

Explanation of the Soft and Hard Caps in the World Handicap System

Part of the *Handicap Index*[®] calculation that limits the amount by which a player's *Handicap Index* can increase when measured against the player's *Low Handicap Index*[™]

How the caps work

If a player's *Handicap Index* increases by 3.0 strokes over their *Low Handicap Index*, the *soft cap* slows additional upward movement by 50%. The *hard cap* prevents any additional upward movement from taking place beyond 5.0 strokes.

Why the caps exist

The *soft cap* and *hard cap* ensure that a temporary loss of form does not cause a player's *Handicap Index* to increase to a level inconsistent with their demonstrated ability.

The *caps* also ensure equity – as players who have experienced significant upward movement in a short period of time without such restriction would, on average, have a more likely chance of scoring at or below their *Handicap Index* compared to a more stable player.

How Low Handicap Index works

When a score is posted, the existing *Low Handicap Index* is used to calculate the player's new *Handicap Index*. Once the new *Handicap Index* is calculated, a new *Low Handicap Index* is determined from within the last 365 days and displayed.

Why 365 days?

- It is enough time to consider the “memory” of a player's demonstrated ability.
- It provides a consistent timeframe for everyone, rather than a count of scores which would be dependent on frequency of play.
- It enables a player who performed well in an annual event to potentially still be impacted in the same event the following year.

Action items for a Committee

If a player has been “capped”:

- Check with the player to make sure they are applying *net par*, *net double bogey*, and *most likely score* guidelines correctly.
- Determine if numerous away scores have caused fluctuations in their *scoring record*.
- Check to see if the player had an *exceptional score* reduction and when that round took place. Did it lead to a new *Low Handicap Index*?

Key messages for players

- The *cap* is part of the *Handicap Index* calculation and applied automatically.
- The *caps* do not prevent a *Handicap Index* from increasing, just the amount that it can increase.
- The purpose of the *caps* is not to punish the player, but to provide equity and ensure their chance of playing to their handicap is consistent with others.
- Research suggests that most players who experience a *cap* will return to their “normal” demonstrated ability.
- In many cases, the impact of a *soft cap* is only a few tenths of a stroke and may not result in a change in their *Course Handicap*[™]. For these players, it only takes one or two good scores to “play out of it.”
- **The *cap* should only be overridden by the *Handicap Committee* if special circumstances such as an injury or illness have taken place.**

Soft cap and hard cap examples

Soft Cap example:

3	Low H.I.	Current 8 of 20 average	Amount of increase beyond 3.0 strokes	Amount suppressed (50% of 1.0)	Calculated value (after Soft Cap)	Final Handicap Index (Hard Cap N/A)
	10.0	14.0	1.0	0.5	13.5	13.5

Hard Cap example:

5	Low H.I.	Current 8 of 20 average	Amount of increase beyond 3.0 strokes	Amount suppressed (50% of 5.0)	Calculated value (after Soft Cap)	Final Handicap Index (capped at Low HI + 5.0)
	10.0	18.0	5.0	2.5	15.5	15.0

Shortcut: If a player's 8 of 20 average is 7.0 or more above their *Low H.I.*, they have reached the *hard cap*.

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Please note this document may be updated periodically.

