

# Media Conference

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## Peter Dawson

Chairman, OWGR Governing Board

## Ian Barker

Chairman, OWGR Technical Committee

## Sasha Forster

Secretary, OWGR Technical Committee

## Professor Steve Otto

OWGR Technical Committee; R&A Executive Director

## Billy Schroder

OWGR Technical Committee; Vice President, PGA TOUR International Relations  
Press Conference

STEVE TODD: Let's make a start. Good afternoon, everyone from Europe, and good morning, everyone from America. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Steve Todd from the European Tour's communications department, and we'd like to welcome you to today's Official World Golf Ranking media briefing.

I'd like to start by introducing our speakers today, our representatives from the Official World Golf Ranking who are going to expand on the contents of that press release and help answer any questions you might have.

Firstly, we have Peter Dawson, the chairman of the Official World Golf Ranking governing board; we also have Professor Steve Otto from the Official World Golf Ranking technical committee and R&A executive director.

STEVE OTTO: Good afternoon or morning, as appropriate.

STEVE TODD: We also have Billy Schroeder from the Official World Golf Ranking technical committee and vice president of the PGA TOUR international relations.

BILLY SCHRODER: Hi, everybody.

STEVE TODD: And we are also joined by Ian Barker, the chairman of the Official World Golf Ranking technical committee. And finally we also have Sasha Forster, the secretary of the Official World Golf Ranking technical

committee.

I want to start by asking Peter to make some opening comments, then we'll move to Billy to expand on why the changes are being implemented, and then Steve will explain some of the technical aspects of the announcement.

We'll then have an opportunity to take some of your questions which will be moderated by Amanda. Please use the usual methods to flag that you would like to ask something.

Peter, if I could just ask you to get us underway today, please.

PETER DAWSON: Thank you. Hello, everyone. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening, and thank you so much for taking the time to be with us today.

I'm going to make just a few opening remarks before handing over to Billy and then to Steve. Some of us are old enough to remember back in 1986 the rankings were originated by Mark McCormack and Tony Greer. I think since its inception, the Official World Golf Ranking has come to serve our sport extremely well. It's become widely used through the world of men's professional golf. It began just covering six eligible tours, and now over the years that number has expanded to 23.

In the 35 years since it began, the system has had to be modified on no less than 17 occasions. Sometimes these modifications have been very minor and sometimes a bit more radical, but they've all been directed at catering to this expansion and at increasing the accuracy of the rankings.

Now, despite all of these well-considered improvements, and believe me, they were well-considered, the OWGR governing board felt that the time may have come for an in-depth review of the rankings, and in 2018 it commenced a process of coordinating an independent analysis to ensure that the system was meeting OWGR's key objectives of producing a transparent, credible and accurate ranking based on the relative performances of the players.

Now, that's pretty easy to say but perhaps not very easy to



do. What is the best way to compare the performances of players competing in far-flung corners of the world, perhaps rarely meeting head-to-head in the same events?

Many experts were consulted. We had mathematicians, statisticians, sports analytics specialists and so on. They worked with the OWGR technical committee and other internal project groups, and the considerable enhancements resulting from this exercise and accepted by the governing board are what we are announcing today.

Shortly you're going to be hearing about some new terms and concepts such as strokes gained world rating, fixed effects regression, field rating, wider differentiation of player performances, and so on. Nothing to be alarmed about, I assure you, so don't panic, but it is an indication of just how thorough and far-reaching this review has been.

Before I finish, I would just like to mention something about the implementation date and notice period. The revisions to the ranking will become effective the week ending the 14th of August, 2022. That's a whole year away.

Implementation will then only impact future tournaments and championships, and previously earned ranking points will not be affected.

As the two-year rolling ranking period is being retained in the new system, the new methodology will therefore not be finally fully reflected in the ranking until August 2024. There will be plenty of time for familiarization and for the system to bed in.

