



GRAA

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

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

- **Instruction: Golf Instruction Takes a Stab at “Flip the Classroom”** – Seizing on an education trend that’s sweeping the schools and colleges, PGA Professional Ed Oldham is bringing video-first, mentoring-later to the golf academy setting.
- **Video File: Advances in custom-fitting knowledge at America’s ranges is applauded by gear experts like Bronson Wright of The Club Fix** – in this video he shows clubfitters how to complete the task.
- **Public Range Profile: 1757 Club** – When your practice facility is as complete as this one, you attract every kind of golfer – and so you need the personnel and programming to serve them all successfully.
- **Traffic Builders: Have Land, Will Innovate and Golfers Respond** – People say there’s no more course construction in America – meanwhile golf professionals and superintendents are building “short-form” golf layouts cheaply, creatively and successfully.
- **Range Operations: Range Plans and Walk-Up Business – A Balancing Act** – It’s great that users come in so many different varieties, but that creates tough decisions for anyone allocating range privileges and setting up price schedules.

Keep it fun and thanks for supporting the GRAA.

Best Regards,

Rick Summers
CEO & Publisher, GRAA
610-745-0862
rsummers@golfrange.org
Golf Ranges: Where the Fun Starts

Golf Range



M A G A Z I N E

Volume 20, No. 12
December 2012

PRACTICE • TEACHING • FITTING • MARKETING

In this issue:

- **Clinic Breakthrough:
"Flip the Classroom"**
- **Virginia Standout:
1757 Golf Club**
- **Golf Domes Facing the Chill**

Pricing and Privileges:

**Calculating for
Optimum Service
Levels and Profit**











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Golf Range

M A G A Z I N E

Volume 20, Number 12

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Golf Range Association of America:

2600 Philmont Avenue, Suite 325, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006; Phone: (215) 914-2071, Fax: (215) 914-2076

CEO & Publisher: Richard K. Summers; **COO & Art Director:** Peter J. Sansone; **Vice President Sales:** Brian Folino; **Editorial Director:** David Gould; **General Manager, Operations:** Patrick Cherry; **Editorial Assistant:** Tony L. Starks; **Production/Pre-Press:** Frederick Yantz; **Design:** Jim Gerhard, Matt Hulnick, Steve Higgins; **Operations:** Julie Yuen, Tom Gauss, Ryan Henderson; **PGA Relationship Manager, National:** Kelly Sheehan, PGA; **PGA Relationship Manager, West:** Greg Prudham, PGA; **PGA Relationship Manager, Midwest:** Ryan Holland, PGA; **PGA Relationship Manager, Northeast:** Ryan Gingrow, PGA; **Accounting:** George Kotlyar

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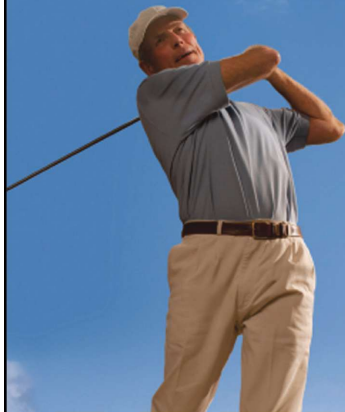
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Year One for the New GRAA

I'm reporting to you on our progress. As we close out year one, our focus is on the huge upside for the GRAA and for everyone associated with golf ranges.

Here's a timetable of our launch year:

1. In December 2011, we named an Advisory Board and met for the first time. The Board's participation has been vital to our early success.
2. From day one we have been working closely with the PGA of America. We wish to thank the entire PGA membership and in particular Darrell Crall—whom we congratulate on his recent appointment as the PGA's chief operating officer.
3. In January, we relaunched *Golf Range Magazine* in digital format and received a superb reception. The magazine annually features 10 trade issues plus two consumer issues. We are currently averaging 3,000 trade visitors and 30,000 page views each month.
4. *Golf Range Magazine* weekly e-mail alerts are sent to over 40,000 trade recipients, receiving an average of 5,000 opens each week.
5. The GRAA also sends a weekly Best Practice e-mail with 3,600 to 4,300 readers weekly.
6. *GolfRange.org* now averages 1,800 visitors and 3,900 page views monthly. Past issues of *Golf Range Magazine* as well as GRAA Best Practices are archived on the site.
7. We have added over 10,000 superintendents to the weekly e-mail distribution, bringing total distribution to over 40,000 trade recipients. Approximately 650 superintendents open and read our weekly e-mails.
8. This summer, the GRAA completed its first consumer research with the Longitudes Group, generating over 1,100 responses from dedicated golfers.
9. The GRAA relaunched at the 2012 PGA Merchandise Show. In association with Reed Exhibitions, we will substantially increase the exposure and double our booth size at the 2013 PGA Merchandise Show.
10. In June, the first consumer digital issue of *GR Magazine* was created. It featured short, exciting, high-profile articles to help amateurs have more fun—at the range and on the course.
11. In the January 2013 issue of *Golf Range Magazine*, we will list the 2012 Golf Range Award winners in the Top 50 Private, Public and Stand Alone categories, as well as the Top 50 Growth of the Game Teaching Professionals. Winners will be invited to pick up their award at the GRAA booth during the PGA Merchandise Show.
12. I was asked to join Golf 20/20's Executive Committee—this recognition is providing the GRAA greater influence in all efforts to grow the game.
13. Sponsor sales have been strong, a development critical to GRAA's continued operation without need for member dues.
14. The new GRAA membership provides all benefits at no cost to all members of the trade, meaning that every range is a member of the GRAA, whether private, public, resort, municipal, or stand alone. We are proud of this achievement and look forward to continuing on this path.

The intangible in the entire launch has been the impressive word of mouth that the Association, the digital magazine, the e-mails, and other endeavors are garnering on a regular basis. We have gotten enormous support from the entire industry and from PGA Professionals across the country.

That's the update for now—please call with any questions you may have. On behalf of my entire team, thanks again for your support.

Rick Summers
CEO & Publisher, GRAA
610-745-0862
rsummers@golfrange.org
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Does Practice Really Make Perfect?

A dropout photographer is one-third of the way to finding out if the now-famous "10,000 Hours Theory" can be borne out on the golf range. **BY TONY STARKS**

Dr. Anders Ericsson, a psychology professor at Florida State University, is widely recognized as one of the leading researchers in the field of theoretical and experimental expertise. His most popular study asserts that anyone can become an expert in any given field by logging 10,000 hours of practice. Dan McLaughlin is putting that hypothesis to the test, using the golf practice range as his laboratory.

McLaughlin had never played a full round of golf before deciding to quit his job as a commercial photographer and dedicate all his resources to the game of golf in an attempt to make the PGA Tour. Why?

Research, science, adventure or etching one's name in the history books, these are among the possible reasons why a man would veer off from a successful career to take on a seemingly impossible venture. However, none of them describe McLaughlin's reasoning.

"I want to prove to myself what's possible, and in a larger sense, demonstrate to people that they don't have to feel limited," McLaughlin said during a video blog on his website, TheDanPlan.com – where you can follow his progress towards the 10,000-hour goal. "People tell themselves 'I'm not a creative person, I'm not good at math or I'm not good at geography.' Are you really not good at it? Or do you tell yourself that so you don't have to try – and it perpetuates the cycle."

Not trying is something you'll never be able to accuse McLaughlin of. Since embarking on this journey in April of 2010, he has kept up a practice schedule of at least six hours a day for six days a week. Sound strenuous? Well, he's not even half way to his goal. To date the lefty-swinging McLaughlin has



His practice-hours target is 10,000, which means Dan McLaughlin will surely hit over half a million balls on the range.

logged 3,528 hours of practice.

