United States Golf Association
Golf House, PO Box 708, Far Hills, NJ 07931-0708
T 908.234.2300 F 908.234.9687
www.usga.org

Memo

From Jeff Hall, Managing Director, Rules, Competitions and Amateur Status

To Officials in Charge of U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open Qualifying

Date March 7, 2014

Regarding Grooves Condition of Competition

The grooves rules effective from January 1, 2010, will be adopted as a Condition of Competition for all USGA Championships, as well as all qualifying stages for the championships.

The following information is being provided to all officials in charge of qualifying for the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open. Conformance and technical questions may be directed to the USGA Equipment Standards Department. For questions regarding the application of the condition of competition (i.e., penalties), please contact the USGA Rules Department. A list containing names and contact information for appropriate members of the Equipment Standards and Rules Departments is attached.

Please review the taped version of the "Live Meeting" discussing all matters related to this issue posted on the USGA InfoPortal and also viewable at http://webcast.usga.org/usga/OIC_Meeting_-_Grooves_Condition_of_Competition.wmv.

cc: Officials in Charge for USGA Amateur Championships
USGA Executive Committee
USGA Women's Committee
Staff In Charge of Championships

Groove Condition of Competition

General

The groove rules effective from January 1, 2010, will be adopted as a condition of competition for the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open, as well as all qualifying stages (including U.S. Open local qualifying) for these three championships. The condition will also be in effect at the USGA's national championships and team competitions that are contested by amateurs only.

The full text of the condition of competition appears at the end of this document.

The Condition

4-1/1 Groove and Punch Mark Specifications Effective January 1, 2010 Including Condition of Competition

"The player's clubs must conform to the groove and punch mark specifications in the Rules of Golf that are effective from January 1, 2010.

*PENALTY FOR CARRYING, BUT NOT MAKING STROKE WITH, CLUB OR CLUBS IN BREACH OF CONDITION:
Match play - At the conclusion of the hole at which the breach is discovered, the state of the match is adjusted by deducting one hole for each hole at which a breach occurred; maximum deduction per round - Two holes.
Stroke play - Two strokes for each hole at which any breach occurred; maximum penalty per round - Four strokes.
Match or stroke play - In the event of a breach between the play of two holes, the penalty applies to the next hole.
Bogey and par competitions - See Note 1 to Rule 32-1a.
Stableford competitions - See Note 1 to Rule 32-1b.

*Any club or clubs carried in breach of this condition must be declared out of play by the player to his opponent in match play or his *marker* or a *fellow competitor* in stroke play immediately upon discovery that a breach has occurred. If the player fails to do so, he is disqualified.

PENALTY FOR MAKING STROKE WITH CLUB IN BREACH OF CONDITION:
Disqualification.

Ping EYE2 Clubs**

As a result of the waiver from Ping, Ping EYE2 irons manufactured prior to March 31, 1990, may **not** be used at the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open, and U.S. Senior Open as well as all of their respective qualifying stages unless they have been tested and found to conform to the current groove specifications. Please note that Ping has produced versions of the EYE2 iron that do conform to the current groove specifications (these clubs have markings distinguishing them from the original EYE2, particularly an "XG" engraved as a part of the serial number on the hosel).

**Please note- the above ONLY applies to USGA Open Championships

Pre-Qualifying Communication with Players

Attached to this document is championship-specific text (U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open) that **must** be included in your pre-qualifying communication with the players in your qualifying field, e.g., when you communicate information regarding practice rounds, starting times, etc. From the USGA's perspective, it is vitally important that we "over-communicate" with the players regarding this condition of competition.

Club Conformance Questions

The USGA will encourage players to resolve any questions about club conformance prior to arriving on site for any qualifying event. However, we anticipate that an Official in Charge (OIC) might be asked to make a ruling on the conformity of a player's clubs. The first step will be to determine the make and model of the club in question and find out whether the club has been included in the *USGA Informational Club Database* at http://www.usga.org/InfoClubsDB/intro.html, which currently lists models of clubs that were available prior to January 1, 2010 which have been evaluated by the USGA and/or The R&A for conformance to the condition. By March 14, 2014, the database will be expanded to include new models of clubs submitted on or after January 1, 2010. Please refer to the "Live Meeting" for tips on using the database.

