



## RULES AND FORMAT

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## Core values

We aim to uphold the values of golf, including while having a great time.

- Integrity
- Honesty
- Competitiveness
- Friendship

## Mission Statement

Our mission is to create a fair competitive environment for golfers of all skill levels. We inspire and encourage golfers to do their very best and strive to play their personal best on and off the golf course.

## Deposits

- Deposits are required to secure a player's spot in the tournament. This ensures that each player is guaranteed a position to compete.
- The deposit amount will be specified for each tournament and must be paid by the stated deadline to confirm participation.

## Cancellations

- The Pin High Amateur Tour (PHAT) is required to give golf courses a firm player count. As a general rule, this count must be confirmed at least **2 weeks prior** to the tournament date.
- It is imperative that all members understand this policy, as PHAT is LOCKED into the confirmed number of players, and the course charges PHAT for that minimum player count.



- **Cancellation Policy:**
  - If you cancel after the specified date, the tour may incur the cost of your green fees.
  - Therefore, if you cancel after the cancellation date, you will be charged a cancellation fee that covers at least the cost the tour incurred.
- **Additional Fees:**
  - Blue Golf (the tournament management system) charges PHAT **10% of the total registration cost** for any cancellation. As a result, there will be a small cancellation fee to cover PHAT's costs if you cancel at any time after registration.

## Tour Schedule

- **National events (Majors)**
  - **National Majors**
    - Major will hold more point values than a standard local event. The intent is to bring golfers together throughout the states to play competitive amateur golf.
    - Will be at least a 36-hole individual stroke play medal play. Unless specified on the tournament home information page. For example, a Stableford 2-player format
    - Players must be members, have played in at least three local events, and have a validated PHAT tournament index.
  - **National Championship Tournament**
    - This tournament will be at least a 36-hole contest.
    - Players must be members, have played in at least three local events, and have a validated PHAT tournament index.
  - **National Registration Hierarchy**
    - Any player can sign up for the national events early, however there is a hierarchy that will happen if the tournament fills up and we are not allowed to expand the player field.
    - These tournaments will have a 4-week hierarchy cut off.
      - Outside 4-weeks of tournament date
        - A higher tiered player wants to register in a full tournament the progression this player will bump will be in the following order:
          - LIFO – Tier 1 (non-member)
          - LIFO – Tier 2 (member with less than 4 rounds)
        - Any player removed based on the hierarchy will be issued a full refund
      - Inside 4-weeks of tournament date
        - No one will be removed

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- Hopefully ensuring no travel arrangement deposits are lost

- **Chapter Tour Schedule**

- Each local chapter will set their own schedule based on that region's golf season, the population.
- Most tournaments will be individual stroke play with side games available (Skins, 3-ball, etc).

## Handicap Committee

- The committee's primary purpose is to place new players and unvalidated players in the appropriate division.
- The committee will be made up of the Handicap President, three local chapter owners, and five PHAT player members (one per division).

## Tour Index

- The players' index will be determined by using the differential handicap of each round in the PHAT system. To calculate this number, we will average the 5 best rounds from the last 10 rounds.
- **Validated Index**
  - A player's index will be validated after their 3rd PHAT tournament round.

## Divisions

- There will be 5 divisions.
- Division handicap ranges:
  - D1 – (up to 4.9)
  - D2 – (5.0 – 9.9)
  - D3 – (10.0 – 14.9)
  - D4 – (15.0 – 19.9)
  - D5 – (20.0 – higher)
  -

Rounds use	Rounds Played
2	4
2	5
3	6
3	7
4	8
4	9
5	10

## Divisional Placement

- **New members**
  - Vetting - The process of vetting will include various factors such as GHIN, other tour handicaps/Indexes, contacting local courses, club championship scores, and other tournament scores. When using GHIN, the player's lowest handicap within the past 52 weeks will be a significant factor in determining which division they will be placed in.
  - New members will be assigned to the division that best matches their playing ability. The final decision on this placement will be made by the tournament handicap



committee. Their decision-making process may involve conducting phone interviews with the player, considering GHIN, local course information, club championship scores, and other tournament indexes/scores.