As you may expect, he has made significant strides in the two-plus years that he's dedicated himself to golf. After never playing a complete round in his life, the 32-year-old is now down to a more-than-respectable 5 handicap.

Each day McLaughlin documents his progress through his website.

Here are some of his recent posts:

November 24: Much better day out. Got in a full one before heading home to meet with Mary, whose business was burgled. 6,436 remain. Random Stat: Shot 4-over for 11 holes.

November 23: Went out for a few hours today, but it was honestly raining harder than I can recall. After about 3 hours I was soaked to the bone and

there was standing water everywhere to the point where you couldn't find a dry spot on the range. 6,441 remain. Random Stat: Played a few holes but couldn't get the putts to go anywhere through the water.

November 22: Turkey day. The course was pretty open as it was Thanksgiving so I worked on the range until there were no balls left then played about 16 holes and finished with putting. It's been a while since I took a day off... 6,444 remain. Random Stat: Was 6-over from the tips after 16 holes.

According to McLaughlin, golf is the perfect medium for conducting the field research needed to either prove or disprove the 10,000-hour hypothesis. Numbers and statistics go hand in hand with research. And if you talk to any semi-serious golfer about their most recent round, you'll probably get bombarded with numerical figures: "I shot an 82, but I had four three-putts and missed seven greens." We all know what's next – this golfer could have shaved off another six strokes easily.

Granular calculations are highly accessible to golfers, as the 10,000-hour man will attest. "Golf gives me a concrete way to prove the success or failure of this theory," says McLaughlin. "I can track my progress each step of the way." ■



trinity (trin-i-tee)

noun, a group of three, triad

see also, ultra high performance golf shaft

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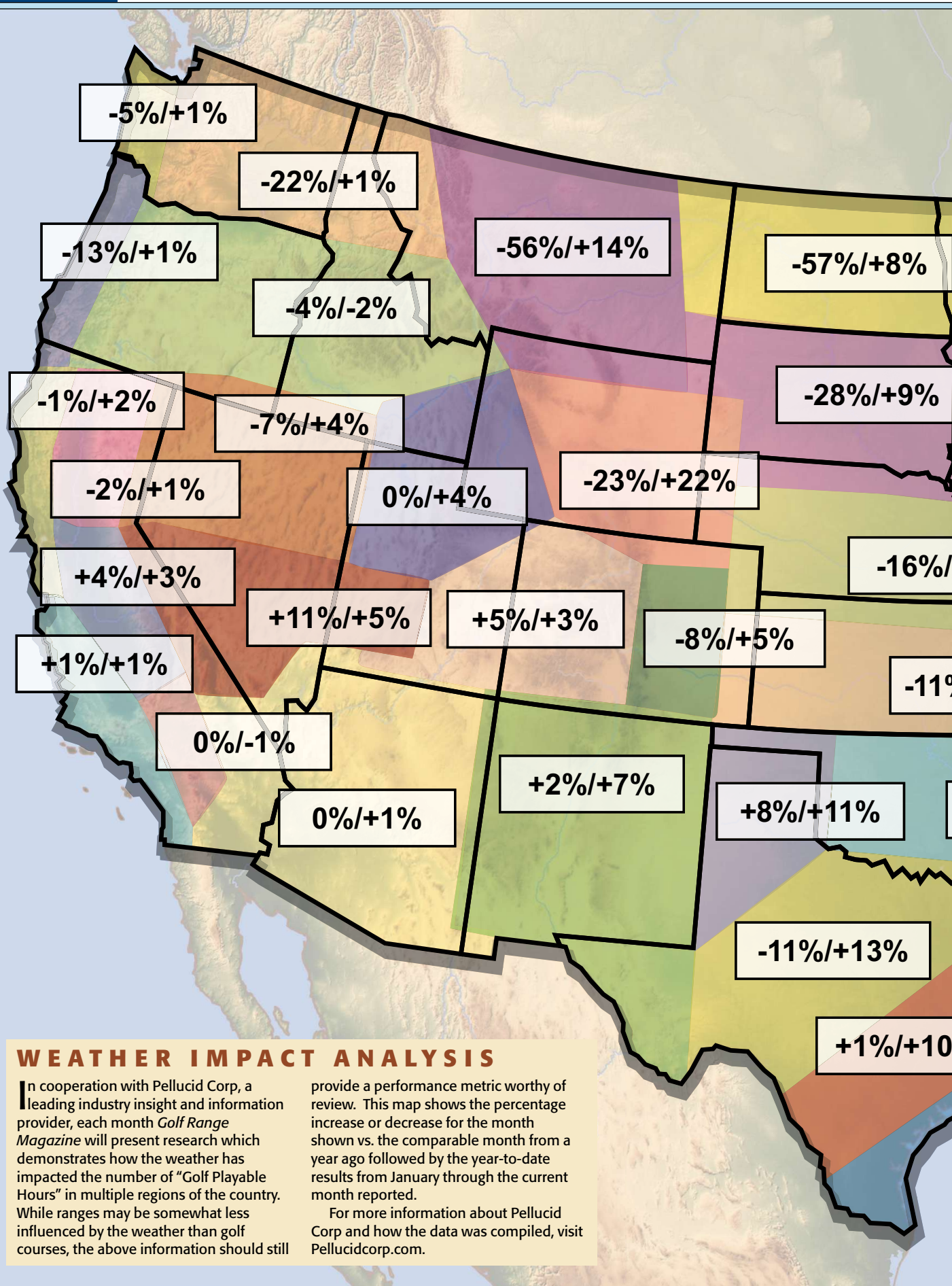
advanced, Tour proven shaft design technologies.

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Coming soon





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: October

Each region includes: Month % / YTD %

Legend:

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

Region	Month %	YTD %
Alaska	+3%	+11%
Arizona	-2%	+2%
Arkansas	0%	+7%
California	-14%	+30%
Colorado	-26%	+12%
Connecticut	+12%	+13%
Delaware	+7%	+11%
District of Columbia	+1%	+12%
Florida	-2%	+1%
Georgia	0%	+10%
Hawaii	N/A	N/A
Idaho	-8%	+18%
Illinois	-13%	+12%
Indiana	-3%	+12%
Iowa	-20%	+7%
Kansas	-18%	+11%
Kentucky	-6%	+8%
Louisiana	0%	+7%
Maine	+3%	+11%
Maryland	+12%	+13%
Massachusetts	+7%	+11%
Michigan	-9%	+13%
Minnesota	-8%	+18%
Mississippi	0%	+7%
Missouri	-13%	+12%
Montana	-26%	+12%
Nebraska	-20%	+7%
Nevada	-14%	+30%
New Hampshire	+3%	+11%
New Jersey	+12%	+13%
New Mexico	-6%	+8%
New York	+7%	+11%
North Carolina	0%	+10%
North Dakota	-20%	+7%
Ohio	-3%	+12%
Oklahoma	0%	+7%
Oregon	-14%	+30%
Pennsylvania	+12%	+13%
Rhode Island	+7%	+11%
South Carolina	0%	+7%
South Dakota	-20%	+7%
Tennessee	-6%	+8%
Texas	-14%	+30%
Utah	-26%	+12%
Vermont	+3%	+11%
Virginia	0%	+10%
Washington	-14%	+30%
West Virginia	-6%	+8%
Wisconsin	-13%	+12%
Wyoming	-20%	+7%

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

Fitting is Complete, Driver is Delivered—One Final Task

Advances in custom-fitting knowledge at America's ranges is applauded by gear experts like Bronson Wright of The Club Fix—in this video he shows clubfitters how to complete the task.

Hitting a drive just slightly off line and landing in a mean old fairway bunker produces an unmistakable emotional reaction. Short grass is what the golfer wanted and sand is where he ended up—there's not two ways about it. And yet, could the cause of that unhappy outcome have been a very slight difference in shaft frequency—between one that suits the player perfectly and one that produces a slight spray effect?

