



16 December 2024

Research Area of Interest

Identification Markings for Golf Balls Conforming to the 2028 Overall Distance Standard Test Conditions

Following the Notice of Decision, “Update to the Conformance Testing of Golf Balls to the Overall Distance Standard (ODS)” released in December 2023, R&A Rules Ltd. (“The R&A”) and the United States Golf Association (“USGA”) are continuing to plan for implementation beginning in 2028.

A key objective of the implementation process is to provide clarity for golf ball manufacturers, golfers, committees, PGA professionals, retailers and other stakeholders, ahead of the 2028 transition, on whether a golf ball is conforming to the updated ODS test conditions. It is important that golfers and other stakeholders be able to readily identify golf balls as conforming, beyond product packaging.

Therefore, The R&A and USGA are interested in understanding the views and opinions of golf ball manufacturers and other stakeholders on the following options:

1. Specified 2028 Conforming Identification Marking

The introduction of a unique marking that would be required on any golf ball listed as conforming to the 2028 ODS test conditions. The marking would be prescribed by The R&A and USGA and specified with consideration of its size and location.

2. Specified 2028 Conforming Identification Marking with Manufacturer Flexibility

The introduction of a requirement that any golf ball listed as conforming to the 2028 ODS test conditions incorporates a distinguishing characteristic prescribed by The R&A and USGA. Manufacturers would have the flexibility to incorporate the prescribed distinguishing characteristic within their own designs, subject to the approval of The R&A and USGA.

At this stage, for both options, it is anticipated that the marking could be required as a condition for inclusion on any List of Conforming Golf Balls related to the 2028 ODS test conditions.

The R&A and USGA are continuing to explore other solutions that would provide clarity on whether a ball is conforming to the 2028 ODS test conditions. We invite comments regarding the options noted above, and any further suggestions specific to the goal of providing clarity regarding the conformance status of golf balls.

We ask that all responses to this Area of Interest be received no later than 14 February 2025.

These communications should be addressed to Dr Mark Grattan at The R&A via the email address equipmentstandards@randa.org.

The R&A and USGA are committed to providing communications relating to implementation in advance of the January 2028 implementation.