



# GRAA

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

Inside the November issue, you will find the following features:

- **Instruction: Get Students in the Right Sequence for Their Swing** – The feel of a swing that has the proper kinematic sequence, starting with the lower body, can be elusive.
- **Video File: Watch and listen as LPGA Teaching Professional Cathy Schmidt offers her “Y & L” swing thought.**
- **Public Range Profile: More Than a Basket of Balls at Longaberger** – Owned by a beloved American brand of handcrafted baskets, Longaberger Golf Club leverages its scenic and high-service golf range to help keep a rural golf haven humming along.
- **Traffic Builders: From Lesson Logic in Georgia to Street Traffic In New York** – There’s more than one way to stream traffic through hitting bays. You could bring strangers in off the streets or vary your instruction curriculum to turn locals into lesson-takers.
- **Range Operations: Remote Ranges Give New Meaning to ‘Long Drive’** – Ideally, a golf course will have its practice area adjacent to the clubhouse and first tee.

Keep it fun and thanks for supporting the GRAA.

Best Regards,

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*Golf Ranges: Where the Fun Starts*

# Golf Range



**M A G A Z I N E**

Volume 20, No. 11  
November 2012

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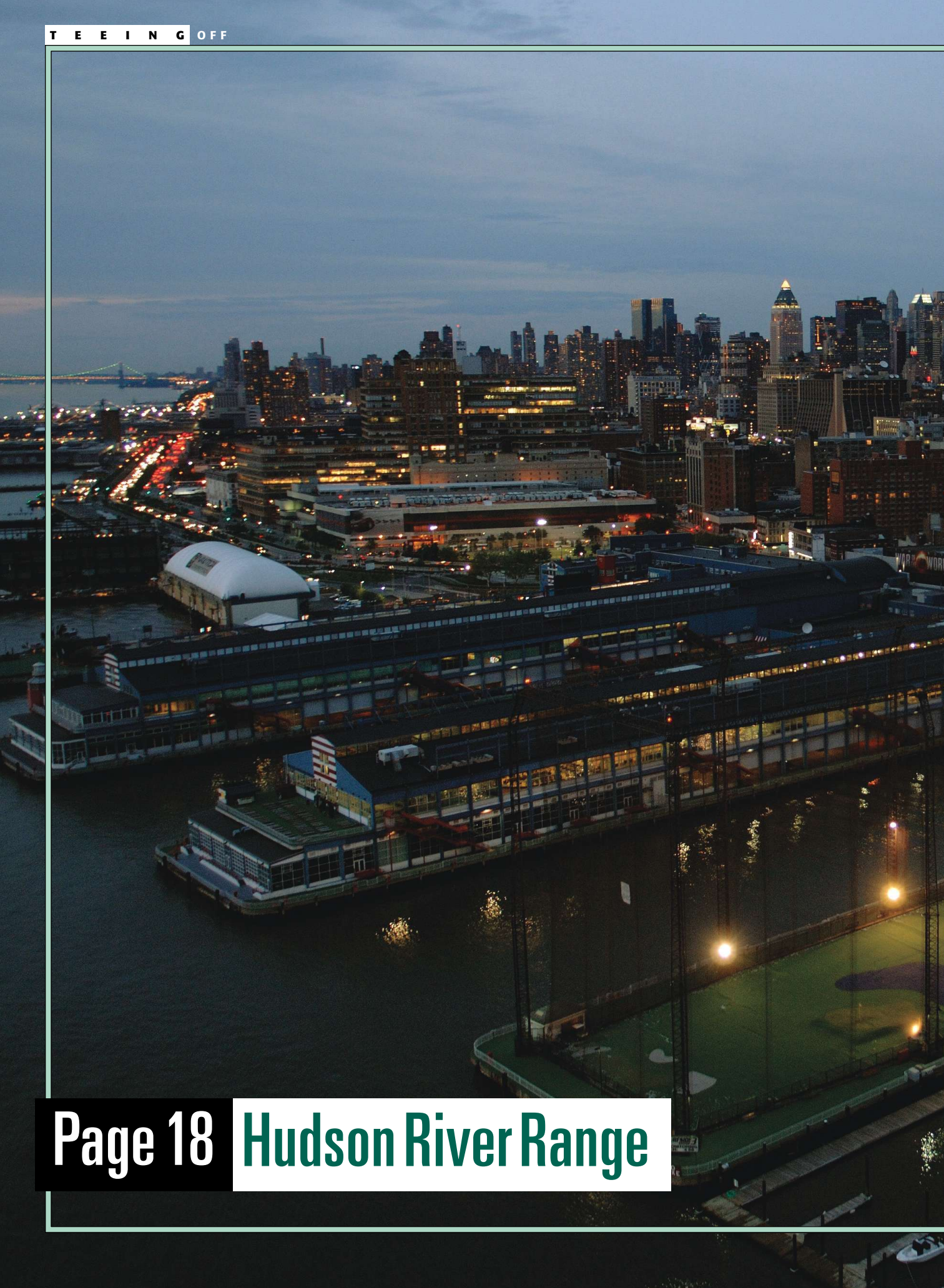
## **In this issue:**

- **Profile: Longaberger GC**
- **When A Range is Remote**
- **How To Teach Timing**

## **Where Practice Meets Perfect**

**How Lester George  
is rethinking the  
game-improvement  
environment**











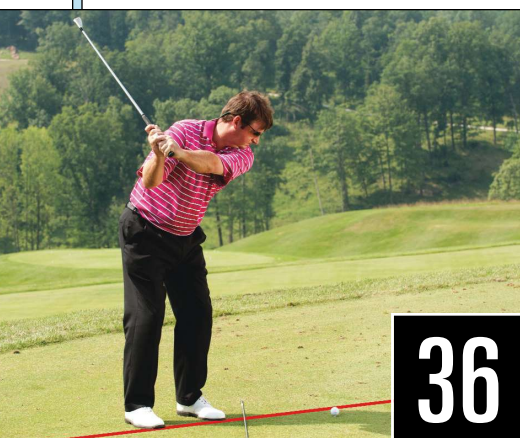






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# Golf Range

M A G A Z I N E

Volume 20, Number 11

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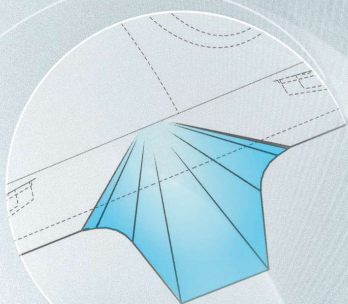
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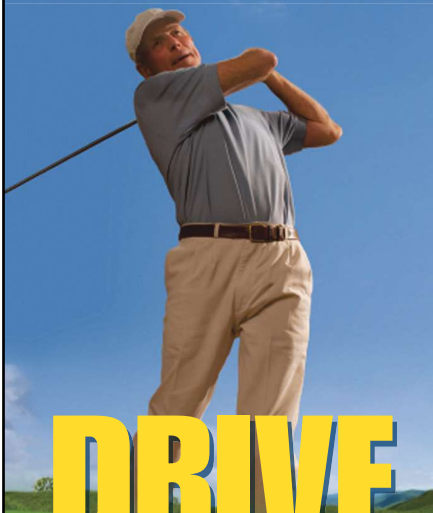
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## Re-imagining the Range

**W**hat does a golf range look like? If you asked this question of golfers and range operators alike, you'd probably get a pretty similar answer from most of them: "A long, rectangular field with an area at one or both ends where people can hit golf balls toward target greens or yardage signs."