That's all from me for now, so Billy, over to you.

**BILLY SCHRODER:** Thank you, Peter, and hi, everybody. It's good to be with you today.

Just from a personal note, I wanted to mention that this has been since July of 2018 a remarkable process to be a part of, that there's been careful deliberation and analysis, including and with representatives from all the major championships, from each of the Federation tours, including the Asian Tour, the Australasian Tour, Sunshine Tour, Japan Golf Tour, and of course the European Tour and the PGA TOUR, and everybody came into the discussion with the mindset or the spirit of discussion with try to find, as Peter mentioned, what is the best way to rank or to evaluate the relative performances of players around the globe and arrive at the most accurate ranking possible given the tools available.

As Peter mentioned, the reviews involved a number of academics and a number of sports analytics experts and others who some have and some who have not had

experience following the rankings, so some of it was new ground that they were diving into. They had a great deal of math and data to work through, and some of them were familiar with the ranking and came into it with some experience over years or decades of involvement.

What these reviews revealed was that through the use of assigned values in its strength-of-field calculation, which includes tour minimums, flagship tournaments, and the home tour rating, there was some level of bias in the system, which means that there was some level of performances that were either being undervalued or overvalued.

What the reviews also revealed is that there's an opportunity for improvement in the ranking's ability to differentiate performances, and that sounds like a fancy term, but when you get down into it, and you look at a given week's ranking, there are quite a number of players out there that, although they have made the cut, they are awarded zero ranking points.

So you can look at last week's WGC FedEx St. Jude Invitational and see Cam Smith finished 60, Si Woo Kim finished 65th. Despite the difference in five finishing positions as well as eight strokes, they both earned zero ranking points, along with five other players.

But this extends not just at a World Golf Championship, this goes through the rankings for every event that is played.

Events that award fewer points than a WGC, they also don't differentiate to the extent that is possible. However, in some cases or many cases, it's quite a larger breadth of players that are awarded zero ranking points, where the system doesn't differentiate between a top 10 or a player that's finishing 60th.

Each of these players in many cases would be awarded zero points.

I might also mention this is the same as players who have missed the cut as walking away with zero points, as well.

This affects, as I mentioned, all events, but then it also kind of works its way into the ranking itself, so it's not only the top 100 of the ranking that has an impact from not differentiating between the performances, this can extend all the way through the final players listed in the ranking where there are currently thousands of players tied for 1,882nd position with zero ranking points.

So while Peter mentioned the ranking has served men's professional golf quite well for an extended period of time,

the governing board approved changes that will modernize and position the ranking for years to come, all in the pursuit of OWGR's objective, which is to provide an accurate and credible and justifiable transparent ranking.

That's a lot of stuff to mention all at one time, and I'll kick it over to Steve to show a couple of the -- or walk everybody through some of the suggestions or some of the recommendations that are being incorporated into the ranking, which solved not only providing a more accurate evaluation of fields but also look into our work to solve, provide a greater differentiating of those players who are competing week in, week out. Steve, over to you.

STEVE OTTO: Thank you for that lead-in, Billy. I'll try and just draw this together to make it perhaps more generic about the method change rather than specific examples.

But really the outcome of the review led to two primary changes that Billy has touched on there, so modernizing the field ranking calculation to accurately account for all players in an eligible event, thereby eliminating the need for minimum points levels.

So the field rating will take into consideration previous interactions or previous relative scores of players in the preceding two years to derive their relative strokes gained statistics, and this will utilize a method called fixed effects regressions.

More questions on that for you later.

The strokes gained metrics for each player in the field will be combined to derive a strength of value to the field, which will be called the "field rating." So there's a change there that we're using all players coming into a field to determine the strength of an event rather than a smaller subset.

This direct calculation will eliminate the requirement to have artificial constraints on the field rating with a more transparent and robust system, so this will see the direct elimination of flagship events and home tour ratings, as illustrated by Billy.