If the club or set of clubs is listed in the *USGA Informational Club Database* as meeting the 2010 groove rules, or if the player can provide proof of conformance to the 2012-2015 Rules of Golf (e.g., a copy of a USGA or R&A decision letter, or a certificate provided by the USGA that the player's specific club(s) have been tested and meet the 2012-2015 Rules of Golf), the club has not been altered, and there are no other extenuating circumstances or other evidence of non-conformance, the club will be presumed to conform. If the club is not listed in the database as meeting the 2010 groove rules and has not been deemed

conforming by the USGA or The R&A, and a determination cannot be made immediately, the player may choose to play with the club but risks disqualification if a determination is subsequently made that the club does not conform. Once a question is raised, whether by the player, a competitor or third party, the OIC must determine the conformance status of the club(s) in question.

If another player calls into question the conformity of a player's grooves, as with any question that arises during the competition, the on-site USGA Rules Committee must take all pertinent facts into consideration in evaluating the situation, and the above procedure will apply if necessary. The on-site USGA Rules Committee must render a decision in these circumstances and that decision will be final. If the club in question requires testing to determine conformance, the OIC must send it to Carter Rich at the USGA Equipment Standards Department. It is only necessary to send a club for testing if the player in question is a potential qualifier or an alternate. In such a case, Carter Rich will contact the OIC with the test results so that an official ruling can be made.

The above link provides very useful information for OIC in handling a conformance ruling in addition to the searchable database. Please see the attached sheet for additional information about how to use the database, as well as properly reading the search result.

Club Testing

On-site club testing will only be available at the three Open sites proper. There will be no on-site testing at any Local or Sectional Qualifying sites.

Application of the Groove Condition

The attached Q&A document addresses many potential situations involving the groove condition. Questions regarding this document may be referred to the USGA Rules Department.

Questions and Answers on the Application of the Groove Condition

Q1. During a competition a player uses a club that he knows the USGA/R&A had ruled non-conforming to the groove rules effective from January 1, 2010 before the competition started. Before the competition is closed, the Committee discovers that the player used the non-conforming club. What is the ruling?

A1. The player is disqualified – see the penalty statement to the condition of competition.

Q2. During a competition a player uses a club that he knows the USGA/R&A had ruled non-conforming to the groove rules effective from January 1, 2010 before the competition started. After the competition is closed, the Committee discovers that the player used the non-conforming club. What is the ruling?

A2. The player is disqualified – see Exception (iv) to Rule 34-1b.

Q3. During a competition a player uses a club that he did not know the USGA/R&A had ruled non-conforming to the groove rules effective from January 1, 2010 before the competition started. Before the competition is closed, the Committee discovers that the player used the non-conforming club. What is the ruling?

A3. The player is disqualified – see the penalty statement to the condition of competition.

Q4. During a competition a player uses a club that he did not know the USGA/R&A had ruled non-conforming to the groove rules effective from January 1, 2010 before the competition started. After the competition is closed, the Committee discovers that the player used the non-conforming club. What is the ruling?

A4. The player's score stands – see Rule 34-1b. However, the player should be advised that the club does not meet the condition of competition and, as a result, must not carry or use it in subsequent competition rounds when the condition of competition is in effect.

Q5. During a competition a player knowingly uses an ATR* club (Additional Testing Required) and does not inform the Committee. Before the close of the competition this fact is brought to the attention of the Committee. The Committee sends the club to the USGA for testing and it is ruled that it does not conform. What is the ruling?

A5. The player is disqualified – see the penalty statement to the condition of competition.

Q6. During a competition a player knowingly uses an ATR club and does not inform the Committee. After the close of the competition this fact is brought to the attention of the Committee. The Committee sends the club to the USGA for testing and it is ruled that it does not conform. What is the ruling?

