



6 December 2023

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  $\mu$ 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  $\mu$ s and testing tolerance of 18  $\mu$ s is not being changed, therefore any club with CT values exceeding 257  $\mu$ 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  $\mu$ 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  $\mu$ 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.