



GRAA

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the digital *Golf Range Magazine*!

Our mission at the Golf Range Association of America is to harness the combined power of all golf range owners, operators and staff at all types of facilities to grow their revenues, enhance their careers and help grow the game of golf.

Inside this inaugural issue, you will find some great stories from ranges across America, plus if you want to know what we have in mind for the future of the GRAA, just read this month's cover story. And as the story says: if you have suggestions on how we can make it better, we want to hear from you. E-mail me anytime.

Keep it fun and thanks for supporting the new GRAA.

Best Regards,

Rick Summers, CEO
GRAA
rsummers@golfrange.org

Golf Range



M A G A Z I N E

Volume 20, No. 1
January 2012

The NEW Golf Range Association of America



GRAA

In this issue:

- **A New Vision: “Where the Fun Starts”**
- **Reinventing the GRAA Platform**
- **Profiles: Industry Hills Golf Club, GlenArbor Golf Club**
- **Video: Teaching Year-Round in Cold Climates**



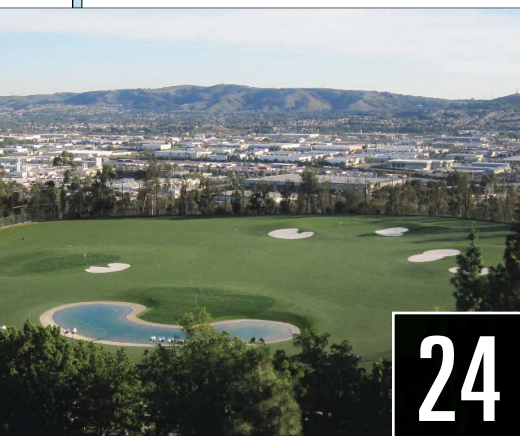


Industry Hills: Where L.A. Grooves Its Swing





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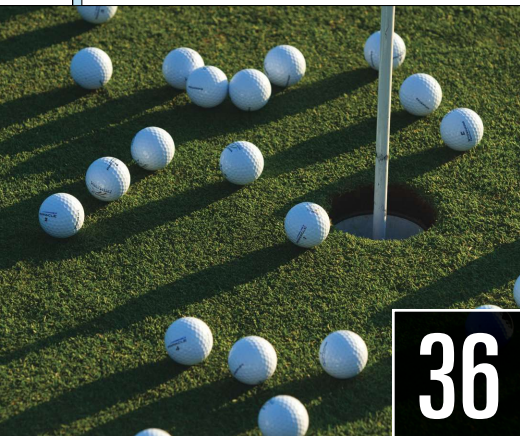
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Golf Range

M A G A Z I N E



Volume 20, Number 1

January 2012

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Welcome to the New GRAA

Anyone who has read the research knows that this industry needs to find more new golfers, needs to keep existing golfers from leaving the game and needs to get more players playing more often. Can ranges help? Yes, yes, and yes. By bringing together 14,000-plus largely independent facilities, a stronger Golf Range Association of America has enormous potential. The research numbers show that dramatically.

Every year, more than 25,000,000 golfers visit a golf range. Over 300,000,000 customer visits are recorded. And 4,600,000 Americans who **never hit a single shot on a golf course** have fun hitting balls at ranges. That offers a whole lot of upside.

Ranges are where golfers are having fun, taking lessons, getting warmed up, practicing, enjoying Demo Days, playing under lights and getting custom-fit for new clubs. And, no surprise here: ranges are where new players of all ages and sizes—women, juniors, and minorities included—take up the game, and if all goes according to plan, they get hooked on it. It all happens on golf ranges every day.

So who are the people behind the new GRAA and what are we bringing to the table? For the answers to those two questions and more, just click the link to this issue's cover story: [The New Golf Range Association of America](#).

As the cover story notes, "from today forward, the GRAA is embracing every range: standalone ranges along with ranges at every public course, municipal course, resort and private golf clubs." That alone will make the GRAA stronger than ever. And the new GRAA is inviting every one of these facilities to **participate at no membership cost** and to receive numerous benefits that should, if we do our job, help all of our member facilities improve their bottom lines and grow their customer lists.

Can our company do all this by itself? Absolutely not. If you are reading this page, we need your help. We hope you join us and look forward to working side by side.

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Golf Ranges: Where the Fun Starts



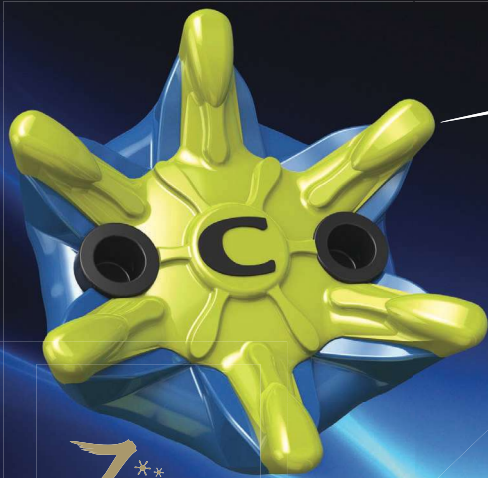


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The Baseline

Golf range usage, by the numbers: Where we stand now **BY TONY STARKS**

People who buy lift tickets at ski areas but never use skis or poles are called snowboarders, a user group that ski area operators didn't know what to make of when they first appeared in large numbers. Now that group produces huge revenues.

You may not realize it, but golf has a sub-population vaguely akin to skiing's snowboarders—the 4.9 million ball-hitting patrons of golf ranges who have never played on a golf course. This hefty population representing “range only golfers” comes from the NGF's 2010 Golf Participation Study. They're out there: nearly 5 million people visited a range in 2010 but didn't play on a golf course. It's fertile ground for growth – for golf and for ranges.

Back in 2000, the National Golf Foundation published a study specifically covering ranges and their customers. “Golf Practice Facilities in the U.S., A Summary of Supply & Demand” provided a macro view of the range world: the total number of

range users, projected revenues generated from buckets sold, number of facilities, etc. But it also covered the micro side: what consumers cared about most, what days of the week and times were most popular, and the differences in consumption between core and non-core users and those that visited on-course vs. standalone ranges. Eleven years is a long time to go without an update so the GRAA and the NGF are now discussing re-examining key findings of the past study in a new collaborative effort.

As we consider new research, we thought it might be helpful to review some of the NGF's past findings from the year 2000 (NGF members have access to the entire study) beginning with the unexpected value and vigor of

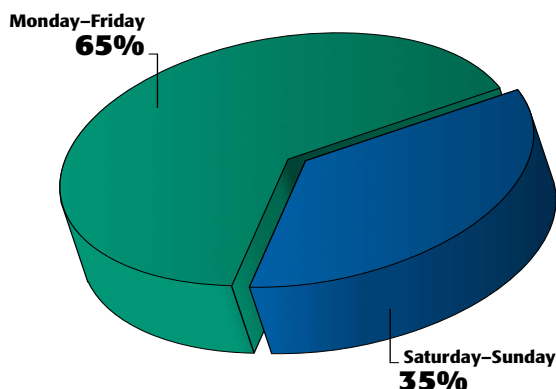
the range market. For example:

- The U.S. population of range users counted by the study totaled 27.8 million. Of those, 7.8 million reported patronizing stand-alone ranges only. The great majority practiced either exclusively at on-course ranges or visited both types.
- Frequency of visits by these basket-renters was about 11 per year, totaling over 300 million customer visits to ranges.
- Collectively, more than \$1.5 billion was spent on range ball rental in 1999, with nearly 60 percent of that revenue attributed to on-course facilities.
- At on-course ranges, the 80-20 rule generally applies: Customers in the “frequent” category make up 28 percent of all on-course range patrons, however they represent 72 percent of all visits. ■

Golf Practice – Weekdays and Weekends

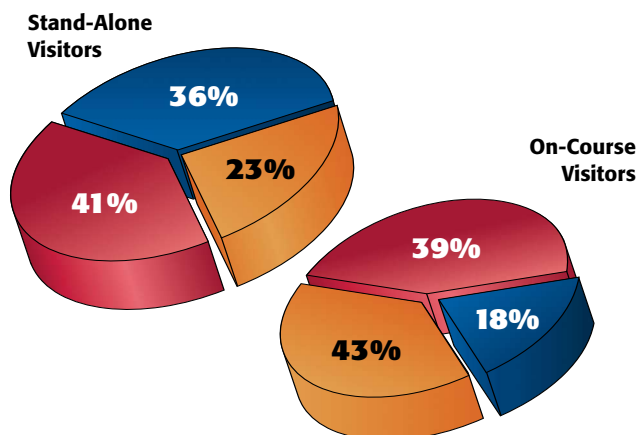
Range users were asked when they typically go to the range. We found ...

About two-thirds of visits to ranges take place on weekdays. Weekday usage is about the same for on-course ranges and stand-alones.



On-Course visitors favor morning practice; Stand-Alone visitors go during the evenings much more often.