A6. The player is disqualified. It is the responsibility of the player, not the Committee, to know whether his clubs conform and he assumes the risk that his clubs will be found to be non-conforming if he does not know before he uses them. The fact that a club has been classified as an ATR club should put a player on notice that it might not conform. Therefore, he ought to either not play with it or get it tested before the start of the competition. To allow a player to use a non-conforming club when he knows it might be non-conforming is unfair to the other players in the competition.

Q7. During a competition a player unknowingly uses an ATR club. After the close of the competition this fact is brought to the attention of the Committee. What is the ruling?

A7. Since the player was unaware that the club was an ATR club prior to the competition closing, the player's score stands – see Rule 34-1b.

Q8. A player comes to the Committee and asks if a club conforms to the groove rules effective from January 1, 2010. What is the procedure for the Committee?

A8. If there is sufficient time prior to the start of his round, the informational database can be consulted and the conformance status of the club can be verified. If the club is listed in the database as meeting the 2010 groove specifications, the face of the club has not been altered, and there are no other extenuating circumstances or other evidence of non-conformance, the club will be assumed to conform. If the club is not listed as such in the database and a determination cannot be made immediately or if there is insufficient time to consult the database or access to the database is not available, the player may choose to play with the club but risks disqualification even after the competition has closed if a determination is subsequently made that the club does not conform.

Q9. Prior to the competition, a player informs the Committee that he has an ATR club but has no way of testing it. Is the Committee obligated to test the club? What is the procedure if they cannot do so, as in the case of a qualifier where no testing equipment will be on-site?

A9. The player, not the Committee, is responsible for ensuring that his club conforms long before the day of the competition. Waiting until the day of the competition is the fault of the competitor, not the Committee. The Committee is under no obligation to test the club prior to the start of the stipulated round (at Local and Sectional Qualifying, the Committee will not be able to test the club the day of the competition). The competitor may play. However, if it is later determined that the club is non-conforming (e.g., the player is a potential qualifier or alternate and the club is sent to the USGA Test Center for testing), including after the competition has closed, the player is disqualified.

In general, if the competitor has had the conformity of his equipment questioned before the close of the competition, then he should be disqualified if it is determined later that his club is non-conforming, regardless of when the determination is made. Questioned would include: (1) the player knew his club was listed as ATR, (2) the player had reason to believe his club might not conform, (3) the player has asked that it be tested for whatever reason, which implies that he has some question about the conformity of the club, or (4) another player or the Committee has chosen to question/test the conformance of the club.

Please note that all U.S. Open, Women's Open and Senior Open entrants are advised upon entry that they may send their clubs to the USGA Test

Center for evaluation if their clubs are listed in the database as ATR or if their clubs are not listed (player's should contact the USGA prior to submitting clubs manufactured on or after January 1, 2010). See the following link for further detail:

http://www.usga.org/equipment/testing/InviteForOpenClubTesting/

Q10. A player wins a competition with a non-conforming club. During a subsequent competition, it is determined that the player's club is non-conforming. Is the player disqualified from the competition which he had won?

A10. No, unless the player knew he was or might have been in breach before the close of the earlier competition – see Exception (iv) to Rule 34-1b.

Q11. What is the impact of the waiver granted to the USGA by Ping with respect to the use of Ping EYE2 clubs?

A11. Ping EYE2 clubs may not be used at the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and the U.S. Senior Open, as well as Local and Sectional Qualifying competitions for these championships, unless they have been tested and found to conform with the current groove specifications.

*ATR (Additional Testing Required) indicator signifies that, based on the samples submitted to the USGA Test Center, there was insufficient information available to provide a definitive answer regarding the status of the club or set of clubs relative to the groove rules effective from January 1, 2010. As a result, the player assumes the risk that his club or set of clubs does not conform if the player chooses to carry the club or set of clubs, when the condition of competition (see Decision 4-1/1) requiring conformance to the groove rules effective from January 1, 2010 is in effect, unless the player has the individual club or set of clubs tested and they are found to conform to the condition.

