



Notice of Decision

Update to the Conformance Testing of Golf Balls to the Overall Distance Standard (ODS)

In March 2023 The R&A and the USGA issued a Notice and Comment relating to a proposed Model Local Rule (MLR) relating to golf ball conformance:

Specifically, for this proposed MLR, golf balls will be tested for conformance to the Overall Distance Standard (ODS) limit of 317 yards (plus 3 yards tolerance) at modified Actual Launch Conditions (ALC), namely a clubhead speed of 127 mph and ALC values of 11 degrees and 37 revolutions per second (2220 rpm).

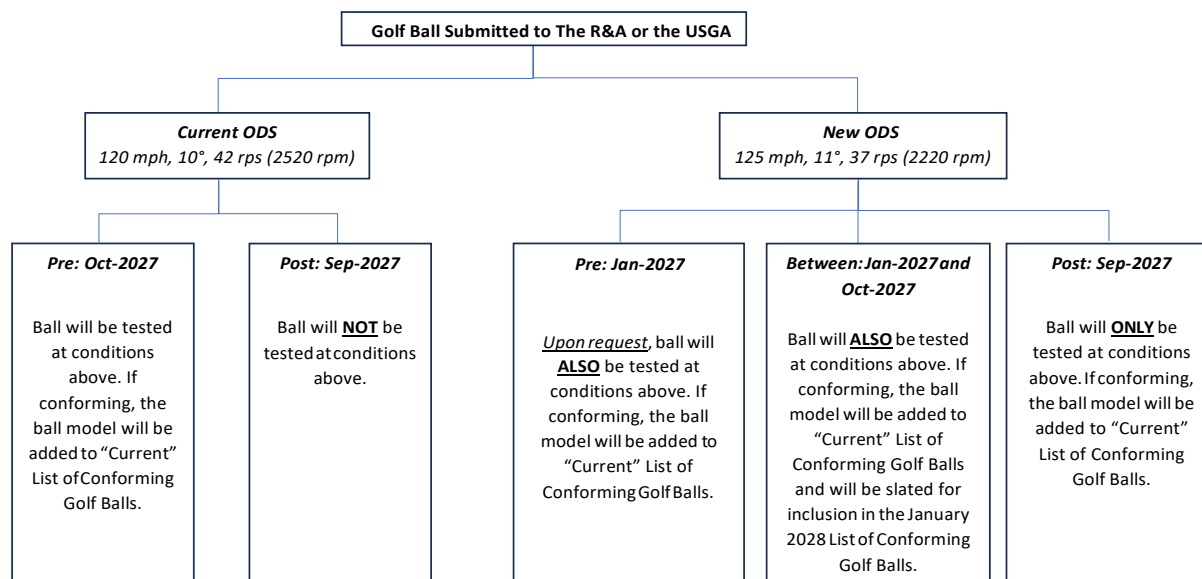
We received significant feedback from stakeholders regarding this MLR proposal. All of the comments have been carefully reviewed and considered in accordance with the Equipment Rulemaking Procedures adopted in November 2011. Based on this feedback and further research by The R&A and the USGA, we have modified our approach. Instead of an MLR, the test conditions for evaluating conformance of golf balls to the Overall Distance Standard will be updated. These updated test conditions will require golf balls to be tested for conformance to the Overall Distance Standard (ODS) limit of 317 yards (plus 3 yards tolerance) at modified Actual Launch Conditions (ALC), namely a clubhead speed of 125 mph with a launch angle of 11 degrees and a backspin of 37 revolutions per second (2220 rpm).

The launch conditions for all golf ball submissions will be determined by a mechanical golfer that has been set up to produce the appropriate launch conditions on the USGA/R&A calibration ball. Please note that interim screening may be used and more efficient means of determining the ALC will be investigated. For clarity, the bounce and roll component of the Overall Distance Standard will be calculated using the simplified bounce model as proposed by The R&A and the USGA in March 2021.

These updated test conditions will be applied to all golf ball submissions for the January 2028 List of Conforming Golf Balls. In other words, all balls received by the USGA/R&A during or after October 2027 will be evaluated in accordance with the new test conditions ONLY. Balls that conform will appear in the List of Conforming Golf Balls beginning January 2028.

An appropriate clarification in the Rules of Golf will confirm that any golf balls that appeared on the December 2027 List of Conforming Golf Balls (or a previous List of Conforming Golf Balls) may continue to be used until January 2030. The clarification to support this position will be introduced as part of our regular updates to clarifications closer to the inception.

Submission & Conformance Process Summary



We would like to thank all those who provided comments for their participation in this process and the constructive feedback provided. The decision set out in this Notice reflects those interactions.



Notice to Manufacturers

Proposed Update to the Evaluation of Conformance of Drivers for Spring-Like Effect

In March 2023 The R&A and the USGA issued a Notice and Comment on a proposed Model Local Rule (MLR) relating to golf ball conformance which also identified an interest in investigating driver performance after repeated use:

While not pursuing a reduction in the Characteristic Time (CT) limit, the USGA and The R&A are concerned that many of today's drivers exhibit levels of CT creep – meaning their CT values are appropriate at the point of manufacturing/initial use, but can become non-conforming after repeated use, especially at the highest level of competition. This is contrary to the purpose and intent of the Equipment Rules. As such the USGA and The R&A are undertaking a comprehensive investigation of this phenomenon. Further details on this topic will be forthcoming in due course.

The reason clubs tested in the field have been found to have CT values in excess of the limit plus the tolerance is due to two factors: (1) the initial CT values being too proximal to 257 μ s, and (2) subsequent changes to the CT values caused by repeated high-velocity impacts ("CT creep").

As such, The R&A and USGA are proposing to modify their conformance evaluation procedure for drivers with effect from 31 March 2024. Under the proposed procedure, the manufacturer will continue to submit a single club for each model/loft for which they are seeking a conformance ruling. The current limit of 239 μ s and testing tolerance of 18 μ s is not being changed, therefore any club with CT values exceeding 257 μ s will continue to be ruled non-conforming.

However, The R&A and USGA reserve the right to more stringently evaluate clubs that are in close proximity to the limit (i.e. CT \geq 251 μ s) by requiring the submission of additional samples to verify the status of the population of these clubs. Should additional samples be required, the process for submission and evaluation of these samples will match the ISO 2859-1 protocol whereby 8 further samples will be submitted and if necessary, this could extend to another 8 samples:

ISO 2859-1, Table 10-E-2, Double sampling plan, AQL 4.0

- (a) Measure 8 samples. Accept on 0 defects, on 2 defects the lot is non-acceptable.
- (b) If 1 defect is found in the first 8 samples, measure an additional 8 samples.
- (c) Accept on 1 total defect (out of 16), on 2 total defects the lot is non-acceptable.

If this sampling plan indicates that the sample lot is non-acceptable, then the club will be ruled non-conforming to Part 2, Section 4.c.(i) of the Equipment Rules.

Additionally, the USGA and The R&A also reserve the right to subject submitted drivers to a series of impacts to determine the presence and magnitude of any CT creep. Submitted clubs which are found to have CT values exceeding 257 μ s after a limited number of high-velocity impacts (e.g., 150 impacts at 125 mph), will be discussed with the manufacturer

and will not receive a decision or be included on the List of Conforming Driver Heads until data/evidence is provided that the club DOES NOT incorporate features or technology that have the intent of, or the effect of, unduly influencing the clubhead's spring effect in violation of Part 2, Section 4.c.(ii) of the Equipment Rules.