- If the handicap committee is unable to verify a new member's handicap, the new member will be placed in Division 1 to ensure fairness for the other participants. It is the player's responsibility to provide a verifiable handicap, not PHAT.
- After the completion of the 3rd PHAT tournament round, the player will be placed in the Division where they achieved their lowest score.
  - For example, if the player's differential indexes are 14, 9, and 13, they will use the +9 round and be placed in Division 2.

## Division Movement

- **Existing Members with validated indexes**
  - Members will be placed in the division their index indicates the day after the final round of the national championship tournament or their local finals. Whichever is the latest in the season.
  - Members will only be moved if they request self-promotion. Otherwise, members will stay in the division they are placed in at the beginning of the tour season.
  - Members are allowed to request to move up a division. **If that request is granted, they will NOT be allowed to move back down until the beginning of the next season.**

## Stroke Back Rule

- PHAT aims to promote improvement among its members and does not intend to punish them for getting better. The organization wants its members to score higher, but it also acknowledges the need to maintain fair competition within each division. Instead of automatically promoting a player when they reach the divisional line, the player has the option to either move up to the higher division or give strokes back to the field they are currently competing against.
- The stroke ratios for giving strokes back to the field below the divisional line are as follows:
  - $0.1 - 0.5 = 1$  stroke
  - $0.6 - 1.0 = 2$  strokes
  - $1.1 - 1.5 = 3$  strokes
  - $1.6 - 2.0 = 4$  strokes
  - $2.1 - 2.5 = 5$  strokes
  - $2.6 - 3.0 = 6$  strokes
  - $3.1 - 3.5 = 7$  strokes

This trend continues with a 1:2 ratio

- If a member decides to self-promote to a higher division, they will only be allowed to transfer 80% of their Player of the Year points into the higher division.



- PHAT believes this method to be the fairest in the amateur tournament industry. It ensures that each member does not miss out on the Tour's Player of the Year race, while also maintaining fair competition for all participants.
- This system also protects the field. For example, if a member has an 11.5 handicap in Division 4 and shoots an 84, their adjusted score will be 91 (84 + 7), placing them in the middle of the 15-20 handicap division.
- The member's actual score will be used to determine their tournament index.

## Tournament format

- **Stroke play**
  - All tournaments will be stroke-play format unless otherwise noted in the tournament details on the tournament information page on the website or app.
- **Contests**
  - Division format
    - Each division is individual **GROSS** scoring
      - The only exception is when the stroke back rule is being used for a player that has an index below the division line.
    - Only compete within your own division
  - Major Ed: Empower the Veterans contest
    - 85% open net contest
    - All divisions are eligible
    - No money payout (Entry free minus trophy cost is donated to foundation)
  - Senior Double Dip
    - Age (50+)
    - Tees:
      - Age 50-59 farthest tee box in their division
      - Seniors 60-69 will use the tour senior tees
      - Supers 70+ use the tours super tees
  - 3-ball
    - 85% net
    - Limited to 18 strokes
    - All divisions are eligible
    - Total net strokes for all par 3's combined

## Out of Division Scoring

- **Existing validated member**
  - Due to the structure of our divisions. Out of division scoring from an established member will not fall into a DQ status. However, this score will affect their handicap tournament index. See rule: Stroke Back Rule



- **New Member**

- If a new member or guest player wins in divisions 2-5, they will be disqualified if their score is 2 strokes below the division line and outside of 3 strokes from the next placed player. This rule is in place to prevent new members from deceiving PHAT and division members by playing in the wrong division.
- If a tournament director suspects that a player intentionally added strokes to their round to avoid disqualification or to inflate their handicap, the player will be disqualified and given a warning. They will also be automatically moved to the division that the tour believes is the appropriate fit for them. The player will remain in that division until the end of the season, at which point they can request to be moved down if they wish.
- Once a player has a validated index, they will not be disqualified for shooting outside of their division. However, if they have less than 5 round, they can be battlefield promoted.

## Battlefield promotions

- Only new members or members that do not have 5 tour rounds are eligible for a battlefield promotion.
- Tour promotes players on the same day as the tournament and moves their score into the new division assuming the tees are the same.
  - If tees are not the same, then the player will be disqualified.