Links from USGA Website to Groove Specific Information

Link to Informational Club Database
http://www.usga.org/InfoClubsDB/intro.html

Questions & Answers: Implementation of Condition Regarding Grooves
http://www.usga.org/grooves/

FOR USE IN PRE-QUALIFYING COMMUNICATION WITH PLAYERS

U.S. Open

In Local (first stage) and Sectional (second stage) Qualifying as well as in the Championship proper, the player's clubs must conform to the groove and punch mark specifications in the Rules of Golf effective from January 1, 2010. ***Note:*** *Ping EYE2 clubs manufactured prior to March 31, 1990 may not be used during Local and Sectional Qualifying as well as the Championship proper. The Condition of Competition is available for review on the entry application.*

The USGA and The R&A have created a reference resource called the Informational Club Database to assist golfers in determining whether their irons, wedges, hybrids and fairway woods comply with the Rules of Golf effective from January 1, 2010 and are permissible for play under the groove condition of competition, which is in effect for all USGA Open Championships. For information about and to access the database, please use the following link: http://www.usga.org/InfoClubsDB/intro.html. Additionally, for other information regarding the groove condition, please use the following link: http://www.usga.org/grooves/. Finally, for information regarding the conformance status of clubs not listed or for any other questions regarding the condition, please contact the USGA Research and Test Center at (908) 234-2300.

Player Club Testing is available for the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open Championships. Please use the following link: http://www.usga.org/equipment/testing/InviteForOpenClubTesting/ *for more information.*

The USGA strongly suggests that all players verify the conformance of their clubs well in advance of their scheduled qualifying competition. It is the player's responsibility, not the USGA's responsibility to ensure that his clubs conform. Waiting until the day of the competition is the fault of the player. The Committee is under no obligation to test the club the competitor may play. However, if it is later determined that the club is non-conforming, including after the competition has closed, the player will be disqualified.

U.S. Women's Open

In Sectional Qualifying and in the Championship proper, the player's clubs must conform to the groove and punch mark specifications in the Rules of Golf effective from January 1, 2010. ***Note:*** *Ping EYE2 clubs manufactured prior to March 31, 1990 may not be used during Sectional Qualifying and the Championship proper. The Condition of Competition is available for review on the entry application.*

The USGA and The R&A have created a reference resource called the Informational Club Database to assist golfers in determining whether their irons, wedges, hybrids and fairway woods comply with the Rules of Golf effective from January 1, 2010 and are permissible for play under the groove condition of competition, which is in effect for all USGA Open Championships. For information about and to access the database, please use the following link: http://www.usga.org/InfoClubsDB/intro.html. Additionally, for other information regarding the groove condition, please use the following link: http://www.usga.org/grooves/. Finally, for information regarding the conformance status of clubs not listed or for any other questions regarding the condition, please contact the USGA Research and Test Center at (908) 234-2300.

Player Club Testing is available for the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open Championships. Please use the following link:
http://www.usga.org/equipment/testing/InviteForOpenClubTesting/
for more information.

The USGA strongly suggests that all players verify the conformance of their clubs well in advance of their scheduled qualifying competition. It is the player's responsibility, not the USGA's responsibility to ensure that her clubs conform. Waiting until the day of the competition is the fault of the player. The Committee is under no obligation to test the club. The competitor may play. However, if it is later determined that the club is non-conforming, including after the competition has closed, the player will be disqualified.

U.S. Senior Open

In Sectional Qualifying and in the Championship proper, the player's clubs must conform to the groove and punch mark specifications in the Rules of Golf available effective from January 1, 2010. ***Note:*** *Ping EYE2 clubs manufactured prior to March 31, 1990 may not be used during Sectional Qualifying and the*

Championship proper. The Condition of Competition is for review on the entry application.

The USGA and The R&A have created a reference resource called the Informational Club Database to assist golfers in determining whether their irons, wedges, hybrids and fairway woods comply with the Rules of Golf effective from January 1, 2010 and are permissible for play under the groove condition of competition, which is in effect for all USGA Open Championships. For information about and to access the database, please use the following link: http://www.usga.org/InfoClubsDB/intro.html. Additionally, for other information regarding the groove condition, please use the following link: http://www.usga.org/grooves/. Finally, for information regarding the conformance status of clubs not listed or for any other questions regarding the condition, please contact the USGA Research and Test Center at (908) 234-2300.

