

## HISTORY of the USGA HANDICAP SYSTEM

The United States Golf Association (USGA) has often resorted to the courts to protect the integrity of its handicap system. In one such case, the California Court of Appeals (First District) summarized the system's history:

The USGA was founded in 1894. One of its chief contributions to the game of golf in the United States has been its development and maintenance since 1911 of the USGA handicap system ... designed to enable individual golf players of different abilities to compete fairly with one another. Because permitting individual golfers to issue their handicaps to themselves would inevitably lead to inequities and abuse, the peer review provided by authorized golf clubs and associations has always been an essential part of the [system]. Therefore, to protect the integrity and credibility of its [handicap system], the USGA has consistently followed a policy of only permitting authorized golf associations and clubs to issue USGA handicaps ... In 1979, USGA assembled a handicap research team to investigate widespread criticisms of USGA's then-existing handicap formula. The research team invested approximately a decade and up to \$2 million conducting intensive analysis and evaluation of the various factors involved in developing a more accurate and satisfactory [system]. As a result, the research team developed new handicap formulas ... designed to measure the overall difficulty of golf courses, compare individual golfers with other golfers of all abilities, take account of differences between tournament and casual play, and adjust aberrant scores on individual holes. USGA subsequently adopted and implemented these new [f]ormulas between 1987 and 1993.