On to the second point: Distributing ranking points to all players making the cut to provide greater differentiation of performances, and as Billy again said, this occurs right from the highest level events through to those with lower strengths.

The enhanced accuracy offered by the new field rating calculation enables a higher level of differentiation between performances, such we're able to extend this awarding of points to all players who make the cut, and we scrutinized

that in a great deal of detail during our work to get to the solution.

This further removes an additional artificial constraint and enables a truer reflection of established golfing norms within ranking systems and the rewarding of players who make the cut in all events.

The remainder of the mechanisms within the system will remain unaltered, but they were all scrutinized as part of a very in-depth process.

This will be gradually introduced from the implementation date in August 2022 so that the new events will be processed with the revised mechanisms, but existing results will remain on a player's record until they naturally expire, as Peter said, in August 2024.

STEVE TODD: Thank you, Steve. As you said at the top, we're going to take some questions. Now we'll open up. Amanda is going to moderate. If you'd like to indicate in the chat if you have a question, please.

AMANDA HERRINGTON: Good morning. As Steve said, if you do have a question, please either type it in the chat or raise your hand and we will call on you.

**Q. Good morning, everybody. Thank you. I was curious, I think if I read correctly in the information package you sent along that in the process of doing this you ran some backwards simulations on perhaps how if the current system had been in place the last two years how things might look differently and you arrived at a few different players in the top 50. I was curious if there would be any specifics about how the top 50 today would look different had the system been in place since whenever.**

BILLY SCHRODER: Steve, maybe you and I can tag-team that a bit. We ran through a number of simulations of actually years' worth of -- 10 years' or longer worth of rankings and playing history, and then we found that as we included in the package that any given week there could be this swapping or influx or the players playing their way into the top 50 or falling out of the top 50, anywhere from say two to five players.

However, it's hard to really pinpoint or give examples of exactly who those players were because there's going to be a difference in playing records, meaning that with a new ranking system, with different points available, with different player pathways, some of those players who would have played one week might not have played that week in a new system.

It's not really accurate to say this player would have made it and this player wouldn't have and put that kind of granularity with the player name, because there would be a difference.

STEVE OTTO: To further answer that, Billy, one thing we did was look at the variation between the old system and the new system in the context of how much there would be natural variation from week to week and see whether it would markedly change things, and it's fair to say that there wasn't very much change within the top 50, taking that natural variation we see in the ranking into consideration.

As Billy made reference to in his opening comments, we have a lot of players on zero ranked points, so there would be significant movements where we're aiming to give granularity to that structure, but really there were slight changes within the top ranked players.

**Q. My question is for Billy and Steve perhaps. Two parts to the question: Can somebody with my kind of a limited knowledge of mathematics can still work out a bit of projections going into next week, or depending on the results this week, can somebody still be able to work that out? Or do they have to now depend completely on the supercomputer that you guys have for the projections? That's number one.**

And number two, for the smaller tours, just going through the way it has been done, I think it will be a lot more skewed towards the PGA TOUR. And what about the smaller tour where they are not going to get as many points, and always the OWGR is more important for people to get into top 100, top 200 position. Just can you explain if the smaller tours will still be able to get players into the top 100, top 200 with this new world rankings?

BILLY SCHRODER: Thank you for the question. I think this is how Steve and I actually kind of go through many of our conversations, that I'll make a comment and then he'll add far more accuracy or depth to my general comment.

The short answer to your first question is that yes, that you will be able to essentially generate a ranking on your own. Each player's performance points as well as his strokes gained world rating will be available on the website, so you will be able to see what the field rating will be for upcoming events. You could also speculate as to how that field rating might shift should one player or a handful of players commit to an event or a handful of players were to withdraw. It gives you some sort of predictive ability to see what the rating is going to be like.

