

United States Golf Association

Golf House
PO Box 708
Far Hills, NJ 07931

July 30, 2004

Notice to Manufacturers

Adoption of Putter Plain in Shape Interpretation Changes

The March 19, 2004 Notice to Manufacturers announced a proposed modification of putter rules interpretation. Comments about these proposals were invited and the comments received were evaluated by the USGA. The USGA has decided that the proposal will be adopted, effective immediately. Please note that there have been some minor wording revisions in the language that was proposed in the March 19, 2004 Notice to Manufacturers, but these have not been substantive changes.

These putter rules interpretation changes should provide putter designers with a clearer understanding of what is permitted. They should also help to reduce the amount of time that is required for the USGA to evaluate putters and issue rulings.

Appendix II, 4a of the USGA Rules of Golf states:

“The clubhead must be generally plain in shape. All parts must be rigid, structural in nature and functional. It is not practicable to define plain in shape precisely and comprehensively but features which are deemed to be in breach of this requirement and are therefore not permitted include ... appendages to the main body of the head such as knobs, plates, rods or fins for the purpose of meeting dimensional specifications, for aiming, or for any other purpose. Exceptions may be made for putters....”

The existing Rule will remain unchanged, but the “plain in shape” requirement will be interpreted so that there will be more permissible “exceptions” for putters. The main change is to permit an appendage to the main body of the head of a putter, even if the appendage is not primarily for the purpose of mass or weight distribution.

Additionally, the USGA has held that excessively large putter heads do not conform to the Rules. To better communicate this interpretation, guidelines for maximum putter head dimensions have been adopted.

The USGA recognizes that some putters previously submitted and ruled non-conforming for violation of plain in shape requirements could be deemed conforming under the new guidelines. Putter submissions which have previously been ruled in breach of the ‘plain in shape’ requirement will be re-evaluated at the request of the submitter or manufacturer.

The R&A is concurrently issuing a similar notice to manufacturers announcing adoption of revised interpretations.

The revised guidelines are attached.

Any questions should be sent to the USGA, attention Dick Rugge, P.O. Box 708, Far Hills, NJ 07931, Fax 908-234-0138, e-mail: drugge@usga.org.

USGA
REVISED PUTTER PLAIN IN SHAPE GUIDELINES
July 2004

1. Regarding Appendix II, 4a ‘Plain in Shape’ – Exceptions for Putters

Amended Guidelines:

Features which are permitted for any purpose, including aiming, sighting and alignment, include:

- Holes, cut-throughs and cavities through the head
- Transparent material
- Lines or other markings painted or inscribed on any part of the head
- Permanent appendages to the head, provided that:
 - the feature is rigid throughout its length (i.e., cannot be bent or flexed by hand)
 - the feature does not extend forward of the face,
 - the feature does not extend above the top line of the face by more than 0.25 inches.

Those features still not permitted under the ‘plain in shape’ Rules and guidelines are as follows:

- Appendages for the purpose of meeting dimensional specifications
- Features of any nature that extend ahead of the putter face
- Holes through the face
- Furrows in, or runners on, the sole that extend into the face
- Facsimiles of golf balls or actual golf balls incorporated into the head
- Heads designed to resemble other objects (i.e. bottles, cars, vegetables, body parts, etc.)
- Optical devices such as prisms, mirrors, reflective material, etc.
- Electronic devices such as light beams and metronomes, or mechanical devices such as spirit levels, etc.

2. Regarding Appendix II, 4b ‘Dimensions and Size’

Revised Guidelines:

- (i) The distance from the heel to the toe of the putter head must not be greater than 7 inches (177.8mm);
- (ii) The distance from the heel to the toe of the putter face must be no less than $\frac{2}{3}$ of the distance from the face to the back of the putter head;
- (iii) The distance from the heel to the toe of the putter face must be no less than $\frac{1}{2}$ the distance from the heel to the toe of the putter head;
- (iv) The distance from the sole to the top of the putter head, including any permitted features, must not be greater than 2.5 inches (63.5mm).

These new dimensional guidelines are in addition to Appendix II, 4b (ii) which states that “the dimensions of the head must be such that the distance from the heel to the toe is greater than the distance from the face to the back”. An illustration showing these dimensions is attached.