That's the standard setup, and it has served golfers and the golf business well for decades. I think it's exciting, however, that we're seeing innovation in how ranges and practice areas are being designed—and that innovation is being driven by a desire to make the experience better for consumers and facilities alike.

This month's issue of *Golf Range Magazine* features an interview with golf course architect Lester George, which you can read starting on page 22. This former Army officer has completed more than 75 golf course projects, but the one that intrigues me the most is his design for the practice area at Kinloch Golf Club in Manakin-Sabot, Va.

As you'll see when you read this story, George knows that plenty of golfers spend more time practicing on the range than playing on the course—and that it's good business to give them a great experience. Or, as George calls it, "a realistic, reasonable practice experience dedicated to improving their game." The practice facility at Kinloch is a free-form area that allows golfers to hit shots from turf that is identical to the fairway and rough on the golf course, with practice greens the same size as those on Kinloch's 18-hole layout. Players can move around to practice shots of different lengths. As George says, "The strategy is to simulate a real condition and have a real learned response from that condition."

This design philosophy dovetails with what modern instruction tells us about practice, which is that golfers get more out of varied or "random" practice hitting a number of different types of shots, as opposed to "block" practice that involves beating large numbers of similar shots. Done well, a free-form practice facility could be the sort of place that gives golfers a chance to improve the way they practice and play, and enjoy themselves while doing it—that's a win for the facility, the golfer and the game.

I encourage you to read our Q&A with Lester George, along with the rest of this month's issue, and see if there are ideas you might be able to apply to your range to create a similar experience for your customers. I think we're heading toward a future where asking a golfer "What does a golf range look like?" yields a variety of answers from satisfied golfers.

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*Golf Ranges: Where the Fun Starts*



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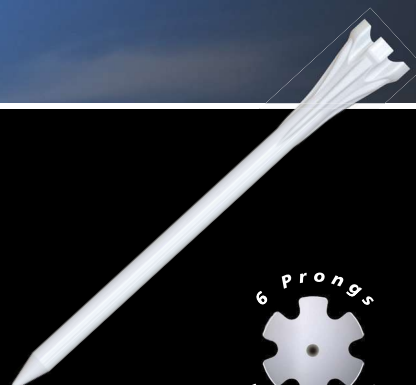
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# Convince Your Students to Stretch — New Numbers Back You up

Hard evidence from highly respected scientists well-versed in golf can now be passed along to golfers you work with — they'll stretch or else pay a price

BY TONY STARKS

When you watch most golfers try to warm up before a round, you'll likely see them make a series of air swings or crank two clubs at once — or even make the effort to touch their toes. Evidence now tells us that is not a sufficient prep of the body for the gauntlet of 18 holes. So when golfers tell you they warm up, they're more stretching the truth than truthfully stretching.

According to research conducted in conjunction with the World Scientific Congress of Golf, the factors involved in a complete warm-up consist of:

- 1) Aerobic exercise to raise the body temperature, which allows for better stretching;
- 2) A period of sport-specific stretching focusing on the muscles that will be used, and;
- 3) A period of activity incorporating movements comparable to those that will be used in the actual performance.

As a follow-up, a group of researchers surveyed 304 adult golfers at Pinehurst (N.C.) Resort and Country Club regarding their warm-up habits (if any) before playing rounds or even before practicing.

All survey participants were core golfers who maintained official handicaps and played an average of at least once a week for the previous year. The median statistics were 53 years of age (range 18–83), 18.5 years of golf experience (range 1–59), and 13 handicap (range 0–40). Of the 304 golfers, 71.4 percent were male.

One of the first points the researchers noted was that more than one-third of those sur-

veyed reported having a golf-related injury within the previous year. Their questionnaires also showed that 35.2 percent of the golfers never or seldom warmed up before playing. And a steeper 62.5 percent said they never or seldom warmed up before practicing. It's worth pointing out that the percentage of those reporting an injury is virtually the same percentage as those who say they never warm up.

Of the respondents who did warm up, only 19.2 percent reported doing so for longer than two minutes. The majority (36.4 percent) said they warm up for less than 30 seconds.

For this study, the researchers defined "appropriate warm-up" as featuring two of the three components listed above. It turns out that only 18 percent of the surveyed golfers met the standard, while less than 2 percent of the respondents reported perform-

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**The percentage of golfers reporting an injury is equal to the percentage stating that they never warm up.**

---

ing some kind aerobic exercise before playing a round.

The third element of a complete warm up was defined as a "period of activity incorporating activities comparable to those that will be used in the succeeding performance." Or, in layman's terms, going to the range. After warming up and loosening the appropriate muscles, it's important to rehearse the movements that will be used on course. Not just the full swings either, but the half swings and pitching motions as well. A complete range warm-up should simulate the variety of shots you'll see on course. This type of warm-up will undoubtedly enhance a player's on-course performance.