## Disqualification

- **Breaking the Rules**

- Any player that is caught intentionally cheating will be given a 2-tournament suspension. A \$100 citation will be issued to the player. Citation must be paid before the player is allowed to return in good standings. The citation funds will be donated to the foundation.
  - All citations will be given to Major Ed Empower the Veterans Foundation as a charitable donation. Must show proof of payment to regain good standings with PHAT and be allowed to play on the tour.
- If a player returns and continues to violate the rules PHAT has the right to remove the player from the tour without a refund of tournament fees or membership fees.

## Caddie Policy

- Caddies are allowed as long as it's not slowing down pace of play or causing undue issues on the course.



## Spectators

- Spectators are welcome; however, they must be respectful of the course and other players. They should not disrupt the pace of play.
- If spectators intend to ride in a cart, it is recommended that they contact the course directly to ensure there are enough carts available.

## Tour Event Prizes

- Trophy, tour credit, cash gift cards and various prizes provided by sponsors at discretion of chapter owners and national office.

## Prize Pool

- Determined based on size of field.
- Non-members are only allowed to win tour credit.
  - Winnings are capped to the cost of annual membership.
- Members (D2-D5)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> tournament is limited to cost of tournament entry fee
    - Protects the field from sandbaggers paying \$55.00 (membership) and winning a \$1,000 prize.

## Trophies

- Division winners – Each division will receive an award.

## Pairings

- Will be posted on the app prior to the tournament date.
  - A player can request a pairing; all pairings are at the discretion of the tournament director.
  - Pairing will be done by tee box assignments as best possible to keep pace.

## Tour Event Scoring

- All scoring will be stroke-play unless otherwise stated in the tournament details.
- Each pairing will be required to enter in live scoring after each hole is completed.
  - This will assist PHAT with keeping pace of play moving forward.

## Triple Bogey Max

- Divisions 3-5 will play triple bogey max.

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## Tee Box Yardages

- These yardages are a baseline for our tournaments and PHAT can not ensure that every course can accommodate these yardages
  - Men's D1 (up to 4.9 Handicap)
    - 6,500 yards
  - Men's D2-D3
    - 6,100 – 6,400 yards
  - Men's D4-D5
    - 5,600 – 6,100 yards
  - Seniors D1
    - 6,100 – 6,400 yards
  - Seniors D2-D3
    - 5,700 – 6,000 yards
  - Seniors D4-D5
    - 5,400 – 5,700 yards
  - Supers D1
    - 5,800 – 6,100 yards
  - Supers D2-D3
    - 5,400 – 5,700 yards
  - Supers D4-D5
    - 5,000 – 5,400 yards

## Tie breakers

- If 1<sup>st</sup> place has a tie within the division
  - To determine the tie breaker the players will play match play until a player wins a hole
    - Course permitting a playoff
  - USGA Score back rules will determine winner if a playoff is not permitted due to course availabilities or time restraints.

## Seniors

- Players 50 and over are allowed to play in the senior division, however if the player is younger than 60 the player will be hitting from the open division tee box.
  - Male players 60 – 69 will play from PHAT's senior tees.

## Super Seniors

- Males 70 and over will be considered super seniors or supers
  - Play from the PHAT Super tees.



## Points Policy

- Players will receive points based on how they place in the field. Points will also be determined by the size of the division field and if it's a single day or multiple day tournament.

## Player of the Year Race

- **Local Player of the Year Race Calculations**
  - Each local chapter will determine the number of events that will count towards the local POY. Many of the regions will have a shortened season due to weather conditions so there is NO ONE SIZE FITS ALL.
  - **1-day, (18-hole events)**
    - Point Value = X1
  - **Elevated Event, (18-hole event)**
    - Point Value = X2
  - **2-day (36-hole event)**
    - Point Value = X2
  - National Major
    - Point Value = X3
  - **Local championship**
    - Point Value = 2.5

Local events refer to any tournament that is not classified as a National Tournament. This means that a member from Colorado can earn local Player of the Year (POY) points by participating in an event held in Iowa, which will contribute to their standings in the Colorado local Player of the Year race. PHAT encourages players to explore different chapters and foster new friendships through their participation.

- **National Player of the Year Calculations**

- Local Chapter events
  - Best (8) 1-day, 18-hole event = X1
  - Best (1) 1-day, 18-hole elevated event = X2
  - Best (2) 2-day, 36-hole event X2
  - Local Championship = X2.5
- National events
  - National Majors – Best 2 – point value = x3
  - National Championship – Point value = x3.5



## USGA Rules

PHAT will use the USGA rules of golf for all tournaments unless stated otherwise in PHAT's rules and format policy.

