



GRAA

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

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

- Range Operations: Controlling Customer Behavior – Range patrons have a lot on their mind besides safety, etiquette and possible property damage. Have you trained your staff to make sure things don't go badly wrong?
- Private Range Profile: Avondale Golf Club – As Palm Springs welcomes a younger demographic, a great place for lessons, practice and shorter-dose golf has proven necessary. Avondale Golf Club fills that niche nicely.
- Instruction: Walk the Line – For range personnel-especially instructors-providing a steady, approachable presence is an opportunity to add value and build your business, if done correctly.
- Video File: Teachers' Video Tips Build Value – Instructors are constantly filming students to find skill flaws. One club uses its teaching staff as its on-camera talent in a series of micro-videos that members watch enthusiastically.

Keep it fun and thanks for supporting the GRAA.

Best Regards,

Rick Summers, CEO
GRAA

rsummers@golfrange.org



Golf Range



M A G A Z I N E

Volume 20, No. 3
March 2012

Market Shift in Palm Springs

**Avondale Golf Club
Hits a Sweet Spot**

Also in this issue:

- Walk the Line Profitably
- How "Name" Academies Promote
- Misbehaving Patrons: What to Do
- Traffic-Builders: The Latest Tips



Younger than Yesterday in Palm Springs



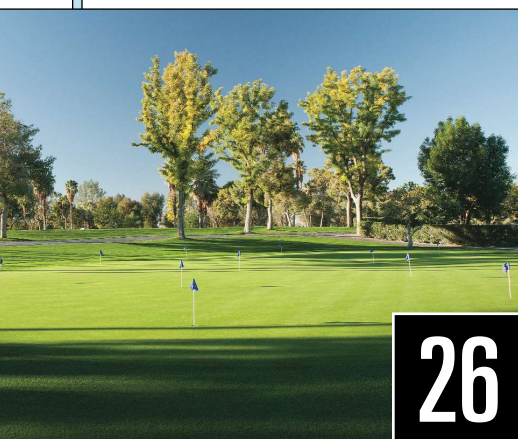




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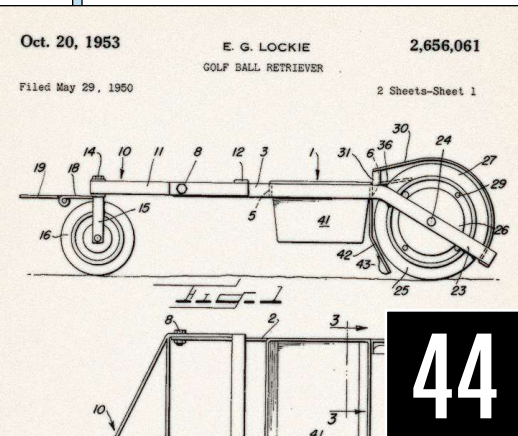
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Golf Range

M A G A Z I N E

Volume 20, Number 3



March 2012

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Entry-Level Opportunity

This month's cover story (page 26) on Avondale Golf Club explores how the Palm Desert property's vibrant practice facility serves as a point of entry to the entire golf experience at the club. With high-end amenities, a wide variety of practice opportunities and conditions that match on-course expectations, the range at Avondale serves to welcome members and guests to the social, upscale atmosphere that permeates the entire club.



The idea of golf range as point of entry is apt, and not just at the facility level. In today's Golf 2.0 environment of reaching out to new golfers and keeping existing customers engaged, golf ranges serve as a vital gateway for the game itself. From formal lessons to practice sessions, our golf ranges serve to welcome new players while giving the already avid golfer a place to enjoy the game before or between rounds.

Serving as the introductory golf experience brings opportunity and responsibility. At Avondale, the opportunity is an influx of younger golfers that enjoy using one of the finest practice facilities in the Palm Springs area. This month's issue of *Golf Range Magazine* also examines the best way for instructors to take advantage of the opportunity created by a range filled with prospective students (page 36). While many golfers are thrilled at the idea of getting a tip or two from a golf teacher, others would prefer to go about their practice without interference. Be sure to take note of the sound advice instructors offer in this story so you can identify which golfers are ready for interaction, and which ones would prefer to practice on