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Using the Callaway System Method for a 1-Day Golf Handicap

By **Brent Kelley**

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The Callaway System (or Callaway Scoring System) is a sort of 1-day handicapping method that can be used in events where most of the golfers do not have real handicap indexes. It requires only the score the golfer shoots in the event where the system is in use, plus a chart (shown below) for reference.

For example, at a company outing or a fund-raising golf tournament, most of the golfers may be only weekend golfers or occasional recreational golfers - not the types likely to carry official handicap indexes. But without handicaps how can they all - with widely different playing abilities - compete fairly in a tournament?

Only One Score - And a Chart - Needed in Callaway System

That's where the Callaway System comes in. The Callaway System allows a "handicap allowance" to be determined and then applied to each golfer's score.

In the USGA Handicap System, a golfer's official handicap index is calculated using his 20 most recent rounds of golf. But in the Callaway System you need only one score - the score the golfer shoots in the event where the Callaway System is being used.

When the Callaway System is in use, all competitors tee off and play stroke play, scoring in the normal fashion with one exception - double par is the maximum score on any given hole:

On a par-3, the maximum score is 6;

on a par-4, max score is 8;

on a par-5, max score is 10.

Following the round, the golfer totals his gross score (using the double par maximum). The golfer then finds his score in the Callaway System chart (shown on Page 2), which tells the golfer how many of his "worst scores" he gets to deduct. That deduction is made, and then a second adjustment - also shown on the chart - is applied and may involve subtracting or adding strokes.

After all that, the golfer's score goes from a gross score to a net score, similar to the process of using real handicaps.

Sound complicated? Don't worry; it's easier than it might sound. You just need to see the chart and examples of the Callaway System in action. Also now that in a tournament, the tournament organizers will probably be making all the Callaway adjustments for you.

The Callaway Scoring System Chart

Gross (using double par max.)					Handicap Deduction
		70	71	72	Scratch
73	74	75			1/2 of Worst Hole
76	77	78	79	80	Worst Hole
81	82	83	84	85	1 1/2 Worst Holes
86	87	88	89	90	2 Worst Holes
91	92	93	94	95	2 1/2 Worst Holes
96	97	98	99	100	3 Worst Holes
101	102	103	104	105	3 1/2 Worst Holes
106	107	108	109	110	4 Worst Holes
111	112	113	114	115	4 1/2 Worst Holes
116	117	118	119	120	5 Worst Holes
121	122	123	124	125	5 1/2 Worst Holes
126	127	128	129	130	6 Worst Holes
-2	-1	0	+1	+2	Handicap Adjustment

The Callaway System scoring chart looks complicated? It's not. Just remember: All you're really doing is playing a round of golf, typical stroke play except for that double-par maximum, and then doing what the chart tells you to do.

Before we show some examples, a couple of notes about the chart:

This chart applies to a par-72 golf course. If par is different, simply add or subtract the number of strokes - corresponding to the difference in par - from the Gross Scores listed in the chart. For example, if par is 71, then subtract 1 from each of the Gross Scores listed above.

Also, half scores are rounded up. If a player is deducting half of 7, then that 3.5 is rounded up to 4.

And finally, the maximum a golfer can deduct under the Callaway System is 50 strokes.

Using the Chart to Calculate Your 'Callaway Handicap' and Net Score

Example 1: Mario shoots 70. He consults the chart and finds 70 on the row where the "handicap deduction" column says "scratch." Mario gets no handicap allowance - in the Callaway System, scoring 72 or lower makes you a scratch golfer.

Example 2: Anand shoots 97. Look at the chart above and find 97. Its row (going across) corresponds to a handicap deduction of "3 Worst Holes." So Anand checks his scorecard and finds his three worst scores. Anand's three worst scores are, say, a 9, an 8 and a 7. Total those up, and we get a handicap deduction of 24.

Now we apply the *second* adjustment. Go back to 97 in the chart above; follow the column down to the "handicap adjustment" row on the bottom line. The column for 97 corresponds to a handicap adjustment of -1. That means we're going to subtract a stroke from our handicap deduction of 24. So our final, adjusted handicap allowance is 23.

And our net Callaway System score is 97 minus 23, or 74. And 74 is the net score.

So using the chart is a matter of finding the gross score, looking across the row for the handicap deduction, then looking down the column for the adjustment. Once you've

done it once, it's easy.

Example 3: Helen shoots 84. According to the chart, her handicap deduction is "1 1/2 worst holes." Let's say her two worst holes were an 8 and a 7. So Helen adds 8 plus 4 (3.5 - half of 7 - becomes 4, because you always round up in the Callaway System) and gets a handicap allowance of 12. Looking back at the chart, she finds her "handicap adjustment" is +1, so she adds another stroke to 12 to make 13. Helen's gross score of 84 is a net score of 71 (84 minus 13).

17th, 18th Holes Can't Be Deducted

Important point: In the Callaway System, you *must* count your scores on the 17th and 18th holes, even if they are among your worst. If the chart tells you to deduct your three worst holes, and one of them is the 17th, sorry, you can't deduct that one. You'll have to keep that hole and move on to the next-highest score.

Is the Callaway Scoring System Connected with Callaway Golf Company?



Rob Tringali/SportsChrome/Getty Images

Does the Callaway System, the handicapping method, have anything to do with Callaway Golf, the company? Did Ely Callaway, founder of Callaway Golf, invent the Callaway Scoring System?

No on both counts. The two Callaways are unrelated.

The Callaway System is so-named because it was created by Lionel Callaway, a onetime pro at Pinehurst Country Club. (Today there is a conference room at Pinehurst Resort named The Callaway Room after Lionel and his brother Harold, also a Pinehurst golf pro.)

There are two other popular 1-day handicapping methods similar to the Callaway System that do not require consulting charts (although they do require knowing the proper steps). Those would be the Peoria System and the System 36 handicapping methods.