On to your second question, and this is something that the technical committee and the working groups that as I

mentioned was comprised of the representative from the major championships, PGA TOUR, European Tour, but also representatives of the Federation Tours. We spent a great deal of time on analyzing what would the impact on player pathways be for the smaller tours all the way through.

The end result of that is that the thriving golf ecosystem is very important to the members of OWGR, and for that reason, an additional external analysis was completed to see exactly what those impact or what the difference would be with different player pathways, and that was shared with each of the governing bodies or members of the governing board.

In addition to that, these bodies are using that data to continue to look at, to do internal reviews to make certain that their fields or their eligibility in their tours are keeping up with elevating the most talented players so that they get to the biggest stage in our game.

With reference to the PGA TOUR and mentioning would it be a cyclical ranking, and what we found is that it wouldn't, that there are checks and balances throughout the new system that provide an accurate analysis of skill, and as players graduate through the ranking system or as players move up the ranking, their movement is appropriately awarded, depending on or based on their exhibited skill, meaning their finish position in various events. If a player on any Tour were to get on a hot streak, he would be able to find momentum or movement up the ranking and be recognized for what he's doing.

I'll make one final comment with regards to PGA TOUR, and you mentioned that a higher level of points or significant grouping of points will be at that level, which is reflective of the level of play. Players, to keep their average within the top 100, and if they're playing against the best players in the world, they have to perform well. If they are not performing well, they will drop in the ranking and fall their way -- even though they may be competing for a high level of points, if they're not finishing well and proving themselves, their numbers will drop in the ranking and drop in eligibility.

Steve, if you had something to expound on?

STEVE OTTO: Just very briefly on the first question. We're looking at enhanced tools to help people understand the system and ultimately be able to run their own rankings, as Billy said, but nothing really more to add.

PETER DAWSON: Can I just add something to the answer to that question. It is very important to the game of golf and to all of the organizations in it that player pathways



clearly exist. We want good players coming through to the very top of the game and finding the route to do so.

It is not, however, the job of the rankings to provide those pathways. The rankings are there to try to accurately rank players relative to one another, and pathways have to be provided not just through that process but also by the, shall we say, higher level tours and championships, finding ways for players from perhaps lesser events or lesser tours in terms of standard of play to find their way through.

It's not the job of the rankings to do that, it's the job of the tours and the whole golf ecosystem to do it, if that helps.

BILLY SCHRODER: I'll add in something on that, that the new system, one of the -- one of its benefits is that the data analyzes it's agnostic to tour affiliation. All it cares about is the scores that you've posted. That's how it determines the field rating and then how many points are awarded to that particular player.

**Q. A few years ago Mark Broadie wrote a paper on some of the biases that you spoke of in the old system. How much was Mark involved in the creation of the new system and how would you describe what he contributed?**

BILLY SCHRODER: Mark has been integral in the development of the strokes gained world rating calculation. He's consulted with OWGR and the technical committees and the working groups throughout many steps of the process, and not only providing insight and analytics to the existing system but also in designing and testing different changes or improvements that could be made to the system to make it more accurate and credible and justifiable, as we've set as the objective.

PETER DAWSON: I think Mark did some great work for us, and we're very grateful to him.

**Q. The new system will be fully augmented you said August 2024, which if the Games are as scheduled would be after the cutoff for the 2024 Games. Is there any consideration to possibly tweaking the Olympic ranking so it's based only on the new system, or how would you describe the impact the vestiges of the old system would have as the Olympic qualifying window is closing?**

PETER DAWSON: I think the cutoff date for the Paris Olympics will be very close to that August 2024 date. It might be back from it only a couple of months. So you will get the vast majority of the new system reflected in the rankings at that point, possibly almost so near it would make no difference. I doubt if we will be tweaking it just for

that reason.

**Q. Billy, I just wanted to clarify, I think you mentioned this will do away with any flagship events, correct?**

BILLY SCHRODER: That's correct. With the more modernized field rating calculation, there is no need for the TOUR minimums, and as it does a better job at evaluating fields, there won't be any flagship events, nor will there be the home rating that is currently used to help create a strength of field calculation.