■ Morning ■ Afternoon ■ Evening



Golf Practice Facilities in the U.S.: A Summary of Supply and Demand

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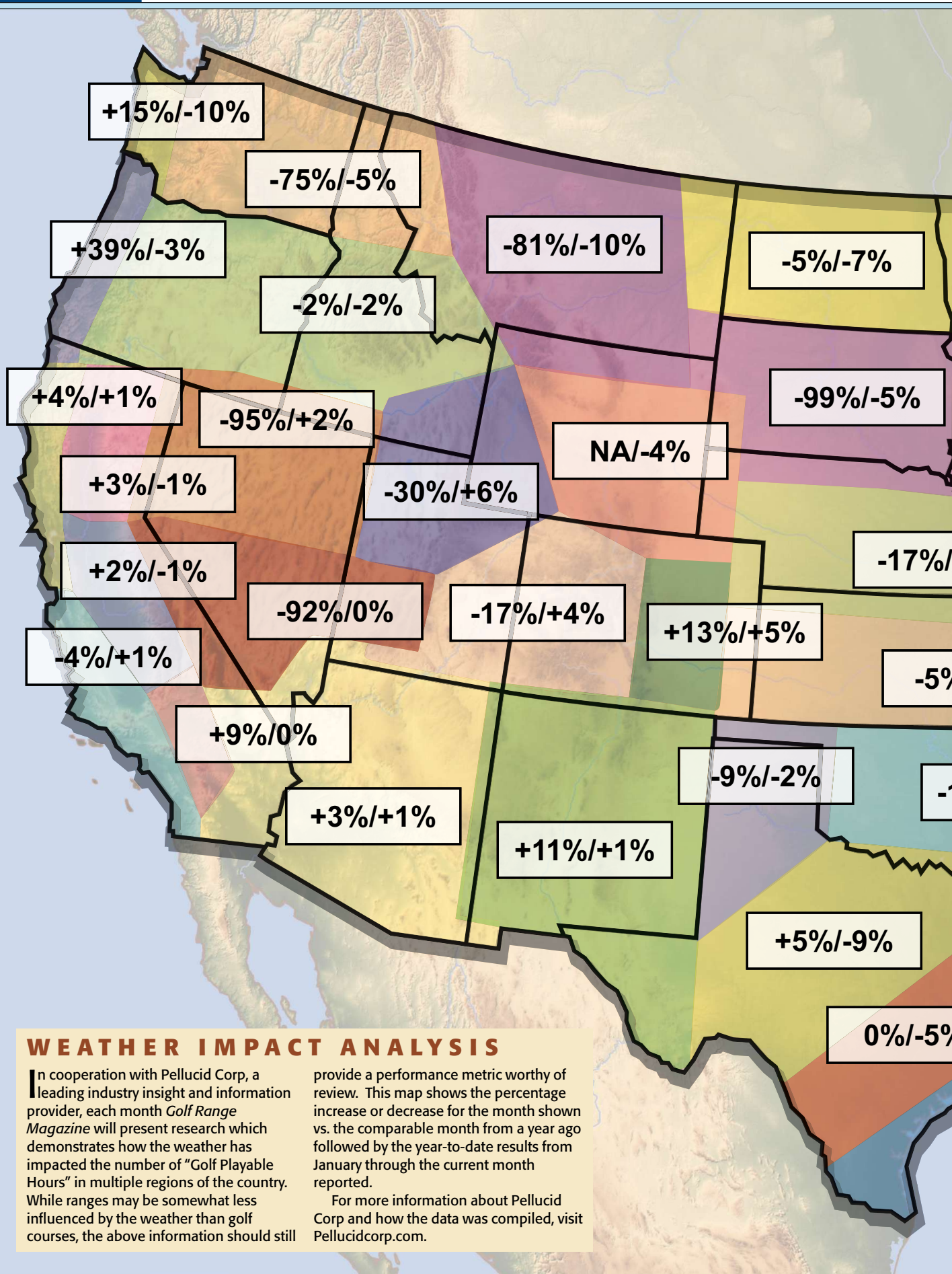


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WEATHER IMPACT ANALYSIS

In cooperation with Pellucid Corp, a leading industry insight and information provider, each month *Golf Range Magazine* will present research which demonstrates how the weather has impacted the number of "Golf Playable Hours" in multiple regions of the country. While ranges may be somewhat less influenced by the weather than golf courses, the above information should still

provide a performance metric worthy of review. This map shows the percentage increase or decrease for the month shown vs. the comparable month from a year ago followed by the year-to-date results from January through the current month reported.

For more information about Pellucid Corp and how the data was compiled, visit Pellucidcorp.com.

Golf Playable Hours: November

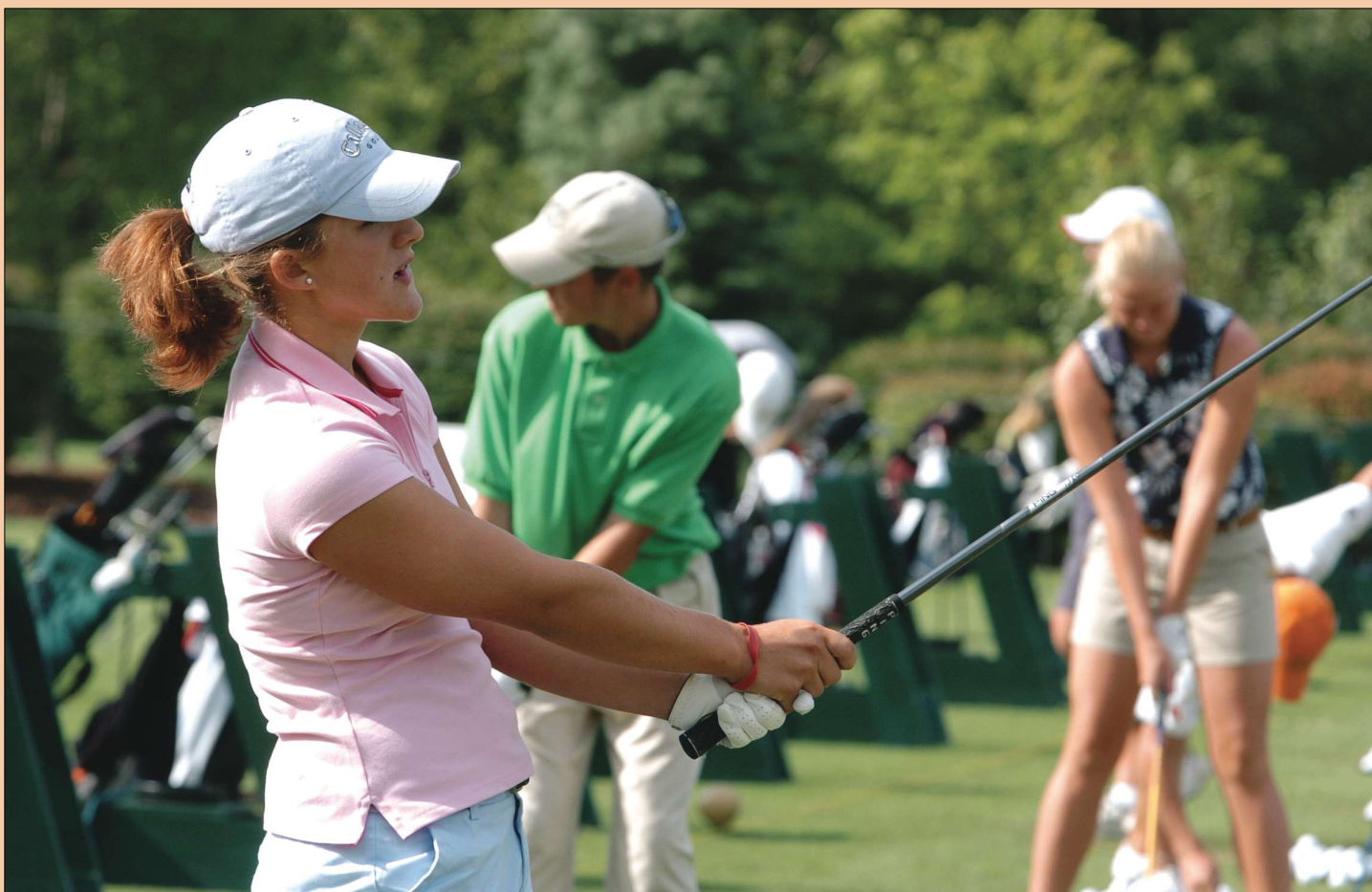
Each region includes: Month % / YTD %

Region	Month %	YTD %
Alaska	NA	-5%
Montana	+14%	-12%
Wyoming	+14%	-11%
Idaho	-3%	-1%
Utah	-20%	-12%
Colorado	-3%	-5%
Arizona	-7%	+6%
New Mexico	+5%	+8%
North Dakota	+1%	+10%
South Dakota	-4%	0%
Nebraska	+3%	+4%
Kansas	-17%	-4%
Missouri	+30%	-7%
Illinois	+9%	-10%
Indiana	+15%	-3%
Ohio	+6%	-3%
Michigan	+80%	-5%
Wisconsin	+49%	-7%
Minnesota	+14%	-11%
Iowa	+1%	+10%
Mississippi	+4%	+3%
Alabama	-7%	+6%
Georgia	-4%	0%
Florida	+1%	+10%
South Carolina	+3%	+4%
North Carolina	-4%	0%
Virginia	+3%	+4%
West Virginia	-17%	-4%
Delaware	+6%	-3%
Maryland	+15%	-3%
Pennsylvania	+80%	-5%
New Jersey	+49%	-7%
New York	+14%	-11%
Connecticut	+1%	+10%
Massachusetts	+4%	+3%
Rhode Island	-7%	+6%
Delaware	+3%	+4%
Maryland	-4%	0%
Virginia	+3%	+4%
North Carolina	-4%	0%
South Carolina	+1%	+10%
Georgia	-7%	+6%
Florida	+4%	+3%

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Promotions and Pricing to Fill the Bays

Three top ranges share effective approaches **BY TONY STARKS**

Once you sell a new range patron that first basket, attentive service and a positive experience will bring them back. For effective ways of creating new customers and providing extra incentive for repeat visits, we turned to three GRAA member ranges known for innovation.

