

USGA Policy on Gambling

The Definition of an amateur golfer provides that an amateur golfer is one who plays the game as a non-remunerative and non-profit-making sport. When gambling motives are introduced, problems can arise which threaten the integrity of the game.

The distinction between playing for prize money, which violates the Rules of Amateur Status, and gambling, which does not, is essential to the Rules of Amateur Status. The USGA urges amateur golfers to seek USGA guidance whenever it is unclear whether the prize format constitutes playing for prize money or gambling and, in the absence of such guidance, not to play for cash prizes. Such a course of action would ensure that no one jeopardizes his amateur status.

The USGA does not object to informal wagering among individual golfers or teams of golfers when the players in general know each other, participation in the wagering is optional and is limited to the players, the sole source of all money won by the players is advanced by the players on themselves or their own teams and the amount of money involved is such that the primary purpose is the playing of the game for enjoyment.

On the other hand, organized events open to the general public or designed and promoted to create cash prizes are not approved by the USGA. Golfers participating in such events without first irrevocably waiving their right to cash prizes are deemed by the USGA to be playing for prize money.

The USGA is opposed to and urges its Member Clubs, all golf associations and all other sponsors of golf competitions to prohibit types of gambling such as: (1) Calcuttas, (2) other auction pools, (3) pari-mutuels and (4) any other forms of gambling organized for general participation or permitting participants to bet on someone other than themselves or their teams. The USGA may deny amateur status, entry in USGA Championships and membership on USGA teams for international competitions to players whose activities in connection with golf gambling, whether organized or individual, are considered by the USGA to be contrary to the best interests of golf.