Finally, researchers concluded that golfers who abide by at least two of the three warm up requirements are 3.2 times less likely to get injured during a round than those who never or seldom warm up. In other words, warming up well before you play or practice golf is expected to be good for both your body and your score. ■





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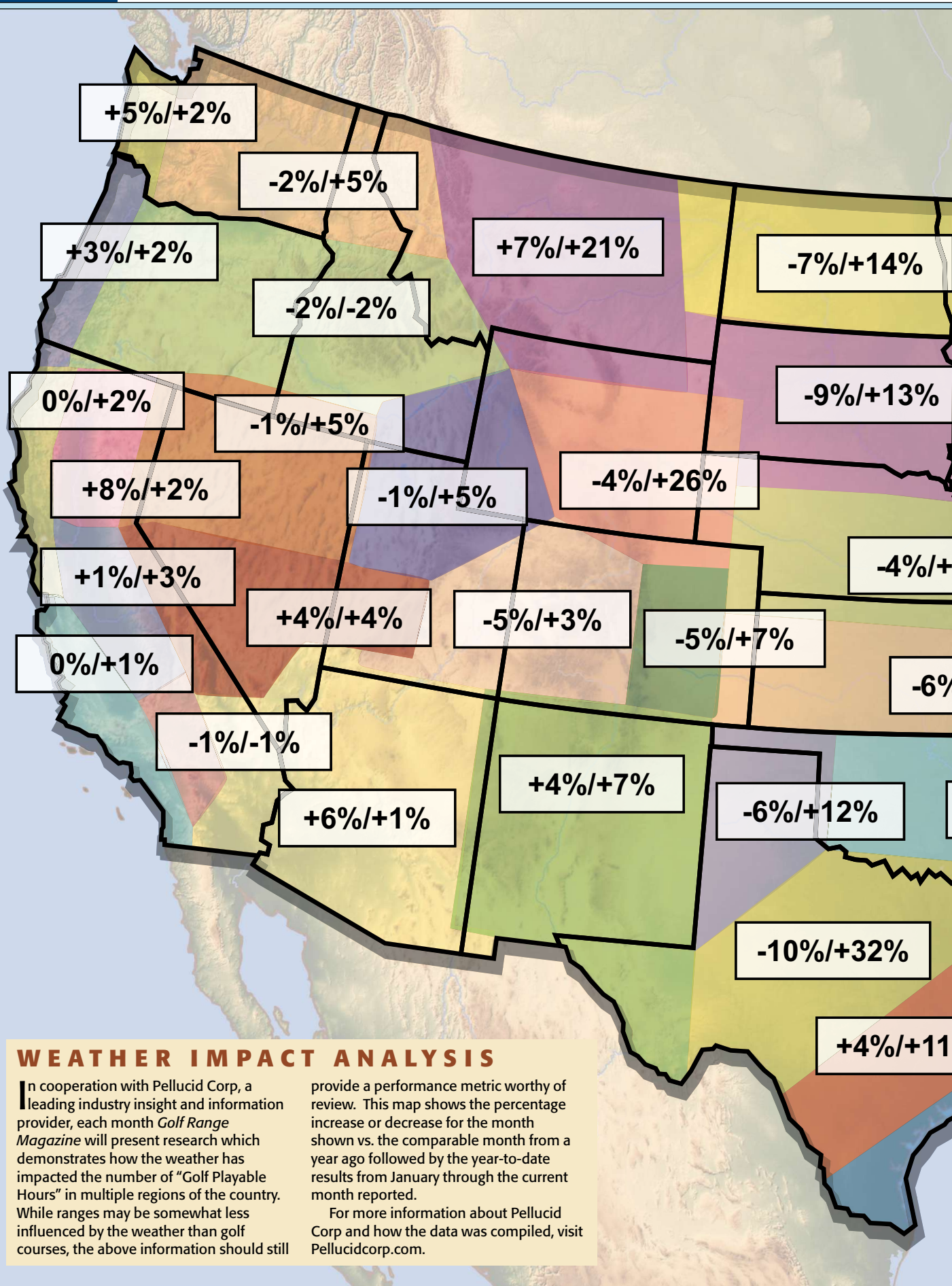


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## WEATHER IMPACT ANALYSIS

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](http://Pellucidcorp.com).



## Golf Playable Hours: September

Each region includes: Month % / YTD %

Legend:

- $\pm 100\%$  = increase/decrease exceeds 100% due to small base value
- N/A = out-of-season period and not reported

Region	Month %	YTD %
Alaska	+1%	+12%
Arizona	+6%	+21%
Arkansas	+2%	+14%
California	+10%	+16%
Colorado	+5%	+17%
Connecticut	-2%	+15%
Delaware	0%	+13%
District of Columbia	-1%	+11%
Florida	-5%	+3%
Georgia	+2%	+8%
Hawaii	N/A	N/A
Idaho	+5%	+10%
Illinois	+12%	+15%
Indiana	-1%	+13%
Iowa	+3%	+14%
Kansas	+5%	+10%
Kentucky	-6%	+11%
Louisiana	-8%	+3%
Maine	+1%	+10%
Maryland	+13%	+14%
Massachusetts	-1%	+11%
Michigan	+5%	+17%
Minnesota	+2%	+8%
Mississippi	-13%	+37%
Missouri	+3%	+14%
Montana	+5%	+10%
Nebraska	+3%	+14%
Nevada	+10%	+16%
New Hampshire	+1%	+10%
New Jersey	-6%	+11%
New Mexico	+2%	+8%
New York	-2%	+15%
North Carolina	+1%	+10%
North Dakota	+5%	+10%
Ohio	+3%	+14%
Oklahoma	+2%	+8%
Oregon	+10%	+16%
Pennsylvania	-6%	+11%
Rhode Island	+1%	+10%
South Carolina	+1%	+10%
South Dakota	+5%	+10%
Tennessee	-6%	+11%
Texas	+2%	+8%
Utah	+5%	+10%
Vermont	+1%	+10%
Virginia	-6%	+11%
Washington	+10%	+16%
West Virginia	-6%	+11%
Wisconsin	+5%	+17%
Wyoming	+5%	+10%

**N/A = out-of-season period  
and not reported**



# A Foundation for New Golfers in Two Letters of the Alphabet

Teaching professionals – and the industry as a whole – continually seek effective ways to communicate swing basics to newbies. In this short video, Cathy Schmidt offers her “Y & L” swing thought.

**I**t may be fun to stay at the Y-M-C-A, as the pop song insists, but for new golfers who work with Cathy Schmidt on a basic swing move they can repeat, the letter “Y” goes best with a complementary “L.” A full-time teaching professional with accreditation from the LPGA and from the physics-based Golfing Machine system, as well, Schmidt is a habitual video-shooter.

Knowledge is energy,” says Schmidt, whose shingle hangs at two Florida facilities, Timber Creek Golf Club in Bradenton and Terra Ceia in Palmetto. “When I have information that I feel could benefit others, I have a professional obligation to share it via the posting of video.” As the golf participation trend tries to eke its way upward here in 2012, there is still a major imperative surrounding the “returnee” player, who had dropped out and now wants to give it another

shot. Schmidt did something a bit like this, herself.