Live Up the Range with LivingSocial

If you're not familiar with Living Social, it's a web-based company that generates coupons and discounts for a variety of activities in locations across the country. Since its debut in 2007, the website has built a database of more than 40 million users worldwide. These bargain-lovers receive daily emails promoting deeply discounted activities in their local area.



While there is a notion among golf professionals that discounting devalues the product—especially when that product is golf lessons—the social-media method of couponing can be a great way to attract new golfers, build revenue and increase traffic on your range.

A fine example of its use is the John Prince Learning Center, managed by PGA head professional Ryan Alvino. Equipped with a range as well as a three-hole

practice course, this stand-alone golf center in Lake Worth, Fla., gets quiet come summertime. This past season, Alvino decided to promote his Get Golf Ready group clinics through LivingSocial. Alvino was looking for a way to boost revenues—even if that meant price reductions.

"We attracted 245 people who were interested in taking our Get Golf Ready class at the discounted rate," describes Alvino. "Personally, I've used Living Social to buy all kinds of things. It's a great option for anyone who may be on the fence about trying something such as a new restaurant, or in this case golf." Alvino's direct experience as a consumer utilizing this social-media option is noteworthy—it often takes a younger, more digitally-oriented professional to walk through new doors.

There is no limit to what you can offer through LivingSocial, or other Internet discount sites such as Groupon. You could offer group lessons, as Alvino did, or individual lessons to hook the customer and then schedule additional meetings at the normal rate. You could even offer month-long range passes to get them coming back to the facility and making auxiliary spends.

In exchange for promoting your services through LivingSocial, you must split the proceeds with the company when someone signs up through the site. The percentage is negotiable based on the cost of your service, but it will never go higher than 50-50.

"We offered Get Golf Ready for \$49 on the site, so essentially we were only making \$25 per student," says Alvino. "But the benefit of attracting 245 potential new customers is absolutely worth the discount. This is a gateway to attract an untapped audience of non-golfers and bring them to the game. Our goal is to bring people to the facility so they can see what we offer, and then turn them into repeat customers."



From the Palmer Playbook: The Player's Club

Every course that's operated by Arnold Palmer Golf Management has a charter-member program called the Player's Club, through which golfers pay a monthly membership fee and receive a lot of great perks at the facility. At Tahquitz Creek Golf Resort in Palm Springs, Calif., the monthly membership fee is \$29 for a single course and \$49 for both of the facility's 18-hole layouts. While being a member gets you free green fees during certain time slots, one of the major components is free access to the practice range with a maximum of one large bucket per day.

"Our range usage is fairly strong year round and I'd like to think The Player's Club has a role in that," says

Brandon Alexander, the PGA general manager at Tahquitz Creek. "We have somewhere around 300-400 Player's Club members every year during the in season, and while they may not always play rounds at our course, they frequent our facility because they have free range access. That leads to them spending dollars all over the facility."

In addition to free range access and discounted rounds, members of The Player's Club can also attend free weekly group clinics. And while all the components of The Player's Club make it an attractive deal for golf consumers, Alexander believes the range element is what makes the program tick.

A series of women's clinics on the range morphed into a profitable league at Makefield Highlands.

"People may not always have time for nine or 18 holes, but they'll stop in after work to hit a bucket of balls if they keep their clubs in the trunk," says Alexander. "That builds loyalty and familiarity among your customer base. I'm certain that our facility is the first to come to mind when our Player's Club members think about where to tee it up next weekend."

A great way for facilities outside the Arnold Palmer family to implement a similar program is by offering monthly range memberships. As Alexander alluded to, it's not only time-effective for the consumer but helps to create a bond between the golfer and your facility.

From the Range to the Big Leagues

Makefield Highlands Golf Club near Philadelphia is well known for its player development efforts. In fact, the course's PGA General Manager Bob Doria received the 2008 and '10



Philadelphia PGA Section President's Plaque – designed to recognize a PGA member for exemplary contributions and achievements in this all-important effort.

But Doria isn't the only professional on staff at this daily fee facility who contributes to their reputation in player development. For several years, Assistant Professional Bruce Fleming has hosted women's clinics on the driving range. In an effort to help female players transition to the course, Fleming created a league specifically for the women's clinic participants.

"We started with a core group of 32 women in 2010," describes Fleming. "By the second year, our number of participants had grown to 100 through word-of-mouth alone."

For 10 weeks, the group comes out on Monday evenings to play a nine-hole event. All participants pre-pay at a rate of \$32.50 per round or \$325 for the entire season. Fleming set aside the \$30,000-plus this program generated in a separate account to support the league.

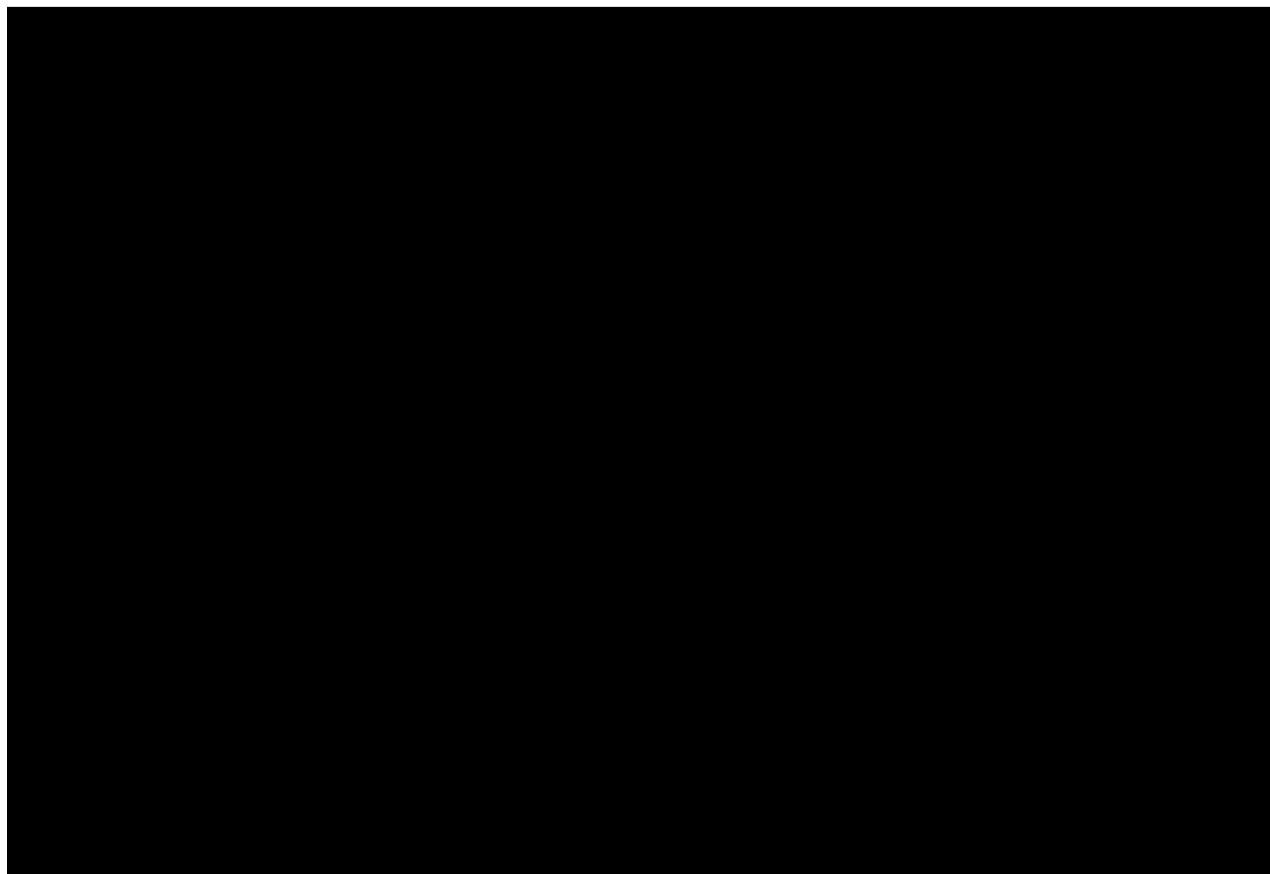
Much as they enjoyed their Monday fun, a fair number of participants missed an event or two. Fleming held as many make-up dates as possible, but at the end of the 10 weeks not all the rounds paid for had been played. So he was left with about \$6,000 in the account.

"I used the rest of the money to organize a lavish banquet for the league participants and also raffled more than \$1,000 of shop merchandise," he says. "The women really appreciated the end-of-the-season bash, and it was perceived as a perk for playing in the league. It was an absolute win-win. They received a great service from the club, prizes and a memorable end to their season. For the club, we built up loyalty, moved some surplus shop merchandise late in the season and showed the women's league how much we appreciated their business." ■

Year-Round Revenue for Instructors

Award-winner Lou Guzzi brings a camera inside his teaching building to show the features that make 12-month teaching a breeze even in the deep freeze

Along with well-chosen words and pictures, *Golf Range Magazine* aims to inform its readers through regular video presentations. We lead off with a short presentation from Lou Guzzi, one of *GOLF Magazine's* Top 100 Teachers and a two-time Teacher of the Year in the Philadelphia PGA. Guzzi's back-of-the-range studio for instruction-tech equipment and an indoor tee space resembles many such facilities, to be sure. But we think you'll be intrigued when you click the Play button to see what Lou's got in there and how well he can serve his students no matter what the weather. And please—if you've got a facet of your teaching operation that you know is a revenue-builder or a useful means of attracting new customers to your golf facility, let us know. We'd love to consider it for a future issue of *Golf Range Magazine*. ■



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GRAA

The New Golf Range Association of America

A letter of introduction from Rick Summers, CEO, Golf Range Association of America

My home is in Philadelphia so the three stories I'll start you off with come from that area of the country. I think you'll like the sound of them.

