

MAKING A CASE FOR NET DOUBLE BOGEY

Have you ever played a hole so poorly that you picked up for the sake of pace of play and then wondered what score to give yourself? Equitable Stroke Control (ESC) is a system used by the USGA to minimize the effects of "disaster holes" on Handicap Indexes. ESC sets a maximum score per hole based on your course handicap. For instance, players with a course handicap of 9 or lower can record no higher than double bogey on any hole. The maximum score increases for players with

higher handicaps (see chart, right).

Most agree the system works well for single-digit handicappers, but critics, including Dean Knuth, who developed much of the USGA's handicap system, think ESC is flawed for most players. A 20-handicapper, for example, can take no more than an 8 on any hole. Although a triple bogey on a par 5 is common, an 8 on a par 3 is unusual. Furthermore, being forced to grind through eight shots on a par 3 can destroy pace of play for an entire course.

Instead of ESC, golf associations in many countries, including all of Europe and New Zealand, implement a rule in which golfers can't record any score higher than net double bogey. So a player getting a handicap stroke on a par 3 could record a score no higher than 6.

Although Knuth thinks the USGA should adopt this rule, Kevin O'Connor, the USGA's senior director of handicapping, says a change isn't likely in the near future. —RK

EQUITABLE
STROKE CONTROL

