

## **IBGA Sight Classification – Trial**

Effective from: May 2023

### Background

The issue of the possible extension of the definition of eligible sight loss for access to IBGA-sponsored events was discussed at the 2023 Biennial Meeting. Points raised included:

- The current sight classification system used in vision-impaired golf could be improved to minimise the impact of vision impairment on the outcome of competition (as suggested in a recent study by Prof Peter Allen and Dr Niall Hynes, et. al.).
- The IBGA currently uses only visual acuity (a measure of a person's clarity of vision) for classification, but items such as visual field (the width of area that can be seen when focused on a particular point) could also have a significant impact on a golfer's performance (even if this may not be as significant as it may be in sports where greater movement is required, such as football).
- Most other sports for the blind allow a slightly wider eligibility definition than currently used by the IBGA, with most incorporating players with restricted visual fields (e.g. less than 20 degrees) or slightly better visual acuity.
- By expanding its definition of eligibility the IBGA could accommodate a much wider group of players whose vision makes it difficult for them to play golf.
- Allowing wider access may be seen as a positive thing for sponsors.
- Moving more in line with other blind sports may assist in the drive for Paralympic access.
- The IBGA could allow – on a trial basis – players with significant visual field loss, or slightly more visual acuity than allowed at present, to compete in some of the IBGA-sponsored events.
- For the IBGA to amend its sight classification system it will be necessary to have some agreed defined level of visual field measurement (or extended visual acuity) which can be applied the same way across all countries. It would not be sensible to allow access to all individuals who have some sort of national blind registration to compete, as such standards may differ greatly by country.
- Carrying out such a trial would allow the IBGA to gather valuable information on the impact of wider sight loss which could assist in the development of an improved, evidence-based, classification system.
- The Board of Directors was encouraged to implement such a trial as soon as possible.

## Implementation of the trial

A trial of a wider definition of eligibility for participation in IBGA-sponsored events will be introduced as follows:

1. The trial group will consist of:
  - (a) Players with a Visual Acuity (VA) of 6/60 Snellen (LogMAR 1).  
(This is in line with many other sports for the visually impaired. Currently IBGA B3 golfers require a VA of less than 6/60)  
These players will be classified as "B4A".
  - (b) Players with a Visual Field (VF) of no more than 10 degrees.  
(While this is less than the 20 degree cut-off allowed in some IPC/IBSA classifications, a strong argument can be made that a restricted visual field is not as much of a disability to a golfer as it is to a person involved in movement-based sports.)  
These players will be classified as "B4F".
2. The B4A and B4F golfers will be allowed to participate:
  - (a) In any IBGA-sponsored events (other than the IBGA World Championships and Vision Cup, or where this cannot be accommodated by the Association hosting the event).
  - (b) For all Net (or Stableford) prizes in such events, but not for any Gross prizes.  
(The rationale for this is that golf handicaps are intended to address the difference in golfing abilities of all players, and so one's extent of sight loss should not be a barrier. However, gross competition should be between players with similar degrees of sight loss.)
3. Any players interested in participating in such a trial need to complete the standard IBGA sight form and have their eligibility confirmed.  
These players will then be added to the IBGA Sight List.
4. The trial will commence from May 2023 and is intended to continue for at least one year.

IBGA Member Associations are encouraged to facilitate the inclusion of the B4A and B4F players in their internal events as well as in IBGA-sponsored events.

Appendix – An indication of the impact of vision loss for a golfer

As an indication of what a fully sighted golfer might see at address, compared to someone with very poor acuity and someone with a very restricted visual field, please see the three pictures below (respectively):