Philadelphia Range Story No. 1:

Hector Bones, age 24, is of Puerto Rican descent and recently graduated from Temple University in Philadelphia. The first time he ever hit a golf ball was this past summer at Umbria Golf Center in Roxborough, a stand-alone driving range not far from the Temple campus. Hector was taking a \$30 half-hour lesson with a young PGA Apprentice named Scott Yurgalevich. A few months earlier, Yurgalevich had opened his own golf school, the Yur Golf Swing Teaching Academy at Umbria. Response has been positive, so much so that Yurgalevich has purchased and installed a golf simulator so he can continue to give lessons all winter at the range. One range, one young aspiring professional, one new business, one new young golfer.

Philadelphia Range Story No. 2:

Bob Doria is the PGA General Manager/Head Golf Professional at Makefield Highlands Golf Club, located 20 minutes north of Philadelphia. Doria's company assumed the contract to manage this municipally owned golf course and range in 2010. At the outset the range was a quiet corner of the facility—then new management began promoting it. The Makefield Highlands range doesn't qualify as state-of-the-art. It does have some grass-tee stations along

with mats, but it has no lighting or covered stalls. Still, it generated well over \$200,000 in revenue in 2012 and is a direct feeder to a number of other

We want to reach every range in America: standalone ranges, ranges at public courses, municipal courses, resorts and those at every private golf club.

successful growth-of-the-game initiatives. Doria reports: "The range is absolutely critical to the success of Makefield Highlands in gross revenue and on the bottom line. We grow grass on the course, but we grow customers on the range."

Philadelphia Range Story No. 3:

Chester Valley Golf Club's PGA Head Professional Jonathan Doctor wanted

to provide members of his private club with an enhanced teaching environment. Elizabeth Granahan, honored as 2009 Teacher of the Year by the PGA's Philadelphia Section, wanted to create a fully amenitized teaching academy for serious players and beginners alike. By working together, the club and Granahan's G2 facility are both winning. They built a state-of-the-art, rain or shine, heated and air-conditioned, four-season instruction academy right on the Chester Valley Golf Club range.

Granahan's first-year results "were very, very gratifying," she reports. "We are thrilled with the reception. It is so great to be able to see golfers playing better golf." Doctor's evaluation: "A win-win-win for Elizabeth, for the club and for the membership."

...

Three range stories from three different types of facilities attracting three different audiences. They represent a small part of a big story. The mission statement of the Golf Range Association of America is *to harness the combined power of all golf range owners, operators and staff at all types of facilities to grow their revenues, enhance their careers and help grow the game of golf.*

All three stories are about industry people who tried new ideas that ended up producing very positive results ... for their facilities, for themselves and for the game of golf.

Our Commitment

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for more than 20 years. Today, we publish the world's leading trade magazine in golf, *PGA Magazine*; the country's leading regional golf publication, *The Met Golfer*; and golf's leading trade website, *PGAmagazine.com*. Our PGA Best Practice e-mails are opened by over 10,000 trade recipients every week. We annually manage four national trade conferences, over 30 regional conferences and co-own and co-manage the world's largest professional equipment expo, Demo Day at the PGA Merchandise Show. We publish digital magazines and consumer and trade print publications. When we purchased the assets of the Golf Range Association from founder Steve di Costanzo this past September, we committed ourselves to helping lift the GRAA to the next level.

So from today forward, the new GRAA will be based on certain core principles:

- Golf and golf ranges should be fun. We are in the leisure and entertainment business. We want to learn how the best operators are making it fun for their customers every day and to help to spread the word of their successes.
- The game needs more customers, playing more often, and enjoying it more. Every company with a vested interest in the golf business needs golf ranges to succeed and by ranges I mean all of them. Our mission is to help every range learn new ways to be more successful financially while helping to grow the number of customers.
- To make it happen, we want to reach every range in America: standalone ranges, ranges at public courses, municipal courses, resorts and those at every private golf club.
- The new GRAA is inviting every facility to participate at no membership cost. This means that more than 12,000 facilities will now have open access to all the basic membership benefits...
- In order to be effective, we need frequent communication with the membership. We will be creating digital publications every month. Ten of these issues will be B2B,

under the *Golf Range Magazine* title. Two of them will be digital GRAA magazines created specifically for range users—making it possible for GRAA facilities to send these two publications to every one of their customers at absolutely no cost.

- Best Practice e-mails written by private, public, resort and standalone range managers and teachers will be a key component. We believe that no one knows the business of ranges better than the people who manage them every day.

The game needs more customers, playing more often, and enjoying it more.

- Golf instruction is central to ranges. So we are devoted to offering quality B2B and B2C instruction content throughout the year.
- Strong research on trends and performance will be a priority. We are collaborating on research with The PGA, the NGF, and Pellucid. And we anticipate creating regular surveys of the membership across multiple topic areas.
- Face to face networking is more important than ever. The GRAA is committed to providing members with opportunities to meet and interact with other range owners, managers and teaching professionals.
- Recognition of the best in the field will be expanded. We want to identify the best in the field and recognize their achievements.

Listening to the People Who Know

We believe that the GRAA will only get stronger as we listen to the experts in the field. So if anyone who works on a golf range has ideas on how to make the GRAA better, we want to hear from them. We want to get to know them. It

is what made *PGA Magazine* successful and it will make the GRAA successful as well.

Six weeks ago, the new GRAA executive team met for two days with 12 leading range owners and operators at the PGA Center for Golf Learning and Performance in Port St. Lucie, Florida. The experience was so successful in generating ideas and providing guidance that we have now asked each of those present to continue as members of a GRAA Advisory Board. Their names can be found in the masthead under the Table of Contents.

Reaching out for Future Growth

We are aware that we cannot do it alone. We hope that our previous established relationships with golf industry leaders, including those with thousands of PGA Professionals, manufacturers and media, will help us bring the right parties together to truly maximize the potential. We are thrilled to count The PGA of America in as our first allied association. Their support across a number of areas will be both important and valued. We are strong believers and supporters in the PGA's long-standing and continuing efforts in helping to grow the game, most recently their expanded efforts in embracing Golf 2.0. We have made this latest investment of time and money based on our belief that the game of golf cannot grow and facilities cannot prosper unless ranges at all types of facilities are more successful.

And in addition to The PGA, Golf 20/20 has also renewed its support of the GRAA by inviting me to sit on the Golf 20/20 Executive Committee and numerous advertisers have renewed their commitment to this Association. We appreciate these early votes of confidence.

I know that it will take dedication and hard work over time to achieve our many and varied goals, but I have full confidence in our team and with the help of all of those who have expressed their support so far, I am bullish that the GRAA can help every range be more successful, and have happier customers, in the future. ■

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New Tactics Worth Trying

Accomplished operators are cranking up the creativity to either bring in new business or reward their golf customers with some range exclusivity. **BY MIKE CULLITY**

As golf facilities strive to boost rounds and revenue in shaky times, ranges have become critical to success—in some cases even survival. Traditionally, golf ranges have operated with little or no promotion and programming. Management simply did what was necessary to handle whatever traffic their range received. That's changing quickly. The industry now sees the range as a catalyst for revenue and business-building.

Looking back to the passive-management days, Bill Rehanek makes a good point about fixed costs—they

weren't much lower then. Rehanek, a PGA professional and senior vice president of Billy Casper Golf, cites an

important contrast between ranges and other ancillary operations at a golf course. If you're trying to pump up revenue in either retail merchandise or food-and-beverage, you have to make a bigger spend on inventory—not so on the range side.

"Range revenue, as it increases, moves pretty directly to the bottom line, and for that reason we put a lot of emphasis on it," says Rehanek, whose company manages 133 facilities in the U.S.

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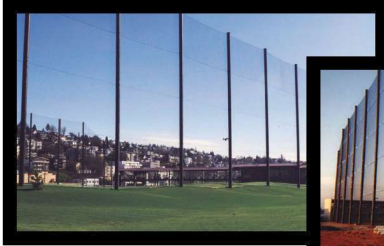


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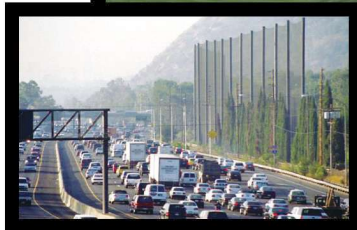
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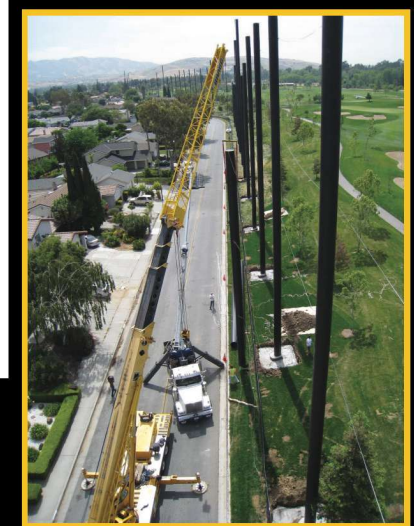
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Operating a range that's profitable while enhancing a facility's potential to generate revenues in other areas presents challenges, of course. Here's how four operators are addressing them.

