Use of Measuring Devices

The IHSA has adopted a local rule to allow the use of any distance-measuring devices (DMD’s) during the state series. Member schools are free to also utilize this local rule during regular season events. However, during the regular or post-season, the DMD must not be used for any purposes that are prohibited by USGA Rule 14-3, including but not limited to:

- The gauging or measuring of slope;
- The gauging or measuring of other conditions that might affect play (e.g., wind speed or direction);
- Recommendations that might assist the player in making a stroke or in his play (e.g., club selection, type of shot to be played, green reading, or any other advice related matter); or
- Calculating the effective distance between two points based on elevation changes or other conditions affecting shot distance

A multi-functional device, such as a smartphone or PDA, may be used as a DMD, but it must not be used to gauge or measure other conditions where doing so would be a breach of Rule 14-3.

Previously, the IHSA had adopted a local rule that reflected the USGA’s earlier stance on DMD’s, which prohibited the use of devices that contained features or functions that would gauge other conditions to help a player make a stroke, even if those features or functions were turned off on the device. This new local rule adopted by the IHSA is consistent with a recent revision made by the USGA concerning DMD’s. In making this change, the USGA and the R&A (golf’s two rules-making bodies) recognize, “golf is a challenging game in which success should depend on the judgment, skills, and abilities of the player. This principle guides the USGA in determining whether the use of any item is in breach of Rule 14-3.”

Should a player be found using a device in breach of Rule 14-3, the penalty is a loss of hole in match play or a two-stroke penalty in stroke play for the first time the player breaches Rule 14-3. Subsequent breaches of the rule will result in the disqualification of the player in either format.

The IHSA continues to recommend that individuals wishing to use DMD’s use only those that only measure point to point distances and don’t contain any additional features that can assist a player in making a stroke. In applying this local rule, players are reminded of their responsibility to protect the field so if a player has concerns about an opponent’s DMD, he/she should immediately raise those concerns with the player in question, his/her coach and the rules committee for the event. It will then be the rules committee’s responsibility to determine the facts of the matter and take any necessary action.

As a final reminder, player can share distance information with fellow competitors and not be in breach of any USGA or IHSA tournament rules. Sharing distance information is NOT considered giving advice. School administrators or coaches with additional questions should contact Kurt Gibson (kgibson@ihsa.org) or Stacey Lambert (slambert@ihsa.org).