We continue breaking down the Top 5 Things a Golfer Needs to Know about the World Handicap System (WHS), which became active on January 1, 2020. Parts 1 and 2 can be accessed at www.msgagolf.org/newsletter-archive. For more information about the WHS go to www.usga.org/whs. We’ll also have additional educational resources posted on our website in coming months.

#3: Net Double Bogey Will Replace ESC

Even the best golfers have bad holes, and this shouldn’t define a player’s ability. Setting a maximum hole score ensures that bad holes don’t impact a player’s handicap too severely. Previously, you would adjust your score using the Equitable Stroke Control system (ESC). Based on a table, and using your course handicap for the tees you played, you would be given a maximum score you could count for any given hole.

Now, ESC has been replaced by Net Double Bogey. Another way to remember this is Double Bogey Plus (or Double Bogey Minus for a plus handicap). This is already being used in many parts of the world, and is simply Par + 2 +/- any handicap strokes you receive for that hole. This adjustment is better reflective of your actual ability, instead of a set number for all holes with ESC. It also helps Pace of Play to know when to pick up your ball.

What does this mean for you? Your maximum hole score could change from hole to hole, and the key factors are Par and your Handicap Strokes. Finding Par is simple, since it is usually listed on the scorecard or tee marker. But, you also need to know how to determine your Handicap Strokes. It’s as easy as knowing your course handicap for the tees you are playing and using the scorecard. Every scorecard lists a handicap # per hole, with the hardest hole as 1 and the easiest as 18 (men and women generally have different numbers listed). Using your handicap for the tees you are playing, you would receive 1 stroke for each numbered stroke hole, starting with 1, until you count to your handicap. For example, if you have a 5 handicap, you get 1 stroke on the first 5 "handicap" holes (highlighted above).

Remember to use your Course Handicap (not your Playing Handicap used in competition) to count stroke holes. And, if you post your score hole-by-hole, the system will adjust it for you. If you have any questions about the new Rules of Handicapping, please feel free to contact us.
Congratulations to our newest Ace Club Members!

Did you get a hole-in-one? Go to www.msgagolf.org to see how to get your MSGA Hole-in-One Certificate!

Becky Smith-Powell, 10/24/19, Whitefish Lake GC (S), Hole #3, 120 yds, 6 Iron
Dow Powell, 10/5/19, Whitefish Lake GC (S), Hole #16, 130 yds, 9 Iron

Congratulations to our NEWEST WINNERS!

DECEMBER’S DRAWING:
Universal Studios, Florida - Susan Near, Helena
$200 cash - Linda Mann, Missoula

** JANUARY’S TRIP PRIZE is Rome, Italy **

 Cheers To The Year and Decade Ahead!
Nick Dietzen, Contributor

To the readers of the MSGA Newsletter, you’re accustomed to a lighter amount of content during the winter months, so please allow me some space to give a bit of personal news and to say thanks.

I’ll start with a little personal history. In 2013, I had returned to my home state of Montana following a car crash that left me focused on what was important, and also left me a little bit uncertain of what the future – one that I was thankful to even have – had in store. During the in-between of the Christmas and New Year’s Holidays, a severe auto accident changed the course of my life. I had been living and working in Minnesota. My employment was with the wonderful Minnesota Golf Association. There, I had the good fortune of traveling the state and meeting many passionate golfers of all walks of life, working with the junior program that I coordinated, the senior tour that I pitched in with, and everything in between. Then the aforementioned accident took place and I decided to immediately return to Montana and be closer to my parents and help with the convalescence of my mother, who sustained myriad injuries.

After nearly a decade away from my home state, I was given an opportunity by Jim Opitz, MSGA Executive Director, to assist with a strategic planning session for the Montana State Golf Association. It was simply a two-day session in Bozeman, full of winter snowstorms outside, and passionate, dedicated work by the MSGA board inside a hotel conference room. That two days gave me excitement, purpose, and a chance to focus on something I really enjoyed – amateur golf and looking to foster a game I loved in the state I loved.

A few months later, I was afforded the opportunity to take over contributing to the MSGA Newsletter. I had recently been fortunate to join the athletic department at Carroll College and I moonlighted with whatever leftover time I had with the MSGA. With the assistance of Emily Hulsey, we produced a newsletter for all things Montana golf. The newsletter was previously distributed seven months a year, and we decided we could make this a monthly distribution and cobble together enough content that the diehards …Continued on the next page

ONE NETWORK IS HERE!

After many months of waiting, the much-anticipated USGA Network is finally here! All handicap systems will be down from January 1-5 as the USGA merges everyone to one network. Golfnet will do additional work on the 6th, with our handicap system up and running on the 7th.

Please note: If you have more than one score record on January 7th (whether in or out of state), please contact us as soon as possible! This means that we need to merge your records, since the USGA mandates that you should have only one Network# and one score record moving forward, which you will share between associations.

With this network merge, all Montana golfers will receive NEW NETWORK#s. Your old # will be archived for administration reference. If you currently have a GHIN#, and you have been linked, that is your new #.

We’ll continue to use the Golfnet software, but will be on the same network as all handicap vendors (including GHIN), so accessing and transferring records will be much easier for our members.

Attention MSGA Smartphone App users: The app will require an update to accommodate the changes with the new handicap system, which will likely happen automatically. It will include new features that we will explain more about in a future newsletter issue.

Thanks for your patience as we navigate these changes! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us any time.

Try the MSGA Smartphone APP. Available in the Apple or Android Stores.
Fast-forward almost seven years and I’m making another move, this time to California. It’s my second trip south, the first for college at USC, and I’m excited for a new adventure. For nearly seven years, I’ve done my best to help publicize the exploits of Montana’s great golfers, industry professionals, and news relevant to Montana golf. I’ve been disappointed that I haven’t had more time to invest in this rewarding work, but also thankful that the MSGA has been committed to delivering news to a very passionate membership who, no matter the weather, are always eager to get out and play a few holes.

I have met a great many friends through golf. The game has been analogous to life for me in many ways and several of the same lessons you have learned through golf, I too, have carried with me and appreciate the special place golf holds in my heart. I want to thank Jim Opitz and the MSGA for allowing me to be a part of the organization.

Despite my schedule and the limited time I was able to commit to this work, I so enjoyed being able to be a part of this golf community. I thank Emily for her continued patience when I often was delivering content in the wee hours, trying to make a deadline on the road after working my principal occupations. Lastly, I want to thank the readers for occasionally dropping me a note and for the various fellow golfers in the Treasure State for saying "Hi", many of which I played with at the many tremendous courses in Montana.

It might be a few months before you’re able to play golf, so I wish you a great winter with other pursuits. I know that half of the fun of loving golf is finding ways to pass the time in the basement putting into a glass, gripping a shovel like it was a seven iron, and just making those perfect air swings in the living room on a Sunday afternoon.

Farewell for now, and I’m hoping to trade in the shovel for a few more rounds of golf this winter. I’m losing more distance at sea level and before long, I’ll be missing the comfort of bent grass. May your 2020 be filled with good friends, good times on the course, and a few more good holes than last year. Happy New Year and thanks for letting me be a small part of your inbox! It’s not goodbye, but see you later – on the course, of course. If you find yourself in Santa Barbara, look me up, or reach out to me at ndietzen@gmail.com. I’ve always got time for some golf with a friend!