **An 83 results in an identical differential of 15.8** and produces the same 15.1 Index.

Did you see that? Did it hit you? The Handicap System considers an 83 from Gold to be the exact equal to an 89 from White. That's how much tougher the White tees play.

So what happens when they tee it up together and both hit their target scores? The results may surprise you.

Dad's 15.1 works out to a Course Handicap of 16 from Gold. $83 - 16 = 67$ net. Junior's 15.1 works out to a Course Handicap of 18 from White. $89 - 18 = 71$ net.

They both hit their target score. . . the score that makes them the 15.1 that they are today . . . and yet Dad waxes Junior, yet again, on a net basis.

Junior slowly reaches for his wallet to pay off his losing bet. “Why is it that I can't beat him at net?” he thinks to himself. “What am I missing?” Well, four strokes to be exact in this case.

Different tees carry different scoring expectations. Tees with low

Course Ratings naturally produce low net scores. Tees with high Course Ratings naturally trigger high net scores.

(A net score equal to the Course Rating, not par, signifies you played right to your handicap (i.e., achieved your target score)).

So how do you bridge this gap in scoring expectations when golfers from different tees collide?

Simple, you apply an adjustment that takes the difference in Course Ratings into account.

Those playing the tees with the higher Course Rating are awarded additional strokes equal to the rounded difference in the Course Ratings (with .5 rounding up). Or, the rounded difference is subtracted from the golfers playing the lesser tees.

Either method will do the trick, both will level the playing field.

(In a tournament full of golfers playing different tees, I like to spin off the tee that the majority of the field is playing.)

So what about our father and son?

With the four-stroke adjustment in place ($70.7 - 66.8 = 3.9$, round to 4), net scoring expectations have been equalized. When both achieve their target score, they now rightfully tie each other on a net basis. They tie with net 67s if the four strokes are added to Junior's Course Handicap ($89 - 22 = 67$). They tie with net 71s if Dad forfeits the four strokes ($83 - 12 = 71$).

Equity achieved! ☺

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