This video presentation by Bronson Wright, the founder and CEO of The Club Fix, takes the clubfitter into one final phase of quality control on driver specifications, using a frequency analyzer and some test drivers that have all come from their manufacturer with similar labeled specs. A veteran of the Bridgestone Golf Research and Development

team in Orange County, Calif., Bronson knows his way around a tour van, a research range and the nitty-gritty of club assembly and testing. Here's how he and this team, at five nationwide locations for The Golf Fix, put the finishing touches on a first-class driver fitting for their satisfied and discerning customers. ■



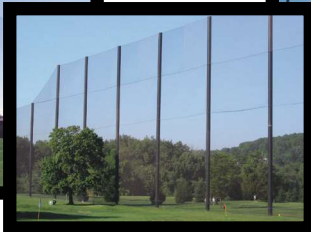
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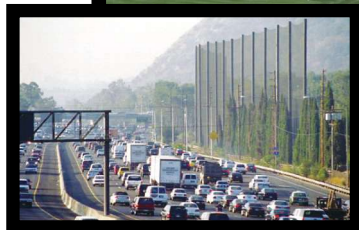
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A Wide Range of News

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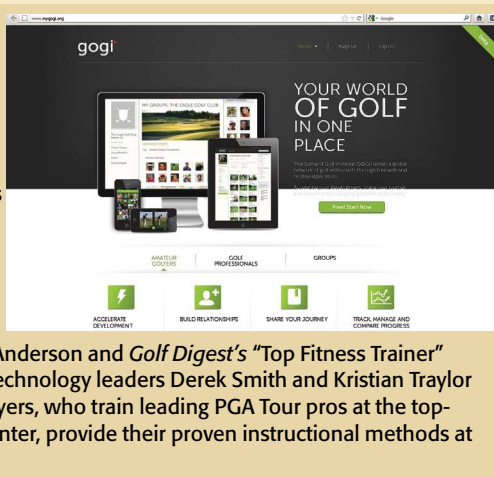
Citizens of Gulf Breeze, Fla., are vehemently opposing the city's attempts to buy **Tiger Point Golf Club** in order to



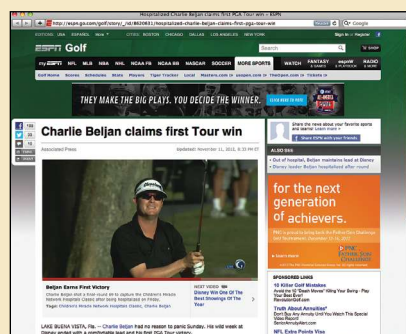
facilitate the expansion of the Santa Rosa Utility System sewage plant. Homeowners fear that expansion of the waste water treatment plant will decrease their property values, which have already suffered from the downturn in the economy. The two sides appeared to reach a settlement when the city agreed to not sell off the driving range for at least 5 years and to pay the HOA \$200,000 to mitigate the depreciation of property value. But when the city reversed its promise to not sell the range, citizens again ramped up their opposition. Goes to show you how much people love their golf, and love to practice ... The town of **Derry, N.H.**, has approved the building of a driving range, to be constructed behind a popular ice cream parlor. Perhaps the most proven "double dip" in American summertime recreation – ball-hitting and an ice cream treat afterwards – will be in force at the new establishment. A case of excellent land planning, no doubt... After years of battling over the golf shop and driving range business at the Sepulveda Golf Course in Encino, Calif., the existing operator has won a court battle to try to force the city to honor its 15-year agreement with him. **Michael Bernback and Ready Golf** won a writ of mandate, with Los Angeles Superior Court Judge



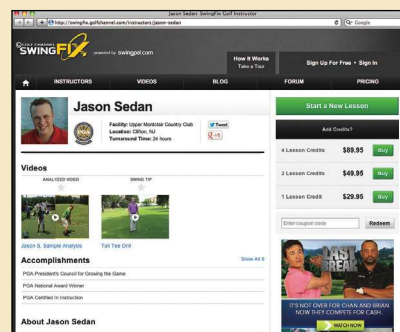
Game of Golf Institute (GOGI), a 501(c)(3) non-profit initiative, announced the launch of its golf networking website and game improvement applications built with the latest social media and mobile app technologies. GOGI's free mobile apps – "Swing Pro" and "Tee to Green Pro" – are available on Apple's App Store, with Android versions to be launched next month. PGA Teacher of the Year (2010) Todd Anderson and *Golf Digest's* "Top Fitness Trainer" Randy Myers joined forces with technology leaders Derek Smith and Kristian Traylor to create GOGI. Anderson and Myers, who train leading PGA Tour pros at the top-rated Sea Island Golf Learning Center, provide their proven instructional methods at no charge to GOGI members.



James Chalfant ordering the city to sign the contract allowing Ready Golf to remain at the course. The company has been operating on a month-to-month contract for a decade, but the city has been trying to evict it and install city workers to run the concession. The city will have 60 days once the final judgment is entered to decide if it will appeal the ruling.... **PGA Tour rookie Charlie Beljan** was hospitalized after shooting a 64 in the second round of the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals Classic. Prior to the



round, Beljan called the paramedics to the practice range when his throat tightened and his heart began palpitating. He was experiencing a panic attack, but what happened next was one of the more frightening – and remarkable – rounds of golf ever caught on video. Beljan, 28, endured a five-hour stress test as he staggered through 18 holes. Medical personnel in his gallery monitored his racing pulse. The fear of a possible heart attack dominated his thoughts. Despite all the medical scares, he carded the second-lowest score of his rookie season to take the lead. Beljan would go on to win the event, picking up a paycheck of \$846,000.



Now 63rd on the money list, with almost \$1.4 million in earnings this year, his playing privileges for next season are secure.... PGA Professional **Jason Sedan** is a **SwingFix instructor** – SwingFix is Golf Channel's online instruction module for amateur golfers. Sedan recently posted an article that could help your students better transition from the range to the golf course. Here's a snippet of Sedan's piece: "We have all felt at times like our range game just fails to show up when we go out to play ... I often see higher-handicap golfers working on the range to overcome their most natural shot rather than practicing to control it ... A crucial aspect in managing the shots you hit on the course is to understand how much curve you tend to put on the ball with each club. And with that in mind, here's a great game you can play the next time your practice. Before you head to the range, pick a target that makes sense for the club you want to hit and count out 10 balls. If you usually hit a left-to-right shot, you earn one point for every ball that lands to the left of the target. If you curve the ball right of the target, however, subtract two points." ■



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Have Land, Will Innovate — and Golfers Respond

People say there's no more course construction in America — meanwhile golf professionals and superintendents are building “short-form” golf layouts cheaply, creatively and successfully. **BY TONY STARKS**

It dates back to that 20th-century concept of a USP (Unique Selling Proposition) and continues in modern interpretations. We're talking about the marketplace imperative — setting your business apart from the competition. Pick up a best-selling business book like “Creating Competitive Advantage,” by the corporate consultant Jaynie Smith, and you'll find that ideas for differentiating your business continue to evolve. That's particularly true as you confer, discuss and brainstorm with your colleagues.

It's a vital activity for any success-oriented golf facility in the state of Florida, that's for certain. In this month's installment of Traffic Builders,

we'll take a glimpse at two Florida facilities that have helped differentiate themselves by adding low-cost putting courses to their practice areas.

Putting Contest Deluxe — Built on the Fly

With a few spare hours on their hands between the first round of the annual men's member-guest and that night's tournament dinner, PGA General Manager John Johnson and his staff at Shark's Tooth Golf Club created a masterpiece of a putting contest that wowed the participants.