“It took a few years off from golf to raise my family,” she says, “and when I returned, golf instruction had advanced to where you could really be part of a technical global community.” It gets pretty granular when you’re building knowledge of athletic motion, but in explaining things to a new player you have to keep it simple. Check out one of Cathy Schmidt’s favorite ways to do that. ■







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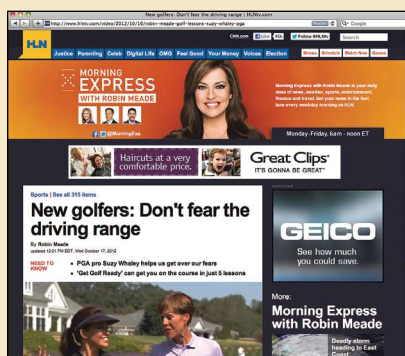
**Coming soon**





# A Wide Range of News

Keeping you up to speed on trends in the golf practice-and-learning sector



Almost every new golfer – man, woman or child – faces the dreaded “intimidation factor” when walking up to hit balls among a driving range full of experienced players. Recently, **HLN news anchor Rachel Meade**, herself a new golfer, took to the range with renowned PGA Professional Suzy Whaley to help address ways to overcome that intimidation. Whaley provides some tips you can share with new players that will help them feel more comfortable while practicing ... While it doesn't get the roars and fist pumps, some of what Tiger Woods does off course is just as impressive as the courageous rounds of golf he pulls together. Recently the **Tiger Woods Learning Center** opened a new branch at



Murray Middle School in Port Salerno, Fla., near his South Florida residence. The after-school program is dedicated to providing hands-on experiences in science, technology, engineering and math, coupled with college preparation workshops to create a rare environment concentrating on college and careers. The learning center at Murray Middle School is one of five nationwide, including the flagship center in Anaheim, Calif., two in Washington, D.C. and another in Philadelphia. It limits its class size to 25 students per session, with two sessions of two days each per week ... So many amateur golfers have felt the frustrations of the game mount to the point where



When 2012 British Open Champion Ernie Els pulled out of the PGA Grand Slam of Golf because of an ankle injury, three-time major champion **Padraig Harrington** was called in just days before the event to fill out the most elite foursome in golf (the PGA Grand Slam of Golf is an annual event contested between the year's four major champions). Upon Harrington's arrival at Port Royal Golf Club in Bermuda, he hit the driving range to find a nameplate that still read “Ernie Els.” In the ego-driven world of pro athletes, an error like this by range staff could set off worries that Harrington would recoil at apparent disrespect. But if Padraig felt insulted, he hid it well – no doubt the \$600,000 check he received for winning the event made his last-minute trip worthwhile.

they've almost quit. As an instructor or range operator, you've undoubtedly encountered golfers who've felt this way. The next time you do, direct them to this article by **Huffington Post** contributor Joseph Satto. Satto tells the story of how his trip to a very special golf learning center changed his perspective on the game ... The proposal to convert the driving range at the Lakes at El Segundo Golf Course into a **TopGolf** facility is facing



some resistance from the local community. TopGolf's initial proposal was received enthusiastically by the City Council in July. But as the city's public input process has unfolded, opposition has emerged, including a “Save the Lakes” Facebook page with more than 700 followers. TopGolf makes the case that its

operation would provide an economic boost to the region ... **Total Driving Range Solutions** (TDRS) LLC has been launched by a Connecticut-based group of golf and design experts. The mission of the new company, which is now active with its first projects, is to help range operators increase revenues and deliver service at higher standards. Proposals from TDRS planners and designers feature a combination of design options tailored to meet the needs of local markets. TDRS believes that upgraded facilities can become a destination point for a broader range of players, thereby growing the game, and even becoming a focal point of the local community.

“We believe we can help operators unlock the hidden asset in their existing facility using our unique design options and consulting services,” says Frank Wainwright, partner in the new firm. “By upgrading a facility's infrastructure to include options such as covered and weather adjusting hitting areas, many operators will see significant revenue increases and experience a very attractive payback on their investment.” Facilities interested in learning more are encouraged to call Jim Downing at 914-282-6398 for a no obligation introductory consultation. ■



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# From Lesson Logic in Georgia to Street Traffic in New York

There's more than one way to stream traffic through hitting bays. You could bring strangers in off the streets or vary your instruction curriculum to turn locals into lesson-takers. **BY TONY STARKS**

Generating traffic for a business is a bit more complicated than it seems. Your local mall could be jammed on a Saturday evening but if every family is cruising the food court or the play pavilion, that doesn't do the toy stores much good. This issue's glimpse of wise ways to pump up revenue by attracting more customers to the right place at the right time carries us up and down the Eastern Seaboard. One golf property (south) is hoping to sell instruction to golfers already on the grounds. Another one (north) is looking to pull them out of taxicabs and off the sidewalks.

## Manhattan's Chelsea Piers: Dipping into an Annual Pool of 50 Million Tourists

When tourists first venture into New York City, the Empire State Building will usually top their must-see, must-do list. The iconic building stretches about a quarter-mile into the sky, and from its 86th Floor Observatory you're granted magnificent views of Manhattan and beyond.

One sight that's abundantly clear from that perch is the Golf Club at

Chelsea Piers, which is tucked along the Hudson River and boasts Manhattan's only outdoor tiered driving range. "I don't think you can get any better marketing than that," says Chelsea Piers General Manager David Beltre with a smile. "Tourists don't make up a large percentage of our business, but we do have some marketing tactics in place to try to capture their business."

It starts with an outreach to a long list of marketing managers at nearby

The allure of New York City begins with the famed skyscrapers of Midtown Manhattan and extends all the way to lights and netting of the golf range at Chelsea Piers.

hotels. The basic version of that is a Stay & Play deal in which the hotel offers guests a special package that includes a set of rental clubs and a card for range balls. Beltre also leaves brochures in the hotel lobbies and provides photography as well as other collateral for the trolling digital displays.

Beyond that, the staff at Chelsea Piers is encouraged to network with the hotel staff members, so that when guests ask where they can go to hit balls Chelsea Piers is on the tip of their tongue. "Building relationships with hotels and their staff really helps drive traffic for us," says Beltre. He has also forged a relationship with the New York Golf Center, which operates the onsite golf shop at Chelsea Piers. That retailer also runs a store on 35th Street in the heart of New York City where the walls of the store are festooned with Chelsea Piers promotional materials like graffiti on a New York subway.





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"The store on 35th is one of the busiest golf shops in the city, and it's right in the middle of the tourist attractions," says Beltre. "That's been an unbelievable relationship for us in terms of attracting customers." The holiday season is the busiest tourism period for New York, which works out well for Chelsea Piers as locals are putting their clubs away for winter hibernation. The heated hitting bays and indoor simulators make Chelsea Piers an attractive option for the tourist looking to hit a few balls on the Hudson during their stay in New York.