Player Club Testing is available for the U.S. Open, U.S. Women's Open and U.S. Senior Open Championships. Please use the following link:
http://www.usga.org/equipment/testing/InviteForOpenClubTesting/
for more information.

The USGA strongly suggests that all players verify the conformance of their clubs well in advance of their scheduled qualifying competition. It is the player's responsibility, not the USGA's responsibility to ensure that his clubs conform. Waiting until the day of the competition is the fault of the player. The Committee is under no obligation to test the club. The competitor may play. However, if it is later determined that the club is non-conforming, including after the competition has closed, the player will be disqualified.

Informational Club Database

The USGA has received numerous inquiries from golfers wishing to know whether or not their clubs will meet the new groove and punch mark specifications effective from Jan. 1, 2010 (the "New Groove Rules"). Many of these inquiries have come from golfers who plan to play in events where the condition of competition is in effect, requiring that the player's clubs conform to the New Groove Rules (the "Condition of Competition"). As a result, the USGA and The R&A have created a reference resource called the Informational Club Database (the "Database").

How to Use the Informational Club Database

The purpose of the Database is to assist golfers in determining whether their irons, hybrids and fairway woods comply with the New Groove Rules.

The Database is a searchable database of irons, fairway woods with lofts of 25 degrees or higher, and hybrids with lofts of 25 degrees or higher, submitted to the USGA and/or The R&A prior to Jan. 1, 2010 and evaluated to determine whether they meet the New Groove Rules.

If it is indicated in the Database that a club does not comply with the New Groove Rules, it does not mean that the club does not conform to the Rules of Golf. Irons, hybrids and fairway woods available prior to Jan.1, 2010, which conform to the 2008-2009 Rules of Golf, are permitted for use until at least 2024, provided that the Condition of Competition is not in effect.

Additionally, clubs available prior to Jan. 1, 2010, which conform to the 2008-2009 Rules of Golf, may be produced and sold by manufacturers until Dec. 31, 2010, and may be sold by retailers indefinitely.

In listing the compliance status of clubs in the Database with respect to the New Groove Rules, the USGA has chosen to indicate whether a club complied or did not comply only if the test results were clear. In situations where the test results were mixed within a set submitted or the model did not consistently meet the New Groove Rules, the Database indicates that there was insufficient information available to determine compliance to the New Groove Rules. Any player who wishes to carry such clubs in events where the Condition of Competition is in effect should have their clubs tested individually and those clubs must meet the New Groove Rules. **It is important to remember that most clubs in production prior to Jan. 1, 2010 were designed to comply with a different set of groove**

specifications. Clubs that conform to the groove rules that were in effect prior to Jan. 1, 2010 will continue to conform to the Rules of Golf until at least 2024, unless the Condition of Competition is in effect. If the Condition of Competition is in effect, the clubs must comply with the specifications effective from Jan. 1, 2010.

Unlike the List of Conforming Driver Heads, the Database is to be used for reference purposes only. The Database is not to be used in any manner stipulating that clubs must be included in the Database in order to be carried when the Condition of Competition is in effect.

To use the Database, simply select the club type (irons and wedges, hybrids, or fairway woods) and enter the appropriate search criteria in the manufacturer, product name and/or markings fields. Once you have located the club model, expand at least one of the "View Markings" fields to ensure that the markings on your clubs match the markings displayed. There may be subtle differences in the markings differentiating two versions of the same model of a club (e.g., a pre-2010 and post-2010 version of the same model) or indicating two different models. For example, one version of a model may include a hosel marking indicating compliance with the New Groove Rules, while the original version may not include the hosel marking. Please note that these differences vary from manufacturer to manufacturer. As a result, **if all markings of the clubhead shown in the Database do not match exactly the markings on the club in question, it may be a different model or version and you should consult the USGA for further assistance.**

Reading the Search Result

1. The search result provides the club's conformance status with the groove rules in effect prior to Jan. 1, 2010 (Yes or No), as well as an indication of whether the club meets the New Groove Rules (Yes, No or ATR).