Challenge: Reverse declining activity

Solution: Make the range a more social place

The drop in consumer spending hasn't spared golf—customers are playing fewer rounds and spending more carefully on items such as practice balls when they do play. To reverse this negative trend, Rehanek and his colleagues at Billy Casper Golf are promoting their ranges as social hubs. Targeting families and young adults, they're offering all-you-can-hit specials and raising the fun quotient at several facilities. At BCG's daily-fee 1757 Golf Club outside Washington, D.C., the company leverages the range's proximity to the clubhouse to create an experience that includes live music, drinks and casual dining on a nearby patio. "It's more like the bowling experience, where families and groups will sit together on the patio and share a couple of hitting stations," Rehanek says.

Challenge: Appeal to players with limited time

Solution: Create a "golf-like" experience

Recognizing that range visits have replaced regulation rounds for time-crunched customers, ClubCorp has sought to provide range experiences that more closely replicate the 18-hole experience. At private Gleneagles Country Club outside Dallas, for example, the company transformed the range from a field with seven or eight flagsticks to a facility boasting tiered target greens and a target fairway. "Visually it gives the feeling of actually playing versus just hitting balls," says Dan Cortese, director of golf and retail operations for ClubCorp, which owns or operates nearly 100 U.S. golf facilities. ClubCorp has also experimented with range games—such as point contests rewarding



Gleneagles uses the range as both a social hub and competitive hotbed.

proximity to targets—at Gleneagles and other facilities. Along with that appeal to golfers' competitiveness, the club warms up its range experience with a classy firepit amenity where members gather to swap stories.

"Visually it gives the feeling of actually playing versus just hitting balls," says Dan Cortese of ClubCorp

Challenge: Increase customer longevity

Solution: Add fitness to instructional programming

The late PGA professional Walter Keller used to say: "You don't give up the game because you get old, you get old because you give up the game." Seeking to keep players active longer, Heritage Golf Group has incorporated fitness into its facilities' instructional programming. "If people stay properly physically fit, it will prolong their desire to play the game," says John

Hungerford, executive vice president of operations for the California-based owner-operator of 19 facilities. On the range at White Columns Country Club outside Atlanta, Heritage opened a golf learning center last summer that includes space for Titleist Performance Institute fitness instruction. Heritage has also introduced on-site fitness centers at some of its private clubs, including White Columns.

Challenge: Maintain quality range turf for daily-fee players

Solution: Limit the amount of "pure practice"

Troon North Golf Club hosts 80,000 rounds a year on its two daily-fee courses in Scottsdale, Ariz. Maintaining quality turf on its range tee is a challenge, particularly during its winter peak season, when the club overseeds with slower-growing ryegrass. To offer optimum conditions, the club limits range use to its daily-fee guests. "The drawback is that we're taking away the ability for local players to have a course nearby where they can practice," says Dan Morn, Troon North's PGA director of golf. "But we've had to prioritize and make sure that customers who are paying good money to play 18 holes have a top-notch practice facility to utilize before teeing off." ■

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Industry Hills: Where

Serving a dense population, the golf range and two courses at this California complex could get by on just-average quality. Instead it shoots for excellence and hits the mark. **BY SCOTT KRAMER**

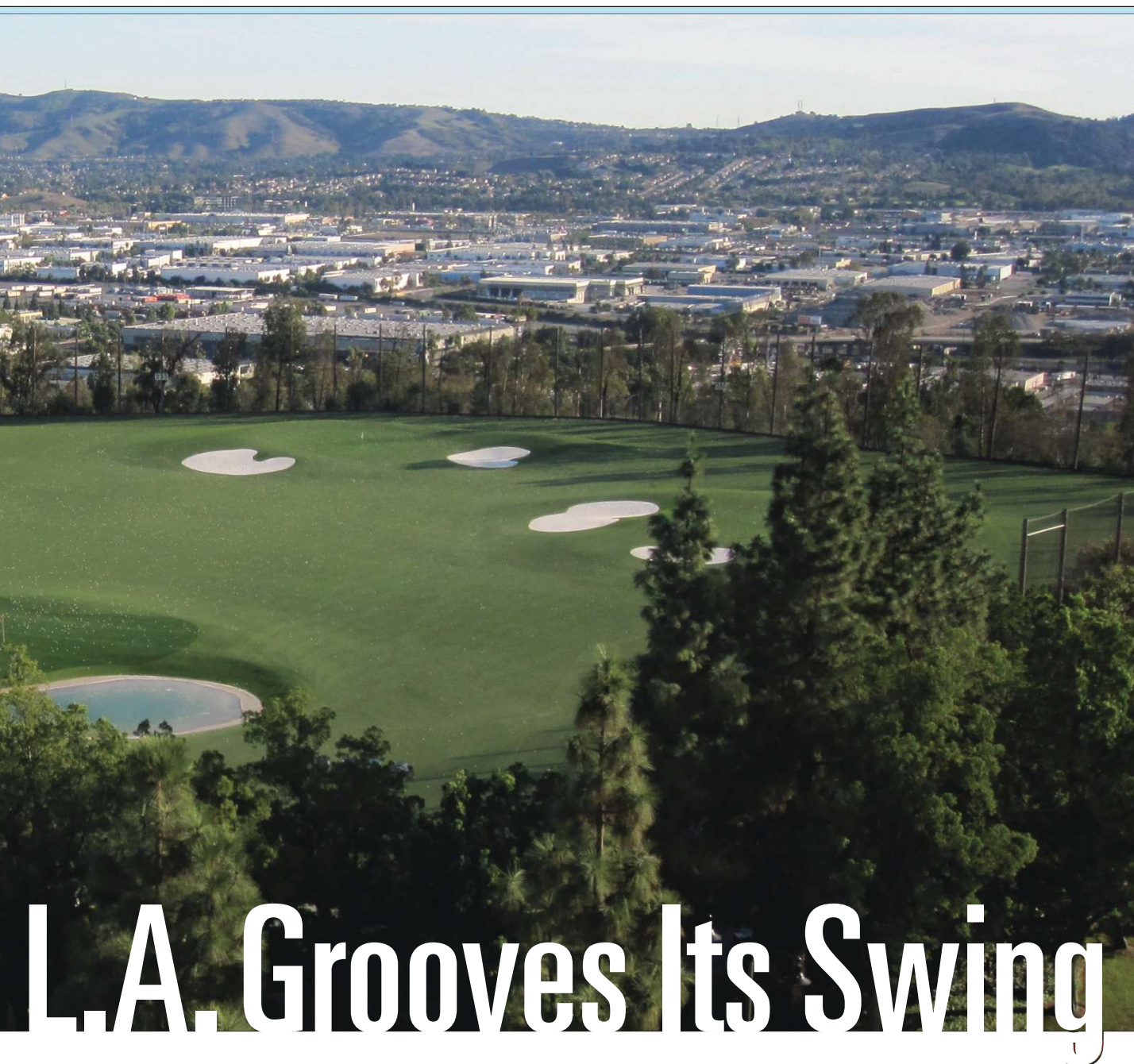
Los Angeles boasts a great golf climate but the public golfer has always had trouble taking advantage of it. L.A. country clubs are pricey and elite, reserved for corporate higher-ups and entertainment moguls. Public courses in the sprawling metropolis are known for their crowded fairways and spotty conditioning.

But there is one exception for Angelenos who want to develop their golf skills and really enjoy the game. Indus-

try Hills Golf Club at Pacific Palms in the City of Industry—located on the far southeast corner of L.A. County—com-

bines high-end golf with reasonable prices. That's true of its two 18-hole courses and undoubtedly so for its ever-popular practice complex.

This is no ordinary range, for a multitude of reasons. Where else can you find the usual throngs of locals mixed in with PGA Tour pros honing their skills, alongside A-list celebrities like George Clooney and Clint Eastwood



L.A. Grooves Its Swing

or sports heroes like James Worthy? It's also probably the only place in L.A. where you can find a 100-ball bucket of top-quality practice balls for the modest price of \$7.

The multimillion-dollar range is the same vintage as the facility's acclaimed courses – built in 1980 – and has been through not one but two renovations. In 2001, the landing areas were stripped of their natural turf and replaced with an artificial surface. That material was all replaced with updated artificial turf in 2009.

"Even the good synthetic turf doesn't last forever," says Dave Youpa, Industry Hills' PGA director of golf.

"We keep it updated, so that the range is always beautiful, perfect every day. You're not digging holes out of the mud and the balls aren't coming back to the golfers muddy. It's very efficient this way and very easy to look at."

Sixty hitting bays are housed in a double-deck structure, each one with a placard bearing accurate and unique distances to the four target greens. Aside from hitting to those targets, golfers can also negotiate simulated hazards, such as bunkers and a lake. And they do it from hitting mats that are perpetually in excellent shape – management is adamant about it. "We don't let the mats or the balls go bad,"

comments Youpa.

The Industry Hills range is open daily from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. The after-dinner hitters enjoy a California sunset that gives way to field lighting. In the detail-oriented spirit that pervades this 650-acre facility, it's not just any set of towers and bulbs. "We installed lighting that was bright enough to let a player see the ball in full flight," says Youpa. "It's perfect lighting, with no dead spots, which you don't get at a lot of ranges."