Unleashing 10 motivated workers on a practice green during that four-hour period, Shark's Tooth fashioned a nine-hole replica short course decorated with real native landscaping that

The Shark's Tooth Golf Club turned their practice green into an aesthetic putting course as a special surprise for member-guest participants.



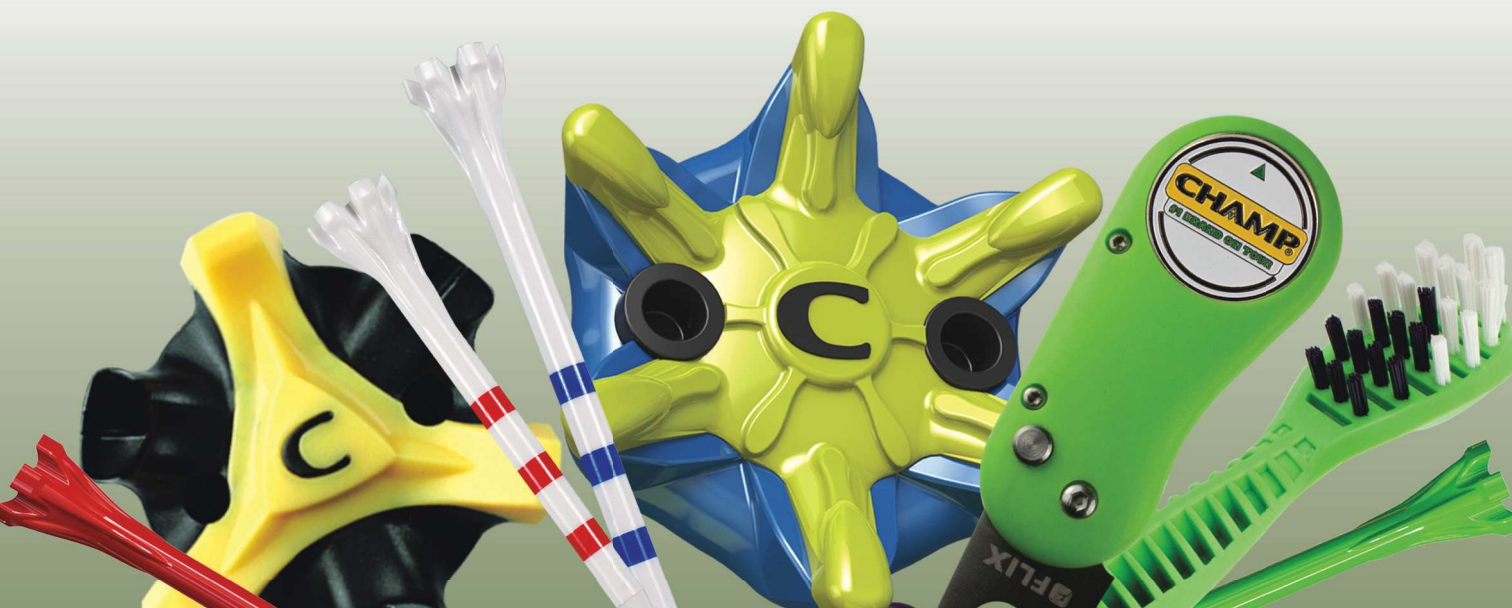


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mirrored the Panama City Beach club's 18-hole private course.

"It had everything that you would find on the golf course so it had a very similar feel," says Johnson, who had scouted contours, visualized holes and plotted an outline of his routing ahead of time. No effort was spared in the actual creation. Holes were dug for six- to 15-feet tall trees, consisting of limbs artfully cut from fairway-bordering trees. A desk-sized pond was built by cutting out the turf and inserting a plastic liner. Golf tees were painted red and used as hazard stakes markers. Sand from the course comprised the fake bunkers. The result was a layout featuring doglegs, double breakers, uphill and downhill holes. And yes, it could all be "packed up" so that the practice putting surface was on the mend and back to normal in short order.

"We'll have to do it bigger and better in the future," Johnson vows. "The members absolutely loved it and it was a great surprise when they came off the course."

Micro Course, Huge Benefits

The Jack Nicklaus Tradition Course is a feature attraction at Reunion Resort outside of Orlando, and there are

many families that visit the resort grounds. Currently the course is operating out of a temporary building, on a section of the massive resort property that lacks any restaurants or attractions to help with the traffic-building and thus the revenue development.

"We've added an amenity that's helped bring more traffic to the golf side of the resort."

— Jubal Jerik

"My director of golf challenged me to come up with something golf-oriented that would get more families involved," says Jubal Jerik. "We had an open plot of land to the right of our driving range, and I thought it would be a great location for a natural-surface mini-golf course." Jerik did his best to replicate an actual golf links. He used real grass, bunkering, sand and rocks to emulate course conditions. The result was a twisting, turn-

ing, undulating little layout that presented quite the challenge.

"It's really great for the parents and the kids who come on vacation looking for some fun," he says. "Many times, the fathers will play the 18-hole course while the rest of the family enjoys the short-and-quick course plus the practice facilities right next door." But it's not just resort guest who have utilized the course. Often times, members will come out for a few drinks and a friendly competition on the nine-hole par 24 layout. They've even used the course to host junior clinics and camps. "It's a great way for young people and beginners to learn how to play the game of golf because they have to learn to read the greens and slopes correctly," notes Jerik.

The initial investment to build the mini-course was just \$150, as Jerik was able to gather most of the supplies from the property. But it has yielded strong returns among golf satisfaction. "It has become an added amenity for members and resort guests, and has helped bring more traffic and interest to the golf side of the resort," says Jerik. "This has helped to generate extra revenue in other areas of the facility, which would have previously been untapped if not for this attraction." ■

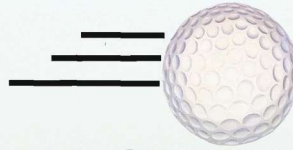
Jack Nicklaus Tradition Course, outside Orlando, transformed a vacant space next to its driving range into a par-24 short course for guests of the Reunion Resort.





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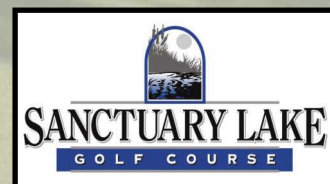
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When your practice facility is as complete as this one, you attract every kind of golfer – and so you need the personnel and programming to serve them all successfully.

BY STEVE PIKE



at the 1757 Club



The tee line at the 1757 Club, all prepped for the diverse user base this facility attracts.



Hitting practice balls on a nondescript range can be one of the more boring things in golf. It's probably one reason why many golfers opt to practice little or in some cases, not at all. The 1757 Golf Club in Dulles, Va., however, takes doldrums out of practice and makes it an event. Think about it, when you're looking forward to practice chances are you practice better. And when you practice better, you improve. Likewise, when a golf course or stand-alone practice facility has happy customers, those players will keep coming back.

The 1757 Golf Club – named after the year Loudoun County, Va., was founded – calls itself “The Ultimate Golf Experience in Northern Virginia” and it might be correct. The club, managed by Billy Casper Golf, features a 6,600-yard, par 70 course designed by the Nicklaus-trained David Heatwole and a 17,000-square-foot clubhouse.

On the practice side of the equation is a facility and programming that puts a skip in the step of ball-hitting visitors. What they find on arrival is a lighted practice range that features 56 hitting stations on SportTurf, including 12 covered bays, and 50 grass hitting stations – 25 on each side of the SportTurf stations. For those intent on learning in a

group setting, the 1757 Club administers “destination-quality” golf schools.

“Our practice facility is a major asset for the 1757 Club,” says Tiffany Faucette, the club’s director of instruction. “We get avid golfers, social golfers, corporate people on the way home from the office – basically all types. Everyone ends up at this learning center, for different reasons.”