### Non-Penalty Areas

- **No mow/fescue/wooded areas**
  - In the event a ball is lost in these areas and the area is not marked Red/yellow or white the player can take a lateral or back of line drop at the point of entry into the non-marked area with a 1 stroke penalty. This is a PHAT rule to assist with pace of play and not a USGA rule.

## Rule 18 – Stroke and Distance: Ball lost or Out of Bounds; Provisional Ball

- **18.1 - Relief Under Penalty of Stroke and Distance Allowed at Any Time**
  - At any time, you may take stroke-and-distance relief. Once you put another ball in play under penalty of stroke and distance, your original ball is no longer in play and must not be played. This is true even if your original ball is then found on the course before the end of the three-minute search time.
- **18.2 - Ball Lost or Out of Bounds: Stroke-and-Distance Relief Must Be Taken**
  - A. When Your Ball Is Lost or Out of Bounds
    - **When Ball is Lost.** Your ball is lost if not found in three minutes after you or your caddie begin to search for it. If a ball is found in that time but it is uncertain whether it is your ball:
      - You must promptly attempt to identify the ball and are allowed a reasonable time to do so, even if that happens after the three-minute search time has ended.
      - This includes a reasonable time to get to the ball if you are not where the ball is found.
        - If you do not identify your ball in that reasonable time, the ball is LOST.
        - **When ball is out of Bounds.** Your ball at rest is out of bounds only when all of it is outside the boundary edge of the course.
    - B. What to do when your ball is lost or out of bounds
      - If your ball is lost or out of bounds, you must take stroke-and-distance relief by adding one penalty stroke and playing a ball from where the previous stroke was made (see [Rule 14.6](#)).

Exception – Player May Substitute Another Ball under Other Rule When It Is Known or Virtually Certain What Happened to Ball.

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## • 18.3 Provisional Ball

- A. When Provisional Ball Is Allowed
  - If your ball might be *lost* outside a *penalty area* or be *out of bounds*, to save time you may play another ball provisionally under penalty of *stroke and distance*.
  - **But** if you are aware that the only possible place your original ball could be *lost* is in a *penalty area*, a *provisional ball* is not allowed and a ball played from where the previous *stroke* was made becomes your ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance*.
- B. Announcing Play of Provisional Ball
  - It is not enough for you only to say that you are playing another ball or are playing again.
  - You **MUST** use the word “Provisional” or otherwise clearly indicate that you are laying the ball provisionally under Rule 18.3
  - If you did not announce this (even if you intended to play a *provisional ball*) and played a ball from where the previous *stroke* was made, that ball is your ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance*.
- C. Playing Provisional Ball Until it Becomes the Ball in Play or is Abandoned
  - **Playing Provisional Ball More than Once.** You may continue to play the provisional ball without losing its status as a provisional ball so long as it is played from a spot that is the same distance or farther from the hole than where your original ball is estimated to be.
  - **When Provisional Ball Becomes the Ball in Play.** Provisional ball becomes your ball *in play* under penalty of *stroke and distance* in either of these two cases:
    - When your original ball is lost anywhere on the course except in the *penalty area* or is *out of bounds*.
    - When your provisional ball is played from a spot nearer to the hole than where your original ball is estimated to be.
  - **When Provisional Ball Must Be Abandoned.** When your provisional ball has not yet become your ball *in play*, it must be abandoned in either of these two cases:
    - When your original ball is found on the course outside a *penalty area* before the end of the 3-minute search time.
    - When your original ball is found in a *penalty area* or is known or virtually certain to be in a *penalty area*. You must either play your original ball as it lies or take *penalty relief*.