**Q. It's fair to say that other than the four majors and THE PLAYERS Championship, correct? Aren't there minimums in place for those?**

BILLY SCHRODER: Yeah, the four majors as well as THE PLAYERS Championship will be the only events that have preset figures recognizing their place in the game.

**Q. Along those lines, you mentioned some level of bias where you've had events maybe under or overrated. Can you give me an example of an underrated event that you were looking at?**

BILLY SCHRODER: I'd say it looks more at -- because we looked at so many events and we looked at a decade's worth of data, really to point at just one event isn't quite fair because sometimes that changed from year to year depending on what their field looked like.

The undervalued versus overvalued, it comes from -- some of that came from the mechanisms, the TOUR minimums, the flagship events, where they were preassigned numbers that stipulated how many points would be awarded based on the event itself, not necessarily the strength of field.

**Q. I'm just trying to understand, the tours where there might be lesser cut lines or the Masters where they might have lesser cut lines, how did you address that, or does it get addressed at all?**

BILLY SCHRODER: Cut line -- Steve, if you want to add in on this, but cut line, essentially with it, a smaller cut, you are looking at the performance required to make that cut is higher, so therefore those who make the cut will get a greater share of the points, which is intuitive as it's been a harder accomplishment. The cut line could flex smaller, it could flex bigger, but a larger cut line means that it is statistically on average more players are less -- doesn't require the same amount of skill as if you take a smaller cut line.

Adjusting the cut line because the cut line makes it or is reflective, the amount of points awarded is reflective of the

skill required to make that cut won't have any impact on the ranking.

STEVE OTTO: Just to add to that, we looked at many, many options of fixed number of players and how that came back, but one of the phrases we used a lot in meetings was applying "golfing norms," and the fact that those events are happy with the cut lines is a good reflection to give them a field for the Saturday and Sunday to be a good mechanism for us to say let's go down as far as the cut but no further, but we did look at it and decided that that was one of the best solutions to reflect, as I say, "golfing norms."

**Q. Obviously there's a lot of digest here, but the real question is are there things that you didn't get a chance to address because there was so much you were dealing with already?**

STEVE OTTO: No, I think we were all happy with where we reached. We looked at all components of the systems and those that we left, we analyzed, as well. So no, I think we're very happy with the time taken.

The number of presentations to the board was very significant. This wasn't a one-and-done. We were asked to go back and reconsider, so a very thorough analysis conducted, I think, and we took our time to get this right.

**Q. Peter, you mentioned in your introduction the number of times the system has been tweaked over the years. Do you hope that this new system is a bit more robust and that won't need to happen going forward?**

PETER DAWSON: I think it's very difficult to predict the future, but as Billy and Steve have said, a huge amount of work has gone into developing this revised system, and we think it's fit for purpose for many years ahead. I have no doubt that things will arise that suggest to the technical committee that one or two changes might be appropriate, but it's very hard to see at this point what they will be. Time will tell.

I think we're satisfied that a very thorough job has been done. If that doesn't sound complacent, it's not meant to. I'm looking forward to getting these new rankings actually into the works.

**Q. Probably a question way out of left field, but I remember a few years ago when Tom Watson went so close to winning the Open at Turnberry, he had a jump in rankings of probably about 1,200 places. Under this new system will you still get scenarios like that? And on the back of that question, could perhaps Ian Barker**

**let me know what is the biggest jump in the rankings, please.**

PETER DAWSON: That's why we have these experts here. I'm going to hand it over to one of them.