The back fence stands some 235 yards from the hitting bays, but you've got to nail shots 255 or 260 yards to hit them out of view, into a backdrop that's

scenically treed. "It's a solid, quiet practice area," says Youpa. "Its key is the double-decker range. We get a lot of younger players on the top deck, and the people who prefer shade to sun hit from the lower level, because it's covered."

Having a complete array of comforts and services is the goal of any range, but all the better when the layout allows easy navigation. "We feel that this range has everything you need, though it's not fancy or confusing, it's just a good practice facility. There's a bunker to hit out of, and a practice putting green there. I think our price sets us apart from all the other ranges in the area—\$7 for 100 good range balls is not a bad deal." That's for the player who's really trying to get in a groove. "We also offer \$5 for a 35-ball warm-up bucket," Youpa says. "A lot of golfers don't have the time to hit 100 balls before a round. But your average guy who wants to take the time to work on aspects of his swing will spend \$7. We get a lot of guys coming here just for the range."

The facility also has several PGA professionals and Apprentice members giving lessons, doing club fitting and running a golf academy. PGA pro Kenny Shiba is a former club fitter-of-the-year honoree and was once a staff pro at Industry Hills—he's been a fixture at this game-improvement empo-

rium for 30 years. Shiba still conducts lessons and club fitting sessions on the range as an independent contractor. Over the years, he has built an outstanding rapport with golfers who come out and practice, and often mingles with the regulars, of which there are many.

Golfers get help from PGA professionals and Apprentices who give lessons, fit clubs and operate a golf academy.

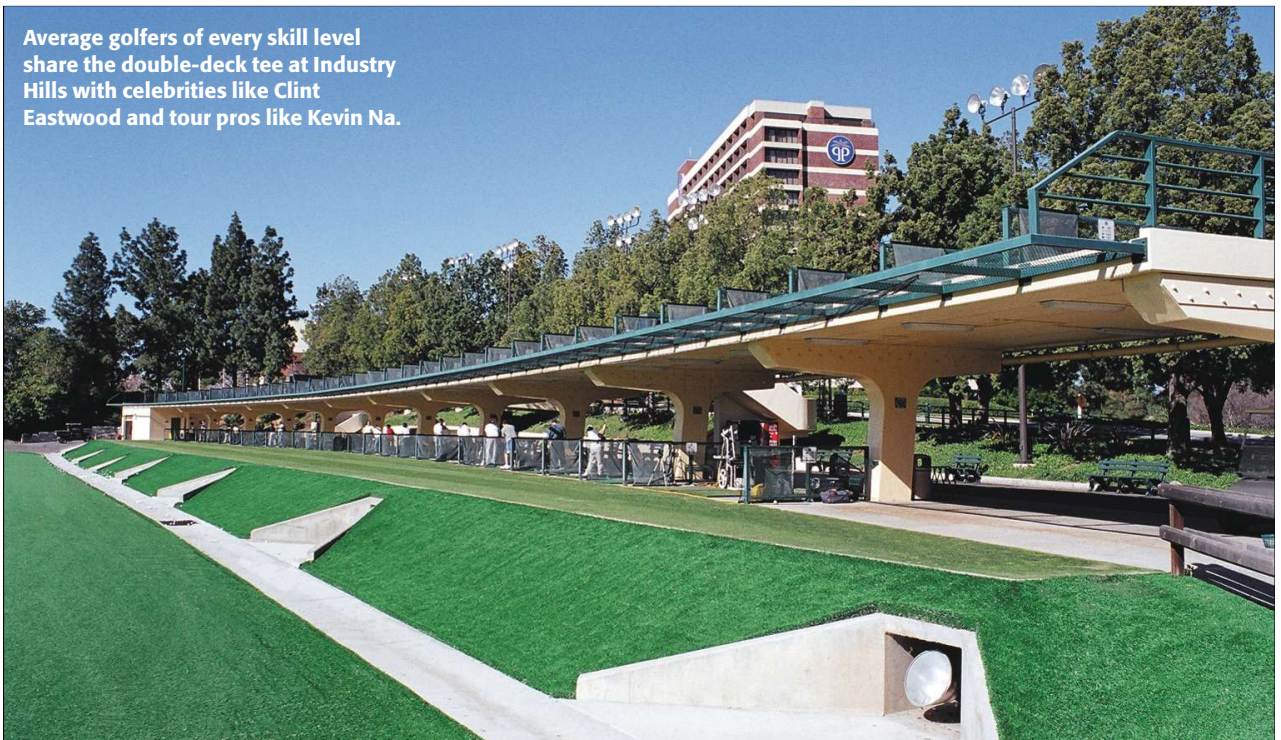
"They ask questions, and I help them build up knowledge," says Shiba, who sometimes gathers galleries while fitting golfers for clubs. "In turn, that builds up my fitting clientele." In the 1990s, when Shiba's Henry-Griffitts fitting cart was the only toolkit of its kind in the industry, range regulars would form a gallery to watch new fitting clients go through this novel process. "I still get some people watching when I give club fitting sessions. Equipment

does affect ball flight and swing motion, and with it you can do things where instantaneously you can get golfers to hit the ball well." Part of being a golf nut, it turns out, is taking a seat to witness those dramatic transformations.

Part of the attraction of Shiba's workstation is the sprinkling of movie stars—the likes of Connery and Sylvester Stallone—who come to Shiba for club fitting and lessons. "I never tell people when they're coming," says Shiba. "I have a friend who's usually there at the range. If the word gets out that there's a celebrity there, I make my friend act as bodyguard. He gets people to wait in line until the end of the session for autographs. They are celebrities, but they're here for a club fitting and I need to make sure it's not interrupted."

When actors aren't turning heads here, pro golfers are. Case in point: PGA Tour pro and nearby resident Kevin Na frequently hits a lot of balls at the range. "Kevin gets a lot of practice in here," says Youpa. "We actually have a little grass area for instruction and for Tour players to use." And that's a nod to the credibility that Industry Hills' practice facility has built up. Wide-open to the public, it's also good enough to attract players who could practice just about anywhere. ■

Average golfers of every skill level share the double-deck tee at Industry Hills with celebrities like Clint Eastwood and tour pros like Kevin Na.





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GlenArbor's Game-Improvement Kingdom



When a golf range and practice complex is loaded with every desirable feature and detail, the time spent practicing pays off handsomely—even when you don't have time to play 18 holes. **BY JOHN TORSIELLO**

High-end private golf clubs may appear to simply sell themselves. But more than ever these exclusive enclaves need practice ranges and teaching facilities to keep members happy and enthusiastic about their investment in membership. It's a known fact that when member handicaps go down, everybody wins. Nor does it hurt to have a state-of-the-art range and short-game center as a selling point for prospective new members.

Morgan Gregory reveals a trace of pride as he guides a visitor through the plush and expansive practice facility at Glen Arbor Golf Club in Bedford Hills,

N.Y. The club is tucked into northern Westchester County, where competition among private clubs for affluent golfers is fierce. Gregory, who holds

the title president, believes Glen Arbor's multi-dimensional practice area and teaching center set it apart from other area clubs.

"There is nothing like it anywhere around here," Gregory states flatly. "We considered it a top priority to have this type of a facility. We see it as almost a sanctuary, where members and guests can practice very productively, as well as receive instruction from some of the top instructors in the country."

Brian Crowell, the club's head professional, is also a respected instructor



and media personality. In Crowell's view, having a first-class platform for game improvement strikes a deep chord with members. "The overall average handicaps of our membership has gone down since the practice facility was completed," he reports. "We have members who will drive up from New York City (about a 45-minute commute) just to use the range or receive a lesson."

Adds Gregory, who oversaw the planning, construction and implementation stages of the practice areas and Teaching Center: "We have some members who will just use the practice facility and not necessarily play some days. Time is precious for our members and it is often difficult to take four or five hours to get in a round of golf. But it's possible to find 60 or 90 minutes

to come and practice or take a lesson."

The golf course at GlenArbor was designed by Gary Player and opened in 2001. Player played a significant role in the development of the practice areas and official Teaching Center, which was fully completed in 2006.

The entire complex is a monument of sorts to skill development and stroke-saving, one that any candidate for GlenArbor membership would likely sigh over.

The Teaching Center features two enclosed hitting bays that can be opened to allow members and guests to hit full shots and receive instruction during even the worst weather conditions. Outside, there is a lengthy tee line, including a natural-turf hitting area on each end of the generously long range.

The Teaching Center has all the bells and whistles and contains the latest in computer technology, with a V-1 Professional coaching system allowing students to learn at an advanced rate through a visual understanding of the golf swing. Through an online "lesson locker," students can receive emailed videos of their swings and instructional tools. Hands-on interaction between teacher and student is crucial to the program's success, Gregory believes, speaking as a skilled player in his own right.

Director of golf Rob Labritz (*pictured above, teaching*) is also a top player. He finished as low PGA professional at the 2010 PGA Championship. Director of instruction Debbie Doniger is seen often on The Golf Channel and staff instructor David

GlenArbor's scoring-game facilities are proven handicap-reducers.



Clinics with the pro build good swings and camaraderie.



Gagnon mentors club juniors.

Key to the operation is a stunning short game area, known as the Gary Player Center. It's the club's little mecca for wedge-wielding members and guests wishing to work on a variety of touch-and-feel shots. The center's five regulation-sized greens were designed to be used as targets from the teeing grounds only and replicate course conditions, such as shots to flags over bunkers and pitches to raised, rolling greens. There's also an area where golfers can practice a 50- to 80-yard sand shot.

"You're really practicing productively when you're hitting the shots you're going to face when you're playing an actual round," says Crowell. "Practicing at the Gary Player Center lets a member work on various scoring shots (from around 20 to 120 yards) from the five teeing grounds and build a feeling of confidence that they can hit any short-iron shot. They can then take that confidence and ability out onto the course and not be intimidated."

GlenArbor's practice amenity includes what it calls The Legends Center, located in a hollow of land close to the Gary Player Center and comprised of three separate green complexes. This is where golfers can practice pitch shots and bunker play to a variety of hole locations. The total area of the

practice facilities at GlenArbor covers about five acres, Gregory says. While declining to give a firm number as to the cost to design and build them, Crowell says it involved a significant investment by ownership.

"We see our range as a sanctuary, where members and guests practice productively and receive valuable instruction."

The physical condition of the practice areas is splendid throughout. A frequently refreshed stock of Titleist Pro V1 golf balls are used. "We have really taken golf instruction and practice to the next level," says Gregory. "We left no stone unturned." Doug Rimsky, a member of GlenArbor who lives in Bedford Hills, took time out from a lesson he was receiving to speak to the value of the club's practice center.

"I've been a member here for three

years and the practice facility is one of the reasons I joined. It's got all the newest and best technology and the focus is always on you and helping you improve as a player. I can see what I'm doing with my swing on a computer and we can work on fixing things. I even come here during the winter to work inside. Being able to hit full shots to the outside range is a huge help."

GlenArbor's PGA teaching staff offers private and group instruction. A Golf Academy combines instruction with golf and dining. Says Crowell: "The Teaching Center makes our job so much easier. We have everything we need to help our students improve as they practice under real on-course situations."

Offers Gregory, "We always had a vision to create this type of a practice facility. Many of the private clubs in this area are land-locked and some have ranges where you can hit maybe only up to a seven-iron. We had the land here and creating a one-of-a-kind practice and Teaching Center was always one of the most important things we wanted to do when we opened the club."

GlenArbor demonstrates the impact a clearly thought out, well-managed, comprehensive practice facility can have on the overall operations of a golf club. ■

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PGA President Sees Opportunity on the Range

Projecting profit and growth in range operations, **ALLEN WRONOWSKI** cites the need for skilled teaching and innovative outreach



PGA President Allen Wronowski, the PGA director of golf at Hillendale Country Club in Phoenix, Md., sat down recently with *Golf Range Magazine* to discuss how golf ranges impact the overall health of the industry and the role ranges play in the industry-wide Golf 2.0 initiative.

Golf Range Magazine: According to a report from the National Golf Foundation, there are 4.9 million exclusive range users. When you look at that statistic, showing how many people hit balls at the range but never step on a fairway, what thoughts does that prompt? Should the industry be grateful that they at least show up and pay for buckets?

Wronowski: We're very encouraged by the fact that there are millions of people who visit ranges, hit balls and have an interest in the game of golf. It's a great sign for PGA Professionals, and for the industry as a whole, that golf appeals to a wide variety of people. This presents a tremendous opportunity for us and we must find ways to transition those unique range users into people who ultimately play rounds of golf.

To accomplish that we must show that golf is a fun, healthy, family-friendly entertainment option. We must continue to break down barriers such as time and cost, and highlight various forms of golf experiences. We are very grateful that people do want to play the game, and that speaks to the many intrinsic values of golf.

GRM: During the go-go years of the 1980s and '90s, entrepreneurs like Dominic Chang set off ambitiously to create chains of golf learning

centers for a mass audience, including many families and beginners. Chang's company, Family Golf Centers, actually succeeded impressively before he revved it up too fast and got over-leveraged. In your view, does that model seem at all viable in the current climate?

Wronowski: The viability of a family golf center or standalone range facility in 2012 lies with understanding who

If people have proper instruction before they play, it becomes more enjoyable. At the core of this is family, friends and fun.

your customers are and knowing the audience you're trying to attract to the game. Much of what Golf 2.0 aims to do is educate operators and PGA Professionals on what people want. Certainly a big part of it is family time. So the more that a particular operation

presents itself as an enjoyable family experience, the more opportunity that operator has to be successful and the more opportunity the game has to grow – one facility at a time.

Regardless of what facility it is, or what type of facility, the operator must understand the changing demographics and values of our society, and how to appeal to them.

GRM: Why in your view don't more standalone ranges hire or align themselves with a PGA Professional? Does it come down to the perception that staffing with PGA Professionals simply costs more? What does The PGA of America say to these owners?

Wronowski: We want, and need, to do a better job of communicating to our membership that standalone ranges and like facilities – such as nine-hole executive courses or par-3 courses – are places where golf can grow. These are the entry points into the game and the places where beginners first come to learn golf.

The opportunity exists at places such as these for PGA Professionals and facility operators to create a successful business model and take a slightly different approach than the traditional 18-hole facility. We must educate our members on the value and importance of exploring different



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employment avenues and educate employers, so they have a better understanding of the value that a PGA Professional brings to the table.

GRM: Does The PGA of America envision creating anything new in the way of outreach tools or out-of-the-box marketing assistance for its instruction-oriented members?

Wronowski: Through Golf 2.0 we've put together 12 Strategic Initiatives, each of which has a team of industry leaders who are creating the tools and marketing assistance to help PGA Professionals and other industry leaders to grow the game and their operations from multiple standpoints.

One of the initiatives involves appealing to new golfers by highlighting the PGA Professional's role in teaching beginners. We view instruction as a key element of our player development outreach initiatives. If people have proper instruction before heading out to the course, then it becomes a more enjoyable experience for our patrons. At the core of this is family, friends and fun. So when someone is first introduced to golf instruction, if it can be done in a fun atmosphere with family and/or friends present, we feel they will be more likely to be retained as a golfer.

Introductory programs such as Get Golf Ready should be relaxed and fun, and people are more relaxed among a group of people they're familiar with. Secondly, once the initial encounter is done they still have a support group of sorts to help them progress with the game. We want to make instruction more targeted for those three areas and help PGA Professionals identify creative ways to engage these audiences through instruction-oriented programing.

GRM: Core golfers are people who are essentially hooked on the game. Their other hobbies or activities may be enjoyable, but for them nothing compares with hitting a pure shot to a tight pin to set up birdie. The more they can strike the ball with authority toward the target, the better they feel. You find these people at the range pretty

often, although many of them are trying to hone their swings without professional instruction. Are there "next steps" for the PGA Professional as an instructor that could address this situation effectively?

Wronowski: Core golfers are a captive audience for PGA Professionals. They have a love and passion for playing the game of golf, and that's the bond that links them to PGA members. It's safe to say that almost every PGA Professional sought membership in our Association because they have an undying passion for the game of golf, and that same type of passion burns brightly among our industry's core golfers.

I encourage PGA members to walk the range and start conversations with core players and core customers.

I encourage PGA members to walk the range and start conversations with their core players/customers, sharing personal golf-related experiences and explaining how that information could help them (the customer/member) become a better golfer. Core golfers come at all levels—I know people who are still out there every week chasing that elusive "best round of their life." Other than actually playing a round of golf, there's nothing those folks like more than telling you about the last round they played.

PGA members should capitalize on that and build relationships with core golfers through a common bond of loving the game. By doing so, PGA members will more and more be looked upon as the "rock stars," as I like to call them, at their facilities.

GRM: Standalone ranges have an

interesting role in Golf 2.0-type initiatives, because they are even lower-pressure than ranges at public golf courses. Their location fronting well-traveled roads makes it all the easier to visit on impulse. Any experienced golfer who practices often at a standalone will frequently see rank beginners hitting grounders and little pop-ups. The PGA Professional who owns or manages the facility certainly provides instruction, clinics, clubfitting, etc., but could they (or an adjunct PGA Professional) be incentivized to provide some early guidance to these newbies? The idea is that the standalone's business may be extremely healthy as is, but its "gateway" status is going underutilized, from a macro perspective. Please comment.

Wronowski: Golf 2.0 is designed in large part to provide tools and communicate to PGA Professionals that they are the ones who can help turn around our industry. They are the best educated and the best trained in our game. The incentive comes from PGA members challenging themselves to be the best possible representation of our game and industry. To help them achieve that, Golf 2.0 highlights various avenues for success. For instance, knowing your customer is a key component. PGA Professionals must begin to understand what matters to different golfers—those beginners who hit grounders and pop-ups are looking to golf for something different than the experienced player two stalls over. If you understand that, then the incentives are clear and the opportunities for greater business are present.

But, regardless of someone's skill level, there's one thing every golfer looks for when they go to the range or to the course: an enjoyable experience. There's no substitute for a welcoming facility and a friendly staff that makes golfers feel comfortable. If you can create that kind of atmosphere, the "newbies" and experienced golfers alike will continue to frequent your facility. How about that for incentive? ■



The New Golf Range Association of America

On January 1st, 2012, the Golf Range Association of America re-launched under new management and with an entirely new platform. We invite you to be part of it! Now operating as part of the same family that publishes *PGA Magazine*, the GRAA will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in a major way. The new GRAA begins with a new mission statement: *To harness the combined power of all golf range owners, operators and staff at all types of facilities to grow their revenues, enhance their careers and help grow the game of golf.*

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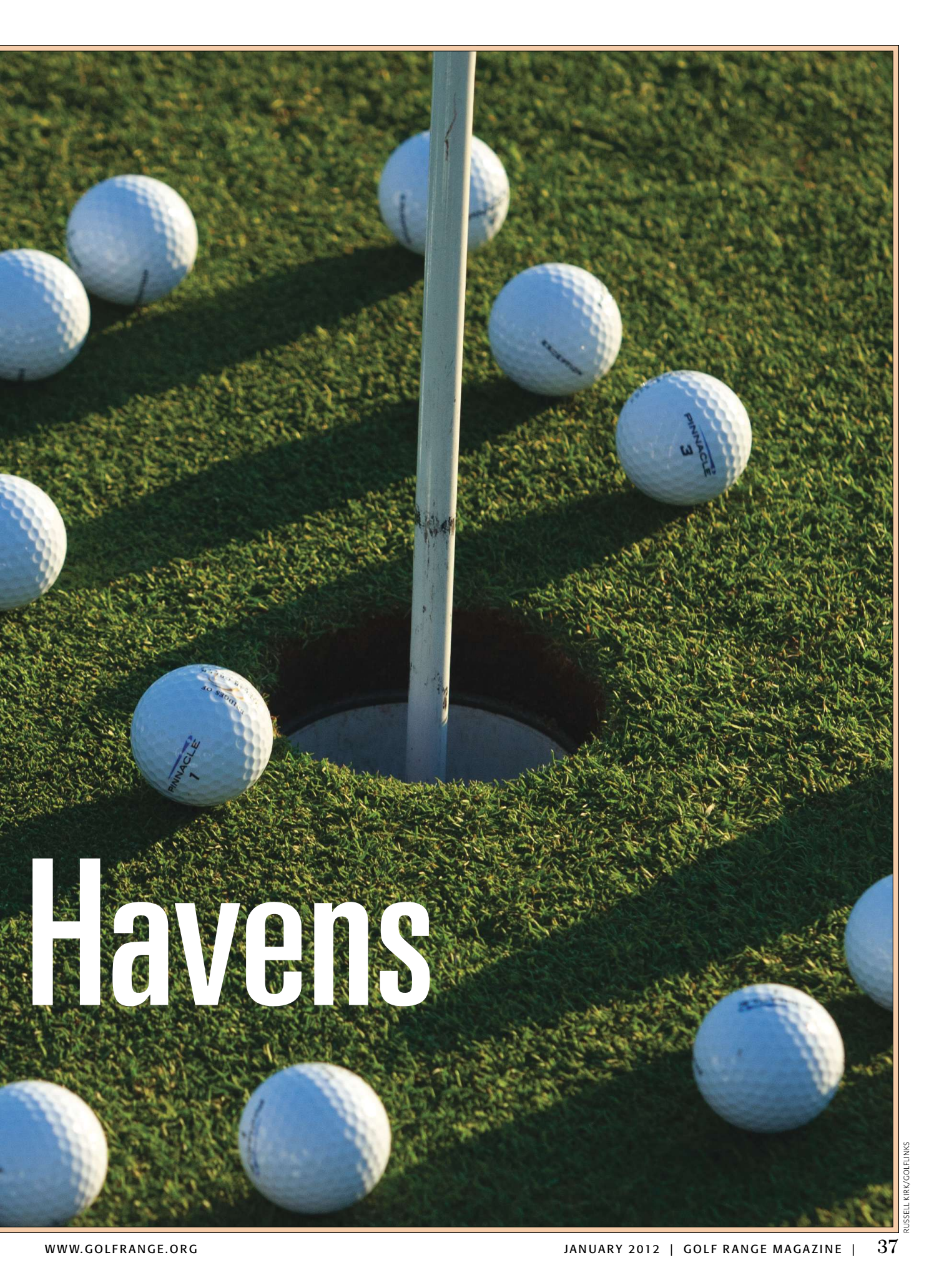
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Chip-and-Pitch

It's called a "driving" range because golfers so eagerly work on distance. That's changing, as facilities set up short game practice areas with their own fee structures. **BY DON JOZWIAK**



Havens

Range facilities that provide a well-conceived short-game practice area open up new possibilities for customer service and business development. If you've got some extra land, existing customers will enjoy the chance to work on scoring shots. Plus, that dedicated short-game area can attract new customers who will contribute to long-term revenue growth.

"More and more golfers realize the importance of practicing and perfecting their short games, so there is no substitute for a good short-game area as part of your driving range or as an independent practice facility," says Mark Maness, PGA Certified Professional at Golden Bear Golf Center in Carrollton, Texas.

"A good practice area devoted exclusively to the short game creates added value and can draw more people to your facility," he explains. "We charge \$10 for daily use of our pitching/bunker area. We issue tubes of balls for use to manage who should and shouldn't be over there. We have range passes that include free access to the short-game area, sort of a membership. It has encouraged pass sales and added to the bottom line with daily use charges."

Maness is a devout advocate of the short game, and recommends several elements to help create a successful short game area:

- Offer a short-game area that is completely separate from putting greens.
- Offer at least 50 yards of manicured fairway.
- Provide multiple targets from various distance ranging from 25 to 125 yards.
- Provide at least two bunkers with differing contours.
- Use a sustainable grass on the target greens.
- Provide mounds and grass bunkers that simulate areas on your course or on courses nearby.

"To truly have enough space for an exceptional short-game area, you need at least 50 yards of fairway on one side, and even more would be better," says Maness. "We have 40-plus yards

of fairway grass on one side and 30-plus on the other, allowing for lots of different length shots and wind conditions." There are certainly design options, based on space available, according to Maness.

"Multiple small greens with one target each also works well for pitching," he says. "But one bigger green with three to five targets works great and doesn't require as much space. Again, the target green needs to be big enough for multiple targets so many people can use it at once without risking safety and providing a diversity of shots." Whatever land you have, it's best to go three-dimensional with it. "Creating mounding and contours is important to keep it fun," says Maness. "A flat area is boring and will wind up underutilized – the area must make them want to practice!"

At the Golden Bear Golf Center in northern Texas, Maness makes short-



Nothing builds short-game lesson revenue like a dedicated space.

game practice fun and challenging by positioning three short flags staggered at 10-yard intervals in front of the teaching area. Yardage plates every 10 yards back starting at 20 yards and going all the way back to 50 yards from the nearest pin encourage simple "contests" to help players sharpen their short games.

Maness also constantly reminds customers of the importance of working on short-game skills through newsletters and web sites. But nothing wedges home the point like providing a fun, well-conceived short-game practice area so customers can feel results for themselves. ■

Teaching a chipping stroke on the main driving range is of course possible, but top instructors like Mike Malaska (above) want students to see relevant results.





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Jack Grout Helped Make Practice Possible

BY DAVID GOULD

Jack Nicklaus, the greatest of American golf champions, was taught the game by Jack Grout, a golf professional who by any definition was ahead of his time. You can learn accuracy as you get older, Grout told his star pupil—for right now hit it as far as you can.

But what exactly would the Ohio phenom hit? Standing on a lesson tee with his coach, Nicklaus could hardly look down at a pile of factory-built balls with “PRACTICE” printed on them—there was no such thing available back when Nicklaus was a junior golfer in the early 1950s.

“You wouldn’t think of a Jack Nicklaus starting out in junior golf and not having a place to hone his swing,” reflects Dick Grout, a PGA professional himself and the son of the legendary Jack. That problem was addressed by Jack Grout’s ingenuity. Both at Scioto,

black-striped himself. When the balls were all picked they would be cleaned in an old clothes washer in back of the golf shop, which must have sounded thunderous in the spin cycle.

“You had to throw rags in there to quiet it down and keep the balls from getting scraped up too bad,” recalls Dick, who hangs his hat at The Cliffs, near Greenville, S.C. “You couldn’t just order range balls back then, either,” Dick remembers, “so my Dad

figured out away to keep up his supply. He would trade the members one brand new ball for 10 of their used balls. Ten for one—and he was picky. He wouldn’t take any ball that was too nicked up.”

The members, who were generally wealthy individuals, would jump at the chance to make this deal, which the senior Grout often marveled at. Grout had a homemade striping device in his back room, consisting of a tube that fed balls into a pincher, which in turn held each ball against a narrow applicator moistened with black paint. Members paid 50 cents for a small bucket, \$1.25 for a large. “Before we striped them, Dad would say, ‘Dickie boy, go back into my shag barrel and dig yourself out some real pearls.’”

The first driving range in the U.S. is credited to Pinehurst Resort and went by the name Maniac Hill. The term has always amused people, but it’s also regrettable, linking practice with deluded desperation. The business is fully modernized now, with covered bays, automated tee-up and outbuildings humming with computers and cameras. Which makes the early adopters—and innovators—all the more admirable.

One of these instructors must have shown up for work one day and hand-dug the first practice bunker. One thought to build covered hitting bays. Yet another devised the first range plan, letting members pay up-front for a full season of ball-beating. Jack Grout spent the 1950s at Scioto nurturing Nicklaus and helping the members straighten out their slices and hooks. His system for creating a practice facility that allowed all this is worth remembering and celebrating. ■

Grout’s muddy orange balls were picked by a Jeep with makeshift scoops and cleaned in an old clothes washer in the back of the golf shop.

where he taught Nicklaus, and later in Florida at La Gorce Country Club, Grout came up with trailblazing techniques to advance the golf-practice regimen. Something had to be better, Grout thought, then a scruffy field where only a few members could hit balls and schoolboy shaggers had to chase down every shot.

These days a clean, cropped, full-service place to practice is a refuge we take for granted, but Dick Grout remembers well his days driving a battered Willys Jeep around his dad’s range at La Gorce, in Miami Beach, aiming a makeshift scoop at range balls the boy’s father had