## Pace of Play

- 4 hours and 30 mins



- Golf courses have allowed us to use their facilities, but they require us to finish playing within the course designated pace of play. This is a standard rule that the golf course enforces for PHAT. PHAT can assist groups that are playing at a slower pace by providing advice on how to speed up their game when players notify us or when we observe slow play. Here are some suggestions for foursomes to help maintain a good pace of play:
  - The entire group stays on the tee box and watches each player's tee shot.
  - If you are not playing cart golf. Drop off player 1 at their ball and player 2 drives to their ball while player 1 is going through their pre shot routine and hits their approach ball. Player 1 then walks to Player B's area while Player B is going through his/her shot routine.
  - Be ready on the green. Read your putt while another player is reading and getting ready to putt. Once the player finishes putting, you're ready.
  - Don't take more than 3 minutes to look for a ball. Keeping pace of play is expected and required by every player of the tour.
- If we cannot keep pace of play, we will have to charge more to purchase tee times the course was not able to sell, due to our slow play. Additionally, with slow play we risk the course banning us from future play.

## Distant Measuring Devices

- Range Finders
  - Rangefinders are permitted during tournament play.
    - Slope and wind measuring
      - Using slope and wind measurements is permitted.
      - Arccos is permitted.
        - Multiple devices are **NOT** permitted. You are only allowed to use one device. Do not use Arccos and then pull your rangefinder out to measure the pin. THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF SLOWING DOWN PACE OF PLAY
      - Slowing down the pace of play due to using any measuring device is NOT permitted – BE READY WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT YOUR BALL TO REVIEW THE DATA.

## Weather

- Inclement weather is certainly not favorable for the tour, but we are dedicated to making every effort to ensure that the tournament runs as scheduled. Your understanding and cooperation in dealing with any weather-related issues are greatly appreciated.
- All communications regarding weather updates will be issued by the tournament chapter director through the app system, utilizing the bulk texting feature. This ensures that all players receive the same information promptly.



- If weather conditions prevent PHAT from completing the round, the event will officially conclude based on the most holes played by division. If this approach is not feasible, the tournament may be rescheduled.
- While PHAT strives to complete all events as planned, it is important to note that no refunds will be provided due to inclement weather that affects the tournament's completion. However, if the course issues a refund to the tour, that amount will be prorated and provided to players as tour credit.

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## LEAF RULE

### Purpose

This rule exists to protect the field from unfair outcomes caused by abnormal leaf accumulation, while maintaining pace of play and preventing abuse.

### Leaf Relief — Ball Not Found Due to Heavy Leaves

If a ball is **not found**, and the **entire group agrees** it is **virtually certain** that the ball came to rest in **heavy leaf accumulation**, the player is entitled to free relief under the following conditions:

- The ball must have been reasonably in play (not clearly out of bounds or in a penalty area).
- The group must agree the ball was **lost only because of heavy leaves**, not because of an errant shot.
- Relief is granted **only when the group is confident the ball would have been easily found if not for the leaves**.

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### Relief Procedure

- The group will **estimate the most likely spot** where the ball came to rest.
- The player is allowed a **free drop** in that estimated area.
- The drop must be:
  - No closer to the hole
  - In the same general area of the course
- No penalty is applied.

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## Important Notes

- This rule applies **through the green**, excluding penalty areas.
- Relief is not automatic — it requires **group consensus**.
- If there is doubt, uncertainty, or disagreement, **the benefit of the doubt stays with the field**, and the ball is treated as lost.

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## PLUGGED BALL RULE

### Purpose

This rule exists to provide fair relief when abnormal soft ground conditions cause a ball to embed, without allowing advantage or manipulation of lies.

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### Plugged Ball — Free Relief

A player is entitled to free relief **only when**:

- The **group has seen the ball** or agrees that the ball **must be in that location**, and
- The ball is **plugged due to soft ground conditions**, and
- The ball **landed and stopped quickly**, indicating embedding.

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### Not Considered Plugged

A ball **cannot** be considered plugged if:

- The ball was **bouncing, rolling, or running** before coming to rest.
- The ball clearly finished in a position inconsistent with embedding.

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### Relief Procedure

- The group will agree on the spot where the ball should be.
- The player is allowed **free relief by placing the ball** at that agreed location.

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- The ball must be placed:
  - As close as possible to the estimated spot
  - No closer to the hole
  - In the same general area of the course

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## Integrity & Confirmation

- **Group confirmation is required** for plugged ball relief.
- Players are expected to apply this rule with honesty and restraint.
- Relief is provided to correct an abnormal condition — **not to improve a lie.**

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Relief under the Leaf Rule and Plugged Ball Rule is granted to protect fairness, not advantage. When conditions are unclear, players are expected to act with integrity and in the best interest of the field.

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