BILLY SCHRODER: This is a good question, and that is one of the tenets of the ranking. As much work has been done over the past few years and looking at improvements and possible ways to make the system more accurate, you want to make certain that a ranking is reflective of current or commonly accepted golf norms, some of those being that the major championships are the pinnacle of the game, but a significant portion of that is that you want to keep a premium on winning so that if a player were to win a significant event or a major championship, he would see an appreciative increase in his ranking. So absolutely that's part of the system, and I would expect -- we've done a lot of analysis on looking back years and seeing players and using their performance and seeing what would their performance be or what would their increase or improvement in ranking be given a similar performance, meaning winning a major, winning two events, three events, four events, how did they move up in the current system, how many spots. We also looked at how they would have moved up in the system that's going to be implemented next season or next year.

The movement itself was very similar compared from old to new. They might achieve different ranking positions, but the movement itself was always quite similar.

**Q. Who did have the biggest ranking jump, do you know?**

IAN BARKER: That's something I'll follow up with you because I don't have it at my fingertips.

**Q. Just a thought, that's all. I remember the Open at Turnberry Watson had a huge jump.**

IAN BARKER: That was really the most significant jump, but what we find of course is if one of the players wins a big chunk of points who's starting from 1,881, it's his starting position that has the biggest impact on the gap, as it were. You can see huge leaps that really aren't as significant as Tom Watson's leap was in 2009. I'm going to go with that as the most significant leap in the rankings.

**Q. This is a technical question, I'm afraid possibly a very dumb one, but because your rating is now so much more dynamic, is it also true that a tournament that has already been completed, the values of finishing positions in that could change based on data that has happened since? In other words, if I won a**

**PGA TOUR event two months ago and in the two months since the field looks a lot weaker than it did then, will I be diminished retroactively, or will I have been set in stone by the moment that tournament finishes?**

STEVE OTTO: The processing will still occur in the same way it occurs today. So the results will be presented. It won't diminish their worth.

Actually the strokes gained ranking for players is relatively static. As I said in my piece, it takes two years of scores into consideration, so that won't fluctuate wildly, especially at the top end of the game.

Even if we were to reprocess, which we're not going to go back in time, you wouldn't see wild fluctuations. It's a very sort of robust and stable system as now designed.

**Q. This is to Mr. Dawson. What I wanted to know is the Rolex Ranking follows a similar pattern to what the men's do. Has there been any discussion with the ladies' tours to really have their rankings under the OWGR banner, as well, and follow a similar thing rather than have two very different kind of rankings working?**

PETER DAWSON: Well, I'll leave the first part of that question perhaps to Ian Barker, who I know has done quite a bit of work on this, but we have not had those discussions with the women's ranking. I know that sounds strange that golf is split in that way from a ranking point of view, and one day I'm sure there will be discussions. Please don't take that as being something that's about to happen tomorrow, but it's the way of the world that these things will eventually come together.

Both organizations do a fine job and will continue to do so for some time yet. Ian, do you want to make some comment on the methodology difference between the two rankings?

IAN BARKER: Certainly. So we do enjoy a very good dialogue with the Rolex Ranking women's world golf ranking, and their system is largely based upon our system as it stands today, and in fairness, many of the 17 changes that have been made over the years to OWGR have been to a large extent followed by the ladies.

For confidentiality and non-disclosure, we haven't had conversations with them about the detail of what's being discussed today, but I'm sure those conversations will commence very shortly when we share all the information with them.

STEVE TODD: Thank you. I don't think we've got any more questions there on the chat. We'll call it there. I'd just like to say thank you, Peter, Billy, Steve, Ian and Sasha for your contributions today, and thank you to members of the media for joining us. We appreciate it.

As I said at the top of the conference, we will have a transcript which will be circulated shortly, and all of that is embargoed until tomorrow when we lift the embargo on the press release, as well. Appreciate there's a lot of sort of digest and absorb in the last 38 minutes as well as the content, so if you do have any additional questions which weren't answered here, please reach out to Ian and Sasha on the contact address supplied on the press release.

Thank you, everyone, for joining us, and we look forward to your coverage tomorrow.

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