



## A Little Insight to TAP Handicaps

The T.A.P. handicap scoring system is the most complex in the industry. There are numerous variables that are used to formulate a player's handicap rating. This information is intended to address the most commonly asked questions and to provide a better understanding of how and what determines a player's rating. We want to create a better understanding to reduce confusion and frustration. It is not an easy system to understand, but hopefully the following explanations will clear things up a bit, at least enough so you can stop worrying about the ratings and just have fun playing pool.

Handicap complaints are common in all leagues because the players don't have access to all the data that formulates the handicap. All you really have is the wins, losses and game win percentages. Keep in mind that no system is perfect, but I believe we have the most accurate one in the league business. There will always be under ranked and over ranked players, but that percentage is very small and the system will weed those players out over time. Overall, since our first start-up, considering all the players audits I've conducted, I believe that 90% to 95% of all player ratings are accurate.

1. I've lost 5 weeks in a row. Why haven't I gone down? He's won 6 weeks in a row, why hasn't he gone up. These are basically the same question. If you look at the entire scoring system, wins & losses alone only account for 25% of the overall rating. The other 75% is based on performance variables. Those variables are: completions-misses-defense-MOB-LOT-the handicap race-to-the outcome of the race-to and the handicap of your opponent.

2. Playing lower ranked players won't move you up or down as quickly as playing equally ranked players. When a higher ranked player plays a lower ranked player they often times don't bring the same game to the table they would if their opponent was equally rated and therefore they don't play to their full potential which is not a true measure of performance. Unfortunately, we've all had this experience.

3. When a player moves up to the next level, here's what happens in most cases. There is a sandbagging variable in the system to prevent that player from bagging down the following week so they drop back down in rating. In each handicap level, there is an A, B, & C rating. A is the highest. For example: when a player moves from a (4A) level to a (5), they are moved to a high (5C) level. To drop back to a (4A), the player may have to play 3 or 4 weeks before the average settles back down if they cannot hold on to the new (5) rating.

4. Averages: Everybody's handicap is based on the averages of their weekly play or their history in the league. If for example, a player is rated a (4) and starts shooting well, they should eventually go up. In order for this player to become a (5), they must start shooting like a (5), which means someone is going to complain that this player is no (4). You must be shooting at the next level in order to move to the next level. The player will move when their average catches up to their quality of play. We have all experienced times when we shot lights out for 3 weeks in a row and then the pool Gods took it away as fast as they gave it to us. That is what consistency of play and averages are all about. The difference between one handicap level and the next is consistency of play. Higher rated players are more consistent than lower rated players.

Some Examples: A (4C) player who starts shooting like a (5C) player will take longer to reach a (5) than a (4B) player shooting (5C) level because the (4B) player is closer to a (5) than the (4C) player. A (5A) player shooting like a (6B) player will reach a (6) faster than a (5B) player shooting like a (6B) player because the (5B) player has further to go before their average catches up with them.

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5. Sometimes a player just gets all the breaks and the balls are set up perfectly for a 4 or 5 ball run, even for a (2) or (3).

6. About new players: Remember that you were once a new player also and somebody probably complained about your rating. The reason it may not have been as accurate as it needed to be is because you were new and there was only a minimal amount of data collected. It takes time to establish a solid rating. At minimum of 10 weeks of scores is required because it is averages that create the rating.

7. If two (5's) play each other and one player wins 4-0, but both players shot (5) speed, that doesn't mean the winner is under ranked. It might mean that one player is a (5A) player and the other is a (5C) player 'or' the winner is shooting (6) speed, but their average hasn't caught up to them yet -or- the loser wasn't shooting their best game 'or' the loser had too many beers 'or' the winner had just the right amount of beers. You can analyze this thing to death, but it's not worth it. Let the system do the analysis. Just have fun, win or lose. Ok, winning is better.

8. Most player audits come in from players that lost their match. Ask yourself. Did I shoot my best game? Sometimes it's not that your opponent is under ranked, but rather that you didn't shoot your normal game or your opponent was shooting their best game or a little better than normal. Just because a player has a couple of good weeks, doesn't mean they should automatically be raised. Those strong scores are averaged with all their other scores. The strong scores do push them closer to the next level, but it takes time.

9. Players submit audits on their own players they believe are rated too high, but NOBODY submits audits on their own players they believe are underrated. Why is that?

10. The Handicap Race Grid: This is what the race grid means. Example: (5) plays a (4):4-3 race. If these two players played 7 games total, on average the (5) would win 4 games and the (4) would win 3 games. In a match, you just don't know in what order those wins will occur.

11. I'm a (7) and my personal opinion is that (3's & 4's) are the scariest of all players because you never know when they will step it up big time and kick your ass, right out of the blue. On any given night they can shoot 1 to 2 levels higher than the norm, but they can't do it consistently. If you've faced a (3 or 4) on one of those nights, my sympathy goes out to you.

12. When we started the League, we brought in all unrated unknown players at the (3-4) level because that was midrange. We have learned that players who are really (2's or 3's) take a long time to drop down. I've seen several cases where this isn't completely fair and the players are getting frustrated. This is part of our learning curve. Starting next session, we will start all unrated players at the (4C) level. We believe this will generate a rating that is fairer to those lower ranked players. We apologize for any frustration this has caused. It wasn't intended to punish anyone. We simply didn't know how the system worked at the time. We have since learned considerably more about it and intend to make the necessary adjustments for the benefit of all our players. Thanks for your understanding.

13. Different leagues use different systems for calculating handicaps. Even though our rating numbers (2-7) are the same as another league, the method or scale used to calculate the handicap is different. For example; A H/C-5 in the other league may only be a H/C-4 in T.A.P. In many cases, our ratings are 1/2 to 1 full rating lower than the other league. This means that a weak (5) may be a strong (4) in T.A.P. or a strong (5) in the other league may be a weak (5) in T.A.P. A lot of you are conditioned from the other system which makes it harder to understand the new system you've chosen to play in. In addition, handicap movement is also slower because of the rating scale.

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14. To help determine a basis for player ratings, examine the following grid:  
H/C.....# of balls made on each shot "ON AVERAGE"

7.....	5-7 balls
6.....	4-6 balls
5.....	3-5 balls
4.....	2-4 balls
3.....	1-3 balls
2.....	0-2 balls

Your assessment of someone's rating can't be based on one experience with that player. It must be based on the entire history of the player, which is impossible to do unless you play them every week. This is not intended to discourage player audits. We still want those to insure the accuracy of the league scoring from corporate and to prevent sandbaggers. We have found mistakes. Some are corporate scoring errors, some are computer glitches, but 90% of the mistakes come from score sheets that are illegible or filled out incorrectly. Please check the accuracy of your score sheets before turning them in to insure proper data entry.

I hope this helps all of you understand the scoring system a little better. If you have additional questions please feel free to call or e-mail me.