



9 September 2025

**Notice to Manufacturers**

**Notice of Decision – Mechanical Golfer Setup for the Overall Distance Standard**

The Overall Distance Standard and Symmetry Test Protocol is administered by R&A Rules Ltd (“The R&A”) and the United States Golf Association (“USGA”). The protocol for this test (rev. 3.0, 9 April 2019) required measurement of ball speed through the use of a mechanical golfer having a clubhead speed of 120 MPH  $\pm$  0.5 MPH and includes a reference speed for the “USGA/R&A Calibration” control ball of 175 MPH.

On 11 February 2025, The R&A and the USGA published an Area of Interest noting an interest in exploring whether the reproducibility of the Overall Distance Standard (ODS) test could be improved through setting the speed of the USGA/R&A Calibration ball (“control ball”) used for setting up the mechanical golfer ( $V_{ALC}$ ).

This was followed by a proposal including research published on 6 May 2025 demonstrating that excellent reproducibility is achieved by controlling the speed of the control ball in setting up the mechanical golfer. This updated methodology includes accounting for both the age and condition of the control ball through a strong relationship between  $V_{ALC}$  and the ball’s coefficient of restitution ( $e$ ) and contact time ( $t_c$ ) derived from the Initial Velocity test

This document serves as notice that The R&A and the USGA are updating the Overall Distance Standard and Symmetry Test Protocol to require the control ball speed to meet the expected value as defined by this relationship. The R&A and the USGA will continue to use Bridgestone USGA/R&A Calibration Balls as the control ball and will continue to apply appropriate checks to maintain consistency of control ball batches.

Clubhead speed as previously defined will remain specified at 120 mph, and will continue to be monitored, but to avoid over-constraining the test setup will be considered a reference value only.

Manufacturers are invited to submit their golf balls for test service that will include the results of the Initial Velocity test and the predicted and measured  $V_{ALC}$  values.

This change is reflected in the Overall Distance Standard and Symmetry Test Protocol rev. 4.0, and will be effective for the List of Conforming Golf Balls published on 3 December 2025.

For questions or comments, please contact:

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