



HRGS Golf Software Upgrades 2020

The Handicap Master software which is used by HRGS Admin for the Monday games has recently been upgraded. Handicap Master (HM) software is a proprietary product widely used throughout UK, Ireland and European Golf Clubs and Societies. It has various versions on offer, each with different levels of functionality. HRGS has upgraded from the UK Society version to the European EGA Club version. After some data migration processes, this new version was implemented in a test environment on Jan 1st 2020 and all competition data processed and run in parallel with the current system through January and February. After confirming accuracy, the upgraded HM system was introduced live at the beginning of March, and has been running two HRGS Monday competitions in March so far without issues.

The previous Handicap Master version was the Society version that HRGS utilised for many years. However, it did not contain any functionality to cater separately for course and tee slopes stroke allowances so HRGS basically 'fudged' the system for its HR course games by holding only a 'sloped' handicap for players and not an exact handicap. This had only been possible because of the fact that HRGS only played handicap qualifiers on the one course, at Hacienda Riquelme. When required to move to another course by GNK, to overcome this, HRGS usually only plays team games or non-qualifying singles competitions. Basically, this restricted HRGS to only playing on the HR course for handicap purposes.

It has to be noted also that HRGS Admin only used a limited proportion of the actual HM software capability, namely the scorecard entry, results calculation, handicap changes and results reporting downloads. HRGS Booking a Game uses a completely separate standalone online process webform on the HRGS website. The Start-sheet creation, printing and uploading to the HRGS website were all spreadsheet manual processes transcribed from the booking form data. Handicaps were manually retrieved and transcribed too. The results publishing is also a separate download from HM and then a manual upload to the HRGS website. So there were many separate non-integrated HRGS administration processes to work through in order to get the Monday game put on.

Why the new HRGS software upgrade?

One of the prime movers for HRGS to upgrade to the EGA Club edition of Handicap Master was that it contains all the functionality to cater for different courses and different tee slope allowances. The new HM software now holds exact handicaps for players and will automatically add slope stroke allowances based on the course being played and its tee slope indexes. As part of the conversion, HRGS has migrated over the current membership details from the old Society version and 'de-sloped' the old players sloped handicaps to create new players exact handicaps. The software now contains a selection of GNK course slopes and tee slope factors to enable accurate playing handicaps to be automatically calculated not only for the HR course but for any courses that are entered into the system. Basically, it is now operating in a correct exact handicap manner and that is really the main underlying technical difference. This technical separation of the exact handicap from the playing handicap (strokes received) should go unnoticed in the main, by our members.

The second prime mover was the potential to utilise more of the administrative capabilities in the new HM version to help with the Monday game admin. It was our intention to initially setup the new system functionality to a level that basically mirrored the old society system just to ensure that HRGS Admin were comfortable with the new conceptual changes and processes involved. We planned to do this for a period of time before introducing any new functionality to the HRGS Admin and player processing. However, as we trialled the new software, we identified immediate improvements and so swiftly moved on to creating start-sheets within the actual HM system rather than as a separate spreadsheet process previously used. The HM system automatically calculates and includes the playing handicaps with slope allowances for all the players in the game, eliminating the previous manual transcription efforts to manually retrieve them. Although currently, there is the same manual process to transcribe from the HRGS website booking form data into a start-sheet in HM, the entry and manipulation of the players once within the start-sheet game format in HM is subsequently much quicker and easier. So immediately we have benefitted by eliminating some of the manual efforts and reduced others within the start-sheet creation process.

Lastly, there is also the upcoming initiative of new handicap re-calculation rules to be introduced across the world in 2020. The details of the new methodology for handicap re-calculation will be published in a later informational release. These new rules depend heavily on a detailed scorecard history containing exact handicaps, the course and tee slope factors being held separately. This new version of HM just implemented achieves this correct format of scorecard history starting from all HRGS games processed from Jan 1st 2020 and should make implementation of the handicap rules upgrade much smoother and easier. The expected release date is Nov 2020 with HRGS implementation likely to be in Jan 2021.

The next functional improvements for HRGS in 2020

HRGS has now chosen two further functional improvements from the upgraded system for implementation during 2020 which should greatly assist HRGS administration and broaden the communication and information to members. This is a limited expansion and would be the only new items currently planned by HRGS for the 2020 period.

1. Firstly, there is a companion product of Handicap Master called Master Scoreboard (MSB) which provides online access to a Players Online Information Portal. This online 'application' provides the web-based platform for a selection of detailed information from HM. The base MSB platform contains information on handicaps, future competitions, all competition results, start-sheets, analysis of players own scores and historical trends, visibility of Eclectics and much more. There is a PC Desktop version and a Mobile Phone version. All the revised data can be uploaded automatically to MSB from HM with the running of one single regular process.
2. Secondly, having already seen the improvements in the HRGS administration functions around start-sheet creation that HM software has brought, HRGS will be looking to develop further the start-sheet publishing communication process. This would involve activating the HM function of automatically emailing the start-sheet to the individual players once the details are finalised on the start-sheet. The functionality is there but there will need to be a data verification exercise to ensure we have the correct and authorised email addresses for our members before considering implementation.

There are quite a number of other improvements that have been identified in the level of HM we have just installed with would benefit HRGS Admin and players alike. Functions such as competition Sign-in and Scores Entry by players. These will be evaluated in due course.

Further potential improvements for HRGS

Upgrading further to the next higher level of Handicap Master would bring much more additional online functionality and capabilities for members and players which would integrate seamlessly with HM base software processes...at an incremental cost of course. However, these additional functions would greatly enhance the online functionality for players to interact with HRGS and would also eliminate the need for many of the current separate non-integrated processes supported by external individuals and many of the manual efforts that HRGS Admin still perform outside of the Handicap Master software. This could provide HRGS with a single, more fully-integrated and professionally supported system. The HM Software providers also produce regular functional releases and extensive updates throughout the year to continually enhance their software.

Examples of the additional functionality potential are mainly in the functional areas of the Players Online Interactive Portal (an expansion of the MSB Players Information Portal). This would provide a game booking entry system which integrates directly into start-sheets, visibility for players of their own future bookings, visibility of other players booked onto a particular game, booking cancellations online, reserve list bookings if a game is full, a visible calendar of all future competitions and also specifically on the HRGS admin side, facilities for label printing for scorecards or even direct scorecard printing.

However, it should be noted that much of this further additional functionality would require a much greater level of golf administration resource for its control and operation than is currently available and as such is not an immediate priority for the current HRGS Admin team.