2. A 2010 status of "Yes" or "No" indicates that, based on the samples submitted, there was sufficient information available to provide a definitive answer regarding the status of the club or set of clubs relative to the New Groove Rules.

3. A 2010 status of ATR (Additional Testing Required) indicates that, based on the samples submitted, there was insufficient information available to provide a definitive answer regarding the status of the club or set of clubs relative to the New Groove Rules (e.g., some of the samples submitted within the set met the New Groove Rules, while other samples within the set did not).

4. An individual club or set of clubs with an ATR status indicates that the player assumes the risk that his clubs do not comply with the New Groove Rules if the player does not have his club or set of clubs tested for compliance prior to the competition and he chooses to carry the club or set of clubs when the Condition of Competition is in effect. Accordingly, it is highly recommended that the player has the individual club or set of clubs tested to ensure they are in compliance with the New Groove Rules. **It is important to remember that clubs available prior to Jan. 1, 2010 were designed to comply with a different set of groove specifications. Clubs that conform to the groove rules that were in effect prior to Jan. 1, 2010 will continue to conform to the Rules of Golf until at least 2024, unless the Condition of Competition is in effect. If the Condition of Competition is in effect, the clubs must comply with the specifications effective from Jan. 1, 2010.**

5. Please note that because the new edge radius requirements do not apply to clubs with lofts of less than 25 degrees, some searches may yield a result indicating that clubs with lofts less than 25 degrees within an iron set meet the New Groove Rules, while the higher lofted irons within a set do not. However, please note that a second major change to the Groove Rules (Area divided by Pitch), applies to all clubs, regardless of loft, other than driving clubs and putters.

6. It is the player's responsibility to ensure that his clubs conform to the Rules of Golf, including all applicable conditions of competition. Players, therefore, should take care to ensure that any clubs carried during the stipulated round meet the

requirements of the rules on clubs in effect for that competition. Moreover, it is strongly recommended that any questions regarding compliance with the New Groove Rules be resolved by the player in advance of the competition because on-site testing may not be available.

7. It is anticipated that the committee in charge of the competition may rely on the Database and presume that clubs listed as meeting the New Groove Rules, as designated as a "Yes", may be carried in the competition, without further field testing. However, if a club is tested and fails any on-site evaluation for compliance with the New Groove Rules, that individual club may not be carried by the player, when the Condition of Competition is in effect, even if that model is included in the Database as complying with the New Groove Rules. Similarly, if a club or set of clubs is listed as not meeting the New Groove Rules, but they are tested and found to comply with the New Groove Rules, that individual club or set of clubs may be carried by the player when the Condition of Competition is in effect. In other words, in all events, actual testing of the club or clubs in question, if applicable, shall supersede the findings in the Database.

RULES AND COMPETITIONS STAFF					
Name/Title	**Responsibility**	**Email**	**908-234-2300 Extension**	**Cell**	**Home**
Hall, Jeff Managing Director, Rules, Competitions and Amateur Status	Rules, Championships	jhall@usga.org	1096	908-217-9432	610-317-1748
Pagel, Thomas Senior Director, Rules of Golf and Amateur Status	Rules, Amateur Status	tpagel@usga.org	1908	908-217-8541	801-834-2659
Loehr, Bernie Director, Amateur Status and Rules of Golf	Rules, Amateur Status	bloehr@usga.org	1902	908-655-7491	585-217-2003
Staebler, David Director, Rules Education	Rules	dstaebler@usga.org	1896	908-655-7490	215-222-2077
EQUIPMENT STANDARDS STAFF					
Rich, Carter Director, Equipment Ru and Conformance	Equipment Conformance Questions	jcrich@usga.org	1085	908-256-1635	908-256-1635
Pringle, Matt **Technical Director**	Equipment – technical details and conformance questions	mpringle@usga.org	5009	908-642-2082	
Spitzer, John Managing Director, Equipment Standards	Equipment – technical details and conformance questions	jspitzer@usga.org	1036	908-310-5407	215-295-0478