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**TO: ALL MANUFACTURERS**

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## **GOLF CLUBS WITH COATED FACES**

Recently, both The R&A and the USGA have evaluated submissions of clubheads with coated faces that, it was determined, could impact clubhead performance in a manner contrary to the Rules of Golf. The R&A and the USGA have also become aware of other product concepts, which might be seeking to use coatings for the purpose of enhancing the performance of a clubhead.

Amongst other things, a clubhead with a coated face must comply with each of the following clauses of the equipment Rules:

- 1) Appendix II, 4c(ii) – The design, material and/or construction of, or any treatment to, the clubhead (which includes the clubface) must not incorporate features or technology including, but not limited to, separate springs or spring features, that have the intent of, or the effect of, unduly influencing the clubhead's spring effect.
- 2) Appendix II, 4c(iii) – The design, material and/or construction of, or any treatment to, the clubhead (which includes the clubface) must not unduly influence the movement of the ball.
- 3) Appendix II, 5a – The face of the club must be hard and rigid and must not impart significantly more or less spin to the ball than a standard steel face.

In accordance with Section 3 of the Equipment Rulemaking Procedures, the purpose of this Notice is to clarify to all manufacturers how the governing bodies may evaluate a coated club with respect to the above Rules, in addition to the standard conformance tests:

- 1) The governing bodies may, at their discretion:
  - a. Remove the coating and measure the characteristic time, and/or
  - b. Conduct additional testing, such as a COR test.

With the coating removed, a clubhead's characteristic time exceeding the limit plus the tolerance would be evidence that the coating unduly influences that clubhead's spring effect. Therefore, the club would not conform to Appendix II, 4c(ii). The same would apply to a coated clubhead, where the rebound velocity significantly exceeds that of a cavity back plate.

Please note that any coating which has the effect of significantly *reducing* the characteristic time also influences that clubhead's spring effect. However, only coatings that have the effect of masking a non-conforming condition, causing it to appear conforming, would be considered to *unduly influence* a clubhead's spring effect.

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- 2) The amount of spin which may be generated by a coated clubhead may be tested and compared to a standard steel face. A spin test typically involves firing a golf ball without spin at a club face set at the intended loft and measuring the resulting spin. The intent of any spin testing is to isolate the effect of an applied coating and, therefore, in order to perform the required testing, the governing bodies may request, at their discretion:
- a. additional sample(s) of the clubhead as submitted; and/or
  - b. uncoated sample(s) of the clubhead as submitted; and/or
  - c. sample(s) of the coating affixed to a flat surface of metal (such as steel).

Significantly higher or lower spin derived from a coated club face, as compared to a standard steel face, would be evidence that the clubhead does not conform to Appendix II, 5a and that the coating unduly influences the movement of the ball, contrary to Appendix II, 4c(iii).

If you have any questions regarding any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



**CLAIRE BATES**  
Assistant Director – Equipment Standards

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