"Tourists provide a nice little boost during the colder months," says Beltre. "And with the way we're set up (with heaters), you can hit balls in the dead of winter and still be comfortable." That's a setup that gives the phrase "warm bodies" new meaning.

#### When the Drills Are Over, A Test Provides Answers

PGA Professional Charlie King, director of instruction at Reynolds Golf Academy at Reynolds Plantation in Greensboro, Ga., implements two dif-



Charlie King shows a small clinic group the initial takeaway position, which they'll learn in technique sessions before being tested on it in the "competitive" section of their lesson.

ferent types of practice to prepare his students for the test of golf: technique and competitive.

"When a person is developing their game, nearly 100 percent of their practice will be technique," says King. "This is the typical skill-building practice of hitting stacks of balls over and over from a perfect lie to build habit." King warns that even when your student is beating balls on the range there needs to be structure.

Make sure they have a specific target.

While technique practice is important, it is not how golf is played. You don't get to hit a dozen 8-irons in a row from a perfect lie when you're on the course. This is where competitive practice kicks in. It involves using your imagination to essentially play a round of golf on the range.

"When I'm with a student for a competitive practice and they step up to 'hole one,' I outline what the shot will look like," says King. "For example, I'll tell them the yardage from the tee to the hole, that there's water on the left and out of bounds on the right," he explains. Next part of the process is executing what's outlined. "Once they make that shot," he continues, "we'll change clubs, bump the next ball so that they aren't playing from a perfect lie, and visualize the next shot, whether it's got a pond to the left or a bunker behind the green."

According to King, this creates accountability for students' shots in practice. It simulates on-course moments where the student feels a tingle of nerves. This can even be translated to the short game by having students work on getting up and down from a practice bunker or two putting from 50 feet.

"By the time my students are about a 15 handicap, that's when I will make 80 percent of practices about technique and 20 percent competitive," says King. "If golfers don't transition to competitive practice, they'll wonder why they are good range players but can't transition to the course." ■

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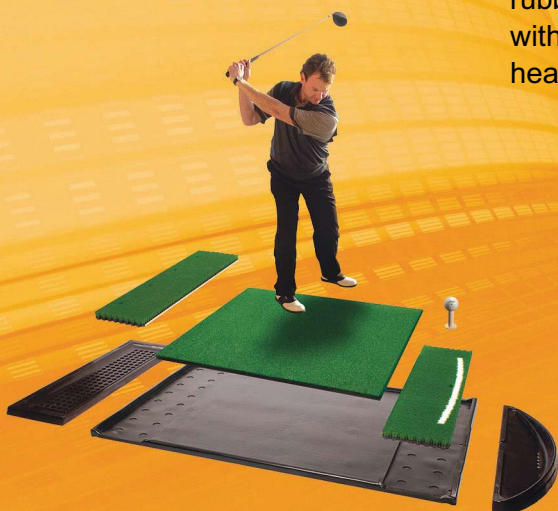
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# Lester's Law: Build Ranges for Creative

How much of the golf challenge can be experienced from a hitting station at the range? No course designer is working on that question harder than Kinloch designer Lester George **INTERVIEW BY MIKE CULLITY**





# Shotmaking, Not Mere Ball-Hitting



The practice complex designed by architect Lester George at Virginia's private Kinloch Golf Club makes it nearly possible to play a round of golf from one spot.





**A**s a former Army officer who has undergone extensive military training, Lester George knows the virtues of practice. So it's no surprise that the 57-year-old Virginia course architect is passionate about practice facilities. His constant goal is to create rehearsal spaces that simulate any situation a golfer will encounter on the proverbial battlefield.

Marrying the terrain-analysis skills he learned in the Army with a love of golf, George left a lucrative government job in 1987 to work for course architect Algie Pulley. He launched his own firm in 1991 and has completed more than 75 projects, including 20 solo course designs.

Among George's creations is the highly touted Kinloch Golf Club in Manakin-Sabot, Va., site of the 2011 USGA Senior Amateur and home to a practice complex that's been called a game-improvement theme park. Offering golfers more than just a place to beat balls is instrumental to growing the game, says George, who shares his thoughts on practice in detail in this exclusive interview.

**Golf Range Magazine:** Why are practice facilities such an important consideration for golf course architects today?

**Lester George:** That's simple: Because practice is an important consideration for players. A lot of people spend more

time practicing than they do playing, because they can do that for an hour and a half three times a week, but they can only occasionally spend four and a half or five hours playing around. With everything in the range business, we've seen an increase in activity from the early '90s on. And I'd say with today's economy, there's probably less

Practice should be "interactive," not "static," says Lester George (left).

of a decline in practice than there is in playing. Practice facilities have been forced to evolve beyond the old commercial driving range where you banged it off a mat until you were tired. Now people want a realistic, reasonable practice experience dedicated to improving their game.

**GRM:** What's your governing philosophy when you're designing a practice facility?

**LG:** It has to provide all the fundamental shot situations a player may wish to practice. Since golfers are static in practice, playing from one or two positions, you want to re-create those things that they would see on the golf course. You just want to make sure that you give them a realistic experience off a realistic playing surface. It doesn't mean that you can't have different kinds of grasses, which we encourage in some climates. You can even have artificial [turf]. You want sloped tees, long bunker shots, and short bunker shots, too. You want to see the ball hit and react on a real putting surface. The idea is to have people actually practice and not mindlessly beat balls. If someone's serious about practice, you should have a serious solution to practice.

**GRM:** How has your philosophy changed since the early 1990s?

**LG:** We're more into an interactive type of a practice now, not necessarily

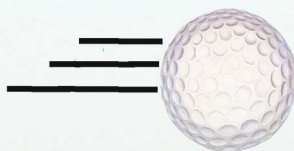






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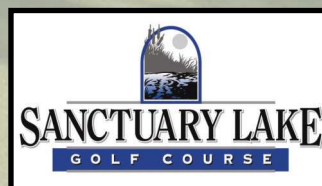
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such a static practice. We build short-game facilities so that people can find the shot that they really want to play without dictating a tee that they have to stand on. A lot of them are becoming free-form in their boundaries, and targets can be approached from 180 to 360 degrees. If you want to hit a high lob to a green that's sloping away, you just move around the target until you find that situation. If you want it out of rough, you should have a rough opportunity. If you want it out of tight grass, you should have a tight-grass opportunity. If you want it out of sand, you should have a sand opportunity.

**GRM:** Can you give some examples of facilities you've designed that reflect this "free form" philosophy?

**LG:** I've done one at University of Richmond, my alma mater. We haven't done phase two yet, but we've already master planned it and hope that it will be built sometime in the near future. It's basically just seven acres of turf with greens and targets and bunkers and streams and water features. You can hit driver all the way down to sand

wedges. It's long enough to imagine your own holes. There are ways to approach things – dogleg left, dogleg right and so on – and there are flat spots and sloped spots. I've also done an interactive master plan for a club in North Carolina that has a 10-hole reversible golf course, so on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays it can be played in one direction, and on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays it can be played in the other. There's an inter-

active practice area wrapped around it and a huge driving range. It's on 70 acres.

**GRM:** How is the practice facility you designed at Kinloch Golf Club different from the typical private club range?

**LG:** First of all, it's grassed like the golf course, which means bentgrass in the fairway and blue and fescue roughs. And it has a stand-alone, 100-yard-long sloped area that goes into a green on the far end of the range, so that people can hit uphill, downhill, sidehill, either direction to a measured distance. Then it has a simulated fairway right down the middle. It's 343 yards from end to end, with a tee on each end. And it has targets that work differently for each end. It's a northwardly oriented range, so we get prevailing winds on one end and downwind on the other. So you can practice all the winds, all the shots. And then it has a smaller short-game practice facility of about an acre and a half right between the putting green and the pro shop that has a three-green target system. It has a teaching building with cameras that opens up right onto the driving range. It's state-of-the-art, and I don't use that term lightly.

**GRM:** What strategies do you follow to simulate on-course situations?

**LG:** We try to have shots into greens. A lot of clubs will put a 2,000-square-foot target out there, but we put 5,500-square-foot greens on our practice facilities. We want people to hit them



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and miss them, but we don't want them to miss a 2,000-square-foot target and think they're missing the green. We try to simulate width, length, distance and scale of bunkers. You don't want the practice facility to look so much different than the golf

**"I would say that in today's economy, there's probably less of a decline in practice than there is in playing."**

**—Lester George**

course that there's a subliminal change in the way you swing all of a sudden because you have a different kind of condition. I guess if we made all of our practice greens so small that nobody could hit them, maybe we'd all be better golfers, but I doubt it, because I think practice would be too frustrating and nobody would do it. The strategy is to simulate a real condition and have a real learned response from that condition.

**GRM:** Why has providing better short-game practice areas become more important today?

**LG:** We consider expanding the prac-

tice facility at most clubs, which usually means adding or expanding the short-game area – which has been traditionally an afterthought or something "we don't have room for." Short game is probably the most overlooked thing in the early evolution of practice facilities and probably the highest-demand facet right now. So we're putting them in everywhere. And people say, "What about across the street or down the road?" Well, one thing we know is if it's not convenient, people won't use it.

**GRM:** What will the practice facilities of the future look like at private, public and resort courses?

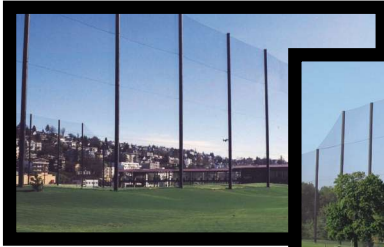
**LG:** With golf becoming a more inclusive game, I think you'll have to have a lot of different ways for people to put a golf club in their hand and see a result. We will certainly see some of the things that we're doing with interactive spaces and reversible courses and complete circle loops. People will hit balls if they have an opportunity to hit balls, whether it's private, public or resort. If you increase opportunity, you increase usage. So I don't see practice facilities going back to the days of a stick in a field and hitting off either dirt or some kind of torn mat. The public's demand for practice is getting focused on the realism of the shot they're hitting, the availability, the convenience and the opportunity. I think you'll see resorts that lack reasonably good practice facilities studying to see if they can get them. I just think it's a demand thing. Practice has a promising future. ■



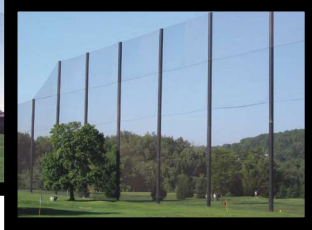
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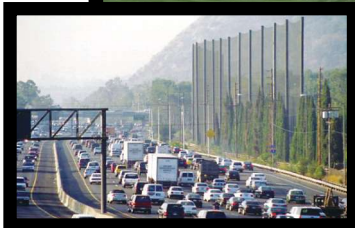
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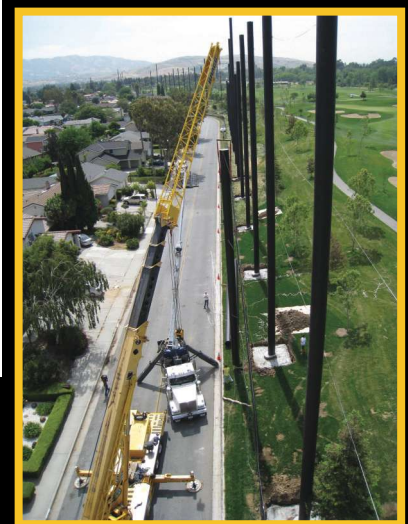
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# Remote Ranges Give New Meaning to 'Long Drive'

Ideally a golf course will have its practice area beside the clubhouse and first tee. Managers not blessed with this configuration learn "remote control" of their ranges.

BY SALLY J. SPORTSMAN







Among the challenges for a golf staff with a remotely located range is getting players back from their warm-up sessions in time to tee off. At Oakmont Country Club outside Pittsburgh, an iconic range clock greatly helps.

**T**he golfer is notorious as a creature of habit, especially in the couple of hours prior to his tee time. That's when a favorite shirt is donned, golf balls get ID markings and caffeine or even ibuprofen is administered. Above all this is the warm-up and skill-sharpening period. Our weekend player figures on 20 minutes of full swing, 10 minutes on the putting green and five or 10 minutes of stretching even before that.





Bandon Dunes director of instruction Grant Rogers with a student at the resort's practice range, with its lush and deeply contoured landing areas.

In order not to repeat what Rory McIlroy pulled at the Ryder Cup – rushing through club gates just minutes before his scheduled tee time – players will occasionally peer toward the first tee to see if a starter or one of their playing partners is beckoning them over. Even when we see the arm waving, every one of us has raked another ball or two from the pile and gotten those extra whacks in.

Proximity of range to first tee and clubhouse makes for an easy flow of golfers through the tee-off process and keeps players relaxed. At less busy times, having the range and lesson tee visible from the golf shop means players and club professionals can transition from a casual conversation to a quick swing check without much disruption. At facilities where the practice area is located a remote distance from the clubhouse or presents a cumbersome walk, a predetermined way to move players seamlessly to and fro, ensuring they arrive at their destinations in a timely fashion, assumes great importance.

At Bandon Dunes Golf Resort near Bandon, Ore., five walking-only golf courses and four clubhouses attract players yearning to experience links-style golf along the Pacific coast. The Bandon practice center is used heavily: almost always before a round, and often again afterwards. It is more than a few steps, though, from any clubhouse to the Bandon Dunes practice area, so the resort has crafted a plan to handle the distance dilemma.

“Players like to practice to acclimate to the wind and weather,” says Jeff Simonds, PGA director of golf at Bandon Dunes Golf Resort. “Al-

## Mississippi Dunes Golf Links had a break-in, theft and vandalism at its practice-facility building in July, necessitating a redesign of the building and range operations.

though people can drive their automobiles to the practice center, most visitors here don't even rent a car.”

Hardly anyone walks to the Bandon Dunes practice center, Simonds says, because resort transportation provides frequent shuttle buses. Each bus holds 10-12 people and their golf clubs. A bus arrives at each clubhouse every eight to 10 minutes. Also, concierges make shuttle-bus calls for players whenever needed. At the new practice-center clubhouse, players

can take a break from their swing sessions, have drinks or snacks and catch the next shuttle to whichever first tee they're scheduled to play from.

Turning Stone Resort, another five-course destination, also shuttles players from practice to play as needed. The fact that there are several practice choices at Turning Stone makes the organization of ride options a bit trickier. The outdoor driving range is not visible from the shared clubhouse at the Shenendoah and Kaluhyat courses, owing to a spa that comes between. Thus, attendants need to keep an eye out for those who need directions or a ride. Players who purchase a tee time at the Atunyote course may practice at that range or at the award-winning Golf Dome, to which they are shuttled upon request. Those who play at the Shenendoah course may practice at the Golf Dome in the event of rain, with a ride available any time.

“We make sure we are customer-oriented,” says Robert Todd, PGA director of golf at Turning Stone Resort. “We will pick you up at your convenience in our six-passenger vehicle, so you can practice, take a lesson or play on schedule.”

Private clubs experience challenges different from those at resorts. At Jefferson Golf & Country Club, in Blacklick, Ohio, the driving range features both north- and south-facing sets of tees. The north-tee area is used at the height of the season, while the



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south-tee section is used in early spring and late fall. The distance from the clubhouse to the south end of the range is nearly 1,000 yards. Depending on the wind and weather, member stake carts or the bag room staff transports them to the practice area and back.

"We have a fleet of 65 carts," says Shawn Thompson, head golf professional at Jefferson Golf & Country Club, "but even so, on weekends we can run out of carts by noon. I plan accordingly, holding back four or five carts that we use to run players to the range."

"We enforce our rule that members must call ahead, so there's never a wait. Still, you have to be prepared for the unexpected."

At Oakmont Country Club, host to many high-profile amateur and professional tournaments, the staff works hard to make it easy for members and guests to travel to the practice facility and back to the clubhouse. The club, in Oakmont, Pa., which has hardly any cart play at all (carts usually are used for medical reasons), has 40 carts, which members use to ride to and from the practice area. Tee times are required, so the practice facility is rarely overly crowded.

"Those who are playing here for the first time might try walking to the practice area," says Bob Ford, PGA head golf professional at Oakmont Country Club. "They walk on a cloud...they fly down and fly back up. It's about a 200-yard gradual downhill walk, and then back up again. People hardly ever walk

it a second time." About five years ago a parking lot for carts was built at Oakmont's practice facility, with room for 15 carts. At major championships, it serves as a turnaround area for player shuttles.

Sometimes a range is placed in an unusual, even inconvenient, location. The Country Club of Coral Springs, in Coral Springs, Fla., a semi-private full-service club, hosts numerous charity tournaments and other outings. These are in addition to member events and daily play. The range is situated in the middle of the back nine, just out of bounds.

"You have to drive backwards past the 18th hole and then past the 17th green to reach the practice area," says Mark Contento, assistant PGA Professional at The Country Club of Coral Springs. "We can't see the range from the golf shop." Members drive carts to the practice facility, but during outside events, staff members usually shuttle players back and forth. Prominent signage directs visitors to the range. "We tend to take it for granted that it's easy to get to the range at a golf course," Contento says, "but we need to make sure that transportation takes place efficiently."

It is imperative that at courses where the range is located remotely from the clubhouse, staff and management maintain careful supervision, especially when no personnel oversee

the operation. Mississippi Dunes Golf Links, a public facility in Cottage Grove, Minn., experienced a break-in, theft and vandalism at its practice-facility building in July, necessitating a redesign not only of the building, but of the entire range program.

"You like to think everyone is honest, but that is not so," says Eddie Brown, PGA director of golf at Mississippi Dunes Golf Links. "At an unmanned practice facility, you must have control of your building and of how balls are dispensed." The range is half a mile from the clubhouse at Mississippi Dunes. Railroad tracks divide the property, making it impossible to drive a cart to the range, so players must drive their cars to the practice area, where parking is abundant. The building redesign entailed replacing the former door with a sliding steel garage door with secure locks; eliminating the side window; exchanging unlimited buckets for a state-of-the-art dispenser; installing a new security system with high-quality cameras and motion-detector lights; and placing a new locking gate at the entrance.

"It is critical to do spot checks several times a day and pay close attention to your range," Brown says. "And insurance is paramount." Encouraging productive practice at any facility is vital, and ensuring players' good experiences may be the most important managerial feat of all. ■

**The fact that there are several practice choices at Turning Stone makes the organization of ride options a bit trickier for the outside operations crew.**





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**BY STEVE PARKER, PGA**  
with Don Jozwiak

Nearly everything you do with an athletic motion starts from the ground up. Throwing a baseball, hitting a tennis ball – these motions start with the lower body, and it is the separation between the upper and lower body that creates power. Despite this natural and universal movement, golfers have the tendency to start the swing using their upper bodies. This causes them to swing over the top, losing all the power that the lower body provides and creating a weak, unathletic swing. I use a simple drill with my students that helps them quickly learn the feeling of a swing that has the proper kinematic sequence, starting with the lower body.

By closing a student's body relative to the target line, my student immediately learns the sensation of swinging the club from the inside and releasing the head of the golf club so the toe passes the heel after impact. This helps them feel and understand that power comes from the core of the body, and that they have to use their legs and not just their upper bodies.

Once I see that a student is coming over the top, I teach them this drill. I start with turning their body 45 to 60 degrees past the target (*pictured*), so their back is actually facing the target and their body is in a closed position – but their clubface is still pointed at the target. I'll then have them hit a series of shots, anywhere from five to 20, with a short iron. This closed

**Steve Parker**, the PGA head professional at Wanakah Country Club in Hamburg, N.Y., was named 2009 and 2011 Northern Ohio PGA Section Teacher of the Year while he was the PGA director of instruction at Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio.











stance forces the student to initiate the swing with their legs, instead of pulling across their body with their

arms. For golfers who aren't used to squaring the clubface at impact, the change is immediate. Many of these

golfers have never felt the sensation of a properly sequenced swing, and you can see the light come on as they watch their shots start out to the right of the target and draw back on line. They quickly understand that they're not trying to hit the golf ball so much as swing the golf club. Then I switch them back to their regular stance and make sure they keep using the lower body and swinging from the inside. ■

## A SEQUENCE FOR SUCCESS

Understanding the kinematic sequence of the golf swing is a fairly recent development in my teaching career. It's something I've picked up from going to the Titleist Performance Institute and from looking at 3D swing analysis. This high-tech tool helps you see that all good players have the same kinematic sequence in their swings. Now I focus a lot of my teaching on these principles, which help golfers of all skill levels eliminate excess movement by the hands and arms in favor of using the legs and core muscles. My students like that my instruction is based on modern swing theory, and they especially like that this drill creates immediate results – and that they can use it in their practice routines to keep their swings in shape between lessons.

*This story originally appeared in the July 2011 issue of PGA Magazine and is used with permission.*





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# More Than a Basket of

Owned by a beloved American brand of handcrafted baskets, Longaberger Golf Club leverages its scenic and high-service golf range to help keep a rural golf haven humming along. **BY STEVE PIKE**





# Balls at Longaberger



There's a "destination" feel to the Longaberger golf experience – and its practice facility is a major reason. Golfers loosen up as another fine golf day begins in Southern Ohio means included.



For the countless times you've heard Ohio referred to as a "swing state," you may never appreciate that phrase's full meaning until your first trip to the practice range at Longaberger Golf Club. Spread across a pastoral landscape in Nashport, Ohio – some 40 miles east of Columbus – it's an ideal place to block out distractions and truly get that golf swing grooved.

This award-winning 14-year-old public golf complex treats regulars and newcomers to the verdant comfort of a 25-acre practice grounds. It's considered a true practice-every-shot facility with tight natural turf and the fine visual details that keep a player at his station for that second and third basket. Given the importance of golf ranges as gateways and re-entry points for golf, Longaberger just couldn't be Longaberger without this expansive jewel of a facility – which management uses as a lever to build overall business and revenue.

The golf quality here should not be a surprise given that ownership, the Longaberger Company, is so well known for its tradition of excellence

**"Range ball sales have gone up dramatically since we limited our comp policy to golfers paying rack rate for golf." — Danny Ackerman**

and attention to detail. The company, founded in 1973, is widely recognized as America's premier maker of hand-

crafted baskets. Its seven-story headquarters in Newark, Ohio, is symbolically designed in the shape of a basket, and includes corporate offices but also serves as a shopping, dining and entertainment destination. The dedication to craft and originality that animates the company's original business seems to clearly carry over to its golf operation.

Newark, about 30 minutes from Nashport, has a rich history in golf equipment. The Golfworks, one of the industry's best-known component and accessories companies, has been based in Newark since 1976, the year it was founded by legendary club designer Ralph Maltby. For many years Newark also was the home to Dynacraft Golf, another component company whose principle, Tom Wishon, is still regarded as one of the industry's top club designers. In the U.S., anyway, Newark is still recognized by many club aficionados as the "home" of the component business, which makes it all the more fitting (pardon the pun) to have such a formidable golf course and practice facility nearby.

From the start, you know the Longaberger Golf Club's practice range is different than most. There are no ugly, faded green mats cluttering up the tee line here – it's all brilliant bentgrass on the 340-yard range that features seven target greens and adjacent chipping and pitching areas. The range is mowed twice a week and staff replaces divots at least that often. It's all part of giving players a destination golf experience – a bit of a hike but well worth it – that has made Longaberger Golf Club a highly lauded name throughout the region.

The club recently struck a deal with the renovated Newark Metropolitan Hotel to provide stay-and-play golf packages, which should drive even more golfers to the practice range and first tee. "It about as a nice a range as any public facility I've ever seen in terms of size and quality of teeing surface," said Danny Ackerman, Long-

Danny Ackerman, PGA General Manager at Longaberger, was a full-time teacher in Pinehurst during the early part of his career – training he values in running the Longaberger program.

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The desire to practice is partly driven by surrounding beauty, as Longaberger golfers will attest.

Longaberger's PGA General Manager and Head Professional since the club opened in May 1999.

Ackerman knows whereof he speaks. He spent 12 years at the Pinehurst Golf Advantage Schools and then headed up the golf program at Quail Hollow Country Club in Cleveland for two years before moving to Longaberger, an Arthur Hills-designed layout managed by Billy Casper Golf. Just a bit underrated as an architect, Hills is an Ohio native with an unfailing eye for landscape lines and the way they integrate into golf holes. Owing to the care he used (and the budget he was given) to build this course, Longaberger has received accolades as one of the country's top public courses.

"The closest range I can think of, acreage-wise, is Muirfield Village," in Dublin, Ohio, Ackerman asserts. "It's larger than what is at Pinehurst—kind

of like a bowl. I've always said it's a perfect place for a football game because you wouldn't have to build seats." The landing zone does work downhill from one end to the other and because it's 340 yards long, you don't have to worry about hitting the other side, unless you're Bubba Watson.

"Mostly we hit from the north end to the south end because of convenience to the clubhouse," says Ackerman. "We use the south end occasionally for clinics and junior golf and things like that, because it's removed." Each end of the range is divided into 16 stations per day, approximately one third of the stations the tee lines can actually hold.

Prior to this year, the club included range balls in its greens fees. This year Ackerman changed things up. Only players who pay the rack rate, along with season pass holders, get free range balls. All other players pay sep-

arately for the balls they hit. "That's been a huge impact from a revenue standpoint," Ackerman explains. "We're a place where people want to treat themselves. Range balls sales have gone up dramatically. We have some local people who come here for nothing but the range."

The Longaberger range also helps promote golf, generally. "We have high schools we donate the range to for practice," Ackerman notes. "We give complimentary junior clinics in the summer and also use the range for Get Golf Ready and our Golf for Women clinics. So we use the range to promote the game of golf more than actually as a revenue generator. That's where it has its greatest impact."

If you get your introduction to golf at this practice facility, amid this scenic golf landscape and fine culture of service, you're all the more likely to stay in the swing of it. ■



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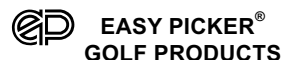
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