According to National Golf Foundation research, so-called avid golfers make up only 23 percent of on-course range users but they account for 51 percent of range visits. The mat-only membership is \$595 annually and includes unlimited practice balls and lesson discounts; the practice membership is \$1,195 annually and includes unlimited practice facility access, unlimited range balls and les-



The range at 1757 is known for an instruction program that draws newcomers and helps skilled players further advance.

the lights that allow the club to stay open until 11 p.m.

"A lot of times people get off work at 6 p.m. and don't have time to play nine holes but they want to hit balls," Keating says. "A lot of men will have dinner with their families and come out and practice at 9 or 10 o'clock at night." Golfers being golfers, you'll even see them come off No. 18 and want to practice some more. "It's really a huge advantage to be open to 11 p.m. Many evenings the lights are on and there are 200 people around hitting golf balls and taking lessons."

Not all of those people, mind you, are members of the 1757 Golf Club. Some of them come from the seven other facilities that participate in the Capital Area Golf Membership, which offers Washington-area golfers daily or weekday access to eight golf

"We get avid golfers, social golfers, corporate people — basically everyone ends up at this learning center, for different reasons."

—Tiffany Faucette

son discounts.

"We can let upwards of 100 people hit balls at the same time," says general manager Steve Keating. "Our members (240) and practice members (100) have unlimited-use privileges, and then we have our daily fee players

and outings hitting balls at the same time. We very rarely have a situation where you have to wait more than a few minutes to get an area, but we have many times during the week when every station is filled." That's primarily because of two factors: grass tees and

A Menu Approach to Pricing and Privileges

For frequent visitors to the 1757 Club, there are two main types of practice memberships to select from — plus three different discount schedules. There's a "mat-only" membership, which lets you hit unlimited range balls off the 56-station SportTurf range mat. In addition to the mat membership, the club offers a "full practice" membership that provides access to a 40-station grass tee and a three-acre short game area. The club offers a variety of promotions throughout the year to encourage off-season sign-ups, along with discount range cards in

various amounts that can save frequent users from paying full price for range balls.

Brian Wilcox, director of golf, wants impulse practicers to feel warmly welcomed. "To encourage that business," he says, "we have daily specials targeting specific groups like women golfers and juniors." The club offers unlimited range balls for a set fee on Saturday and Sunday mornings before noon, a great way of targeting weekend golfers "before some of the local stand-alone ranges even open," Wilcox says.

clubs — 1757 Golf Club plus seven others: Reston National, Virginia Oaks, Forest Greens, PBDye, Heritage Hunt, RedGate, and The Links at Challedon. The price range, depending on the type of membership, ranges from \$3,000 to \$4,450 per person, plus a minimal player's fee when you play away from 1757 Golf Club.

"Last year we had only five courses involved," Keating says. "With eight this year it's probably our strongest



All that practicing on the range preps players for the 1757 Club's first-rate golf course.

(promotion) for us so far." Perhaps, but the 1757 Golf Club has even more. There's a 16,000 square-foot practice putting green along with practice bunkers and the 1757 Golf Academy—a six-acre practice facility that has a two-story building with six bays used

for private lessons.

Four of the bays feature high speed cameras. Faucette even has a mobile camera she takes on the range, primarily for group lessons. "People like to match a ball flight to the position of their clubhead at impact. That's just

one of the reasons why the camera is a great teaching tool," Faucette says. "It helps them develop quicker."

Faucette says approximately 2,500 lessons are given annually at the academy. That number includes individual lessons and group lessons. "A lot of people come here for lessons, are intrigued by the facility and stay to practice," she says. Practice goes even better when the ball-hitter is surrounded by a little ambience. The 1757 Club's range provides what Faucette calls "a café setting," with cut flowers on bistro tables and music piped in. It is designed to provide a stimulating and even social environment, especially in the evenings. During major championships the range's sound system might carry radio broadcasts of the tournament action.

In addition, the 1757 Golf Club is home to the Golf Tour Trailer Studio where a player can get custom-fit for clubs. "It's probably the busiest custom fitting studio in the area," Keating says. "With everything we have to offer at the club, we feel we're in a league of our own." ■

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Smart Pet Tricks — An Alternate Use of Club Ranges



Every now and then it's time to pick all the striped balls and use your range for something completely different—as they do each year at the Waynesborough Country Club dog race BY SCOTT KRAMER

The sight of dogs running loose across a golf driving range might be cause for alarm – or even a call to the Animal Control officer—for most club members. Not so for the committee folks at Waynesborough Country Club in Paoli, Pa., which hosts an annual dog race on its range every March.

This tradition began five years ago and is open to all able-bodied dogs belonging to the club's 700 members. "We're a family club and how many families don't have a beloved pet dog?" asks Jack Molinaro, general manager

at Waynesborough C.C., a hub of sporting activity on a handsome woodland site northwest of Philadelphia. "The first year we started, we had 12 dogs, and by last year we had 43 of them entered in the field."

Course officials lay out a proper racetrack on the range, which is obviously closed to golf that day. It's a straight-ahead sprint, not an oval track, with course-marking paint used to mark the start line and finish line. Flags further decorate and define the course. The dogs are registered and assigned to one of three heats – all breeds and sizes run against each other. One family member holds the dog behind the start line while another stands in clear view at the finish line

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Some club canines run fast and some treat race day as a pageant.

waving their best friend's favorite toy or snack to get them motivated.

"It truly does turn into a competitive race," says Molinaro. "One dog will cross the finish line first to win the first heat, and be taken aside. Then we do it twice more. The last race is a

Lettered on the plaque is the dog's name, the year and the family name.

"So, if you've never had the honor of winning our club championship," says Molinaro, "you might be able to

glance at our champions' wall and at least see your dog's name." There is more hardware handed out, beyond the annual champion's plaque. "I give trophies to all three heat winners, as well," Molinaro explains, "but the grand champ gets a little bit taller trophy. We also take pictures and post them on our website. And I have the same guy who makes the ribbons for the Westminster Kennel Club dog show make ribbons for our race."

There's no fee to enter the family hound in the contest—and if yours isn't exactly built for speed, there is also an award given to the best-dressed dog, after the race. And yes, many dogs sport costumes for the affair—after all, the winner gets a gift certificate to a local dogspa. To further please the participants, WCC's club chef even serves his homemade dog biscuits.

"It is an awesome out-of-the-box idea that the members love," says Nick Wolfe, Waynesborough's PGA director of golf. "We don't generate direct revenue from the event, but as we all know, member happiness equals member retention." That makes the great Waynesborough race a concept that deserves—like every dog—to have its day. ■

"The same guy who makes ribbons for the Westminster Kennel Club dog show makes them for our race."

—Jack Molinaro

three-dog race of just the champions, after which we crown our Waynesborough grand champion." To recognize the mighty achievement of the club's swiftest canine, a plaque is bestowed. It's actually an exact replica of the plaque given each year to the men's and women's club champion golfers.



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Golf domes for winter practice, once considered a fast-return investment, are nowadays fewer in number and geared toward multi-use programming.

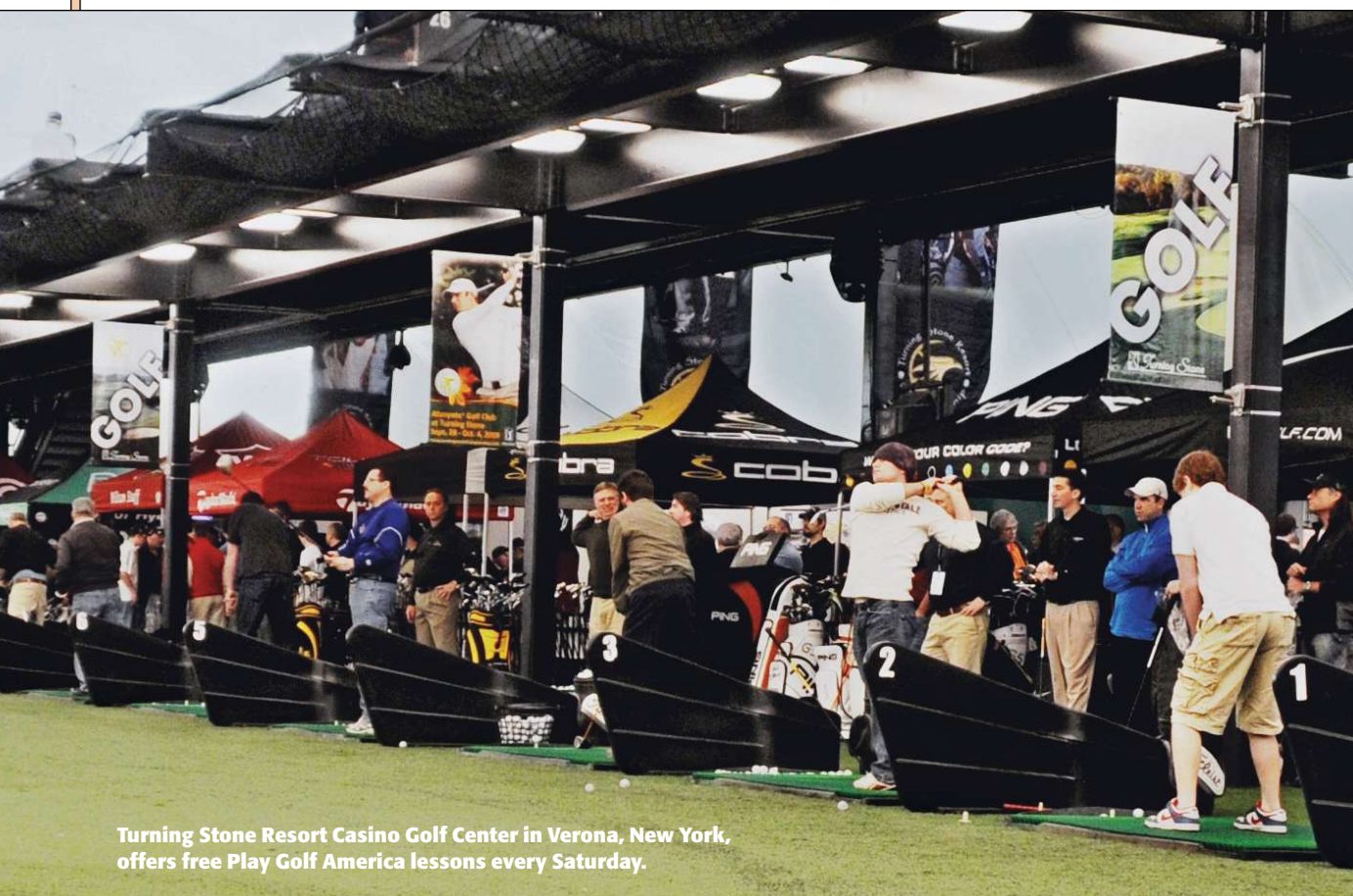
BY MIKE CULLITY



Grow the Game



Fore Seasons Golf Center in Columbus, Ohio, also rents its space for field sports and fitness classes.



Turning Stone Resort Casino Golf Center in Verona, New York, offers free Play Golf America lessons every Saturday.

With two decades' experience owning winter golf domes, Michigan entrepreneur Brian Ashley is a majordomo, if you'll pardon the pun. Ashley recalls a time in the mid-1990s when there were 17 golf domes within 30 miles of Detroit, while today there are just four. These holdouts include the Great Lakes Golf Center in Auburn Hills, which he helped develop in the late '90s and for which he is now a consultant.

The contraction in Detroit's dome market has occurred amid economic turmoil and stagnant golf demand, but even in the best of times operating a golf dome can be challenging. The big white bubbles represent a simple selling proposition: Offer northern-tier golfers a local refuge from winter's harshest elements. Demand for such an amenity has spurred many investors to erect air-supported vinyl practice domes—generous spaces that allow users to observe up to 100 yards of ball flight. When it works it's a nice bit of logic with a tidy upside. However, the steady revenue required to offset these structures' considerable operating expenses can be elusive.

And when bad weather turns good, it's a harsh turnabout.

Take last spring, when warm temperatures across the northern U.S. and Canada sent golfers flocking outdoors earlier than usual. At Four Seasons Golf Center, a dome Ashley owns in Columbus, Ohio, March revenues were down 50 percent from the previous year, he says. And at Great Lakes Golf Center, which Ashley's son, Michael, operates on a long-term lease for a bank owner, revenues for the month were down 75 percent, he adds.

"The early spring absolutely killed us at both facilities," says Ashley, who sold his initial stake in Great Lakes

Golf Center (then known as Mulligan's Golf Center) in 2000 but became involved again with his son in 2009. With startup costs in the \$1 million to \$2 million range and monthly utility bills that can run into five figures during the winter, golf domes are expensive to build and operate. And because domes' customer traffic is dependent on Mother Nature—and the structures can be prone to damage in severe weather—they are fraught with risk.

"A lot of dome owners don't sleep well at night," says Phil Levin, owner of the Currie Park Golf Dome in Wauwatosa, Wis., a Milwaukee suburb. A former accounting manager who's an avid golfer, Levin opened his dome in 1996 on land leased from Milwaukee County that's adjacent to the county-operated Currie Park Golf Course. Entering its 17th season, the facility has outlasted other golf domes around Milwaukee—it has operated free of competing facilities for the last several years—but survival hasn't been easy.

"We've made enough of a profit to



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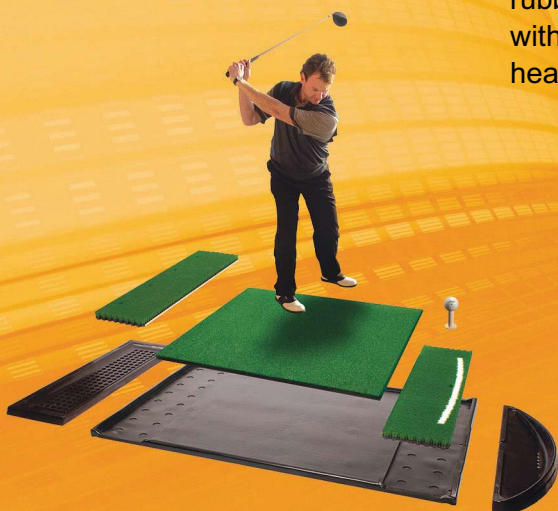
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Heavy resort traffic makes an in-dome golf superstore viable at Turning Stone.

where all our shareholders have gotten their money back and then some, but it hasn't been hugely profitable for them," Levin says. "I don't think any of them would jump back into another dome."

Although the Currie Park dome has survived several partial collapses in winters past, Levin faces the likelihood of replacing the structure's aging vinyl shell within the next few years. He estimates replacement will cost about \$1 million, which will require supplementing money he's set aside with additional investment capital or a loan, he says. Despite the cost, Levin hopes to erect a shell with insulation between its inner and outer layers — technology that didn't exist when he first built Currie Park. He expects that such a design improvement would cut his heating bills considerably.

While Currie Park caters almost

exclusively to golfers and benefits from proximity to a public course during early spring and late fall shoulder seasons, golf-only domes have become the exception rather than the rule. "Golf by itself does not generate sufficient income to create an attractive investment," says Mike Ragen, a senior vice president with The Farley Group, an Ontario company that builds and services air-supported structures.

As such, many golf domes host ancillary activities to bolster revenues. In Anchorage, Alaska, youth soccer, softball and football teams practice inside the Tanglewood Lakes Golf Dome, which also hosts Special Olympics competitions. Ohio's Four Seasons Golf Dome rents its space for fitness classes and field sports, while Michigan's Great Lakes Golf Center is investing \$400,000 to install sports

turf suitable for multiple athletic uses before and after its prime golf hours. "That's going to allow us over the next two years to probably double the annual revenue of that facility," Ashley says.

Meanwhile in central New York, the Turning Stone Resort Casino has integrated a golf dome into its entertainment amenities. Along with 44 hitting stalls on two levels, the Turning Stone dome has two synthetic putting greens, a chipping green and a practice bunker. Offering access to launch-monitor technology and two golf simulators, the dome also houses a golf retail store that opened last January.

Excluding retail store sales, Turning Stone's dome increased revenues by 8.5 percent in 2010 and 7 percent in 2011, with sales on pace to be up more than 9 percent this year, says Robert Todd, the resort's PGA director of golf. Moreover, by offering free Play Golf America lessons every Saturday and hosting clinics for kids enrolled in The First Tee and Oneida Indian Nation junior programs, the facility also functions as a player incubator.

"Our shareholders have gotten their money back and then some, but it hasn't been hugely profitable for them." —Phil Levin

If there's a sweet spot for domes in the grow-the-game movement, it's with juniors and women, says Currie Park's Levin.

"Kids get really excited about hitting in the dome, I think more so than they would outdoors," he says. "And I think getting women comfortable with the game in a contained, smaller environment makes it less intimidating for them." In that scenario, what began as a refuge from snow and rain could evolve to become a haven for any golfer merely testing the waters. ■



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Ed Oldham works with individual students on his lesson tee at The Ranch Golf Club, having flipped-the-classroom and allowed them to digest his swing-technique explanations on video—multiple times, if they so choose.



Golf Instruction Takes a Stab at “Flip the Classroom”

Seizing on an education trend that’s sweeping the schools and colleges, PGA Professional Ed Oldham is bringing video-first, mentoring-later to the golf academy setting.

BY ED OLDHAM, PGA, The Ranch Country Club, Westminster, Colo.

All teaching professionals put a high value on the students we meet in our group lessons and clinics. And yet, to serve them effectively requires almost flawless time management. The clock is ticking as we move from our group presentation to each golfer along the hitting stations. I recently watched a presentation given by Gale Peterson of the Sea Island Golf Learning Center, located in coastal Georgia. “How to Conduct World-Class Golf Clinics” was the title, and it’s full of great ideas and structures for organizing and running clinics. Gale suggested that in a 90-minute clinic with a 10-minute opening and a 10-minute closing, you have enough time to work with each individual for 2½ minutes twice. That is a total of 5 minutes per student.

I came away from the presentation feeling that Gale was getting the maximum value out of her 90 minutes, using the building blocks we as teaching professionals have always used. But it did make me start to rethink those building blocks. All of us, in our careers, have certainly wished for more clinic time to give one-on-one attention, knowing how valuable that is to a student. It’s the part of the experience where you get them really “dialed in.” As it turns out, there is indeed a way that we can do it, by borrowing a new idea called “Flip the Classroom.”

Here’s how it works: In regular classroom instruction, the teacher stands at the front of the room and gives a presentation to students, who listen and take notes. The students then go home and do an assignment based on the lecture material. While

doing these assignments, they have no opportunity for interaction or feedback from the teacher.

In a “flipped classroom,” the situation is reversed. The teacher records the presentation on video and posts it on YouTube or perhaps on a student-only website. The students watch the video at home on their own time. This gives them the opportunity to absorb the material at their own pace. If they don’t understand something, they can rewind the video or watch it over again. The classroom time is then spent on homework, a format that lets the teacher have more one-on-one interaction with each member of the class. The students basically do the “homework” in class and the teacher provides them clarification and feedback.

The first Flipping the Classroom video that I did was for a chipping clinic. I started with some basic setup infor-

mation and the overall concept of what it takes to be successful at chipping. I also gave them a drill they could do at home to reinforce the concept. I received very positive feedback on this approach from students. All of them had watched the video, a vital first step. I was able to jump in and begin working one-on-one with them as soon as our on-range time began. Now, this was a small group lesson, with four students. However, two weeks later when I reviewed my YouTube account, I saw that the chipping video had been viewed 26 times. The students were all watching it multiple times.

Later—more or less by accident—I conducted a “control group” experiment on this concept. I conducted two bunker supervised practices on back-to-back weeks. The first week, I didn’t have the time to create a video. The next week, I had the time to create a video showing basic concepts and what we would work on during the session. I got much better results that second week. The students made more progress than the students did the previous week. It makes sense on two fronts. Yes, they get more in-person

time with the teaching professional, but they also come to that opportunity better prepared in the first place. Prior to the clinic, students have the opportunity to pause and repeat at their own pace. After the clinic, they can review the video again to help reinforce what we learned.

“My conventional bunker clinic produced less student progress than the Flipped version did.” —Ed Oldham

I worked with my first assistant and we created some Flipped videos for our Get Golf Ready classes this spring. Again, we received great feedback from the women who participated and my first assistant felt as if they understood the concepts better.

When you spend time presenting the information to your students, it can become a passive, one-way flow of

information. Learning takes place when there is interaction between the teacher and the student. The teacher has the opportunity to correct and adjust, give feedback and answer the students’ questions. This could take place using the old model, you just get more of an opportunity with the flipped model.

Teachers and coaches don’t develop a student’s abilities by talking to them. We develop a student’s abilities by allowing them to practice, experiment, receive feedback, practice more and ultimately grow and succeed. It has been reported by experts that, immediately following a presentation, students will remember 50 percent of what was said. The next day their recall will be down to 25 percent and a week later it will diminish to 10 percent. By using the flipped-classroom videos, students can look at the video again a week or a month later to help retain and reinforce what was learned. Meanwhile, the extra one-on-one time live will further ingrain the swing motion and technique they personally can use to make the lesson work for their game. ■



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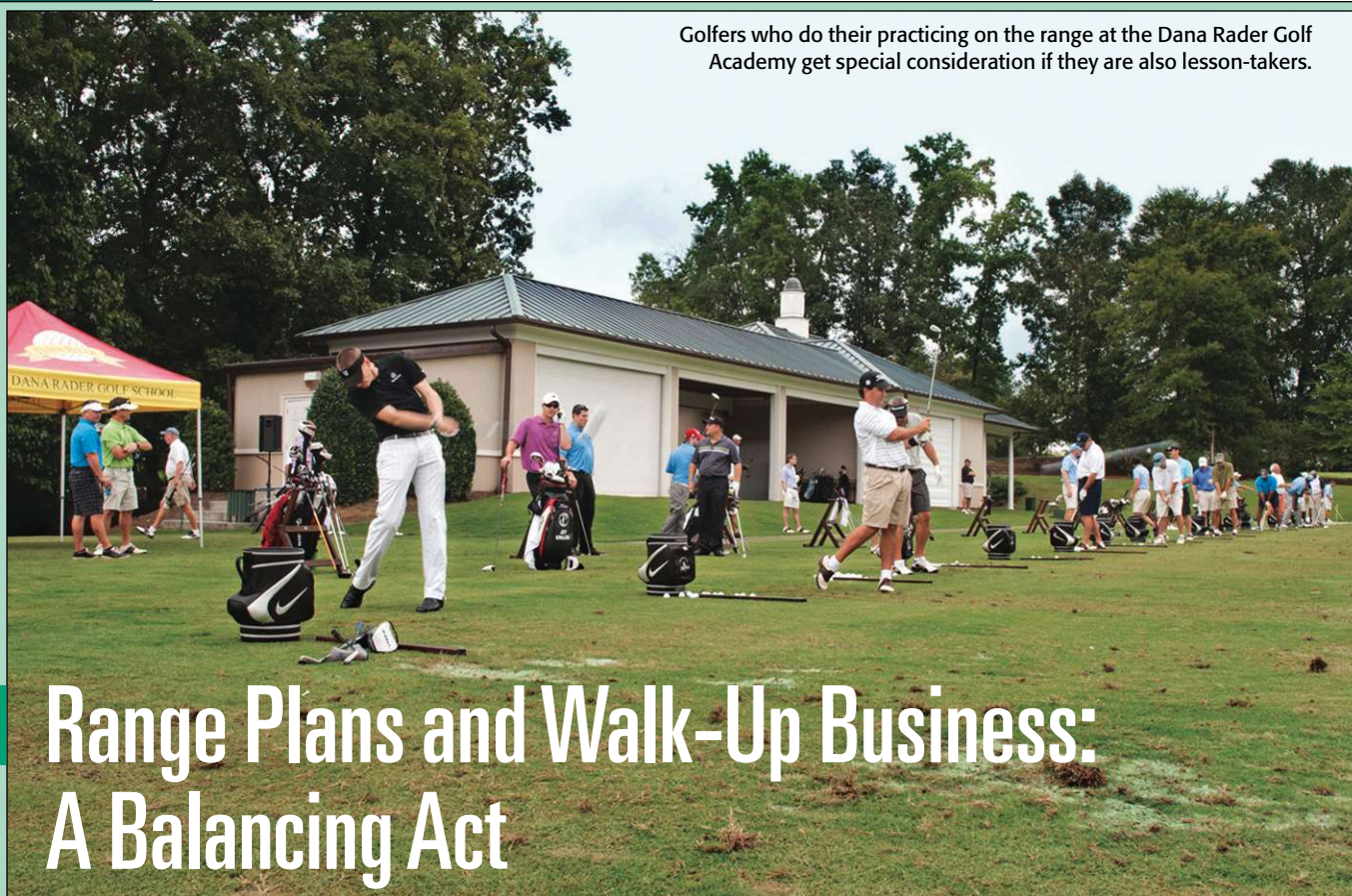
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Golfers who do their practicing on the range at the Dana Rader Golf Academy get special consideration if they are also lesson-takers.



Range Plans and Walk-Up Business: A Balancing Act

It's great that users come in so many different varieties, but that creates tough decisions for anyone allocating range privileges and setting up price schedules.

BY JOHN TORSIELLO

Balancing the traffic flow between walkup customers and golfers on package plans can be a tricky calculation for any range manager. Obviously they are eager for the upfront revenue generated by the sale of range passes. However, a public-access range also needs flexibility—in the form of open hitting bays. A basket of balls can be a red-hot impulse purchase, one that may require a 20-minute car ride and even a “hall pass” from the spouse. Having it frustrated by a lack of tee space is disappointing and not good for future sales.

Range pass holders are great customers—no doubt about it. Their commitment to your product ensures revenue flow during slow times or when weather turns sour, especially early in the season at northern courses and ranges. It's also a starting point for that personal relationship between customer and on-site professional—the type that leads to lesson bookings and custom-club purchases. You don't necessarily get those add-on dollars

from your stop-and-pop clientele. So, it's wise to analyze the capacity of your range, project demand, and then tailor plan prices to optimize your return on investment.

Julie Cole, managing partner at the Dana Rader Golf School at the Ballantyne Resort and Golf Club in Charlotte, N.C., says her facility determines the amount of walk-up usage the range can expect and restricts the number of “plan users” each year in

order to work around the range's schedule of schools and private lessons. “The price of our range and lesson program determines those who are serious about practice and playing better,” Cole explains. “Our price also tends to filter out ball-beaters from the population of golfers who want to gain something from practice.”

Gary Sciarrillo, general manager at Great River Golf Club in Milford, Conn., says the number of golfers presumed to use Great River's range each year is calculated against hitting bay capacity, including the area of the grass surface and the rate at which it incurs damage, then recovers. “We average 100 balls a person, which leaves us a lot of room for error and allows our grass surface to last through the summer,” says Sciarrillo.

In general the club is reliably able to quantify and satisfy its grass-tee practitioners. Great River sells a limited



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number of “turf club” memberships and limited range passes. From season to season, according to Sciarrillo, his range demonstrates an ultra-high retention rate on plan-buyers – close to 100 percent.

Anthony Kazlauskas, general manager at The Mad Golfer Golf Club in Southampton, Pa., keeps track of single-bucket revenue versus range plans. In order to generate interest in package pricing, he advertises a user card for \$100 and loads it up with \$135 of value. “Not all range plan customers are serious golfers who care about score,” Kazlauskas notes. “We have folks who aren’t getting the opportunity to play very often, so they really value the opportunity to hit balls as often as they can.” The Mad Golfer also offers double-the-bonus if a customer buys a range plan in conjunction with a lesson package.”

At the Ranch Golf Club in Southwick, Mass., range usage is included with membership and daily fee play. Hope Kelly, director of golf, says the club has tried a day-pass approach and not gotten many takers. At \$40, the cost is seemingly too steep, despite how complete and varied the club’s practice facilities are. A season practice plan is \$1,500 at The Ranch, which comes out to around \$6 a day. It’s a good deal if golfers are into hitting balls until their hands are calloused.

Dana Chaiken, owner of the Carlsbad Golf Center in Carlsbad, Calif., reports that her range-plan customers

come from every part of the skill, age, geographic and income spectrums. Bonus range privileges are also a great way to gather database information on users. “We ran a range promotion that required customers to fill out an entry form,” says Chaiken, “In one week alone, we had customers between the ages of 5 and 91 from over 30 different zip codes, and even had 14 people who said it was their first time at the range.”

At the Carlsbad Golf Center, when a range card is “charged up” extra value is added — the bigger the charge, the more extra value a customer gets.

The Carlsbad Golf Center offers two ways to buy balls: individual buckets and range cards. Each time a card is “charged up” the club puts extra value on it, which customers can use at their own pace. The more they buy at any one time, the more extra value they get. There are discounts for senior card holders and even “happy hour” discounts ranging from 16 to 30 percent off regular bucket prices.

Dave Christensen, general manager at Lyman Orchards Golf Club in Middlefield, Conn., says the club bundles the majority of its range plans with opportunities to play the course. For example, a Player Development Program (PDP) comes with a 45-minute private lesson or a clubfitting service, and includes unlimited access to the range, plus playing privileges in the first hour of daylight or two hours before dark. “We frequently see customers migrate from one of the lower-end products to a more substantial offering after they have participated in a program for about a year. We encourage and budget for planned usage as it lends itself to greater profitability and somewhat insulates us from just relying on walk-up customers.”

Christensen says Lyman Orchards experiences some attrition due to age, or from customers moving away, “but at the same time we work hard on developing personal relationships” to retain customers. Offers Kazlauskas, “Our range plan business stays pretty consistent year to year and we do our best to continue to grow it by making it part of our daily interactions with every customer, especially new customers, so that everyone is aware of them and sees the value behind them.” From one basket of balls to a full year’s plan purchase is either a long journey or a swift leap, depending on the customer – thus it is well worth the trouble to continually promote that business. ■

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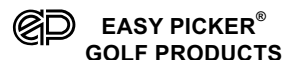
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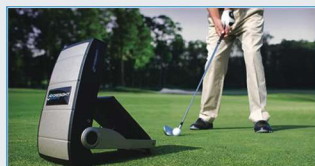
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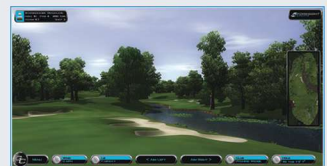
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