Notice to Manufacturers

Communication of New Rules Interpretation

Title	Hollow metal core golf balls	Notice #	B2014-001
Supersedes Notice #	N/A	Effective Date	January 1, 2014
Relevant Rule	Appendix III, 1 (General)		

Relevant Rule Language

"The ball must not be substantially different from the traditional and customary form and make. The material and construction of the ball must not be contrary to the purpose and intent of the Rules."

Background / Reason for Communication

Since the invention of the Gutta Percha golf ball in 1848, golf balls have been constructed from elastomeric materials. An elastomer is a polymer with viscoelasticity generally having a low Young's Modulus (<1GPa). Examples of elastomeric golf balls include the aforementioned Gutta Percha ball, the wound golf ball (1898), and the 'modern' solid ball (1967, multilayer balls starting in 1968).

Since the adoption of standards for golf balls in 1921, two exceptions to this type of material have been considered traditional and customary by the USGA or The R&A. The first is a liquid core golf ball, i.e., a golf ball having fluid contained in a single, plain chamber in the center of the ball. The second is a ball having a small rigid core, also in the center of the ball.

At no time in their history have either the USGA or The R&A allowed golf balls with individual parts that are permitted to move with respect to each other. Though there was some small slip between the elastomeric threads in wound golf balls, the relative movement is neither large, beneficial, nor the intent of the design.

Revised Interpretation

Only golf balls constructed entirely from elastomeric materials (i.e., viscoelastic materials having a low elastic modulus) will be considered to be of traditional and customary form and make. The elastomeric materials may be thermoset or thermoplastic polymers, but must not be designed or manufactured to facilitate intentional modification of the ball's playing characteristics. A ball that contains trace amounts of non-elastomeric materials is not considered to be substantially different from the traditional and customary form and make. In addition, the design of the golf ball may not include parts or components that move with respect to each other or the ball or that are not concentric with the golf ball.

Exceptions to the requirement that the ball must not be substantially different from the traditional and customary form and make are noted below:

Golf balls may have a single, concentric core with a diameter of ≤ 0.9-in (22.9mm), provided that the core:

- contains fluid constrained within a single chamber; OR
- if non-elastomeric, is effectively rigid*

*such as solid or hollow, thick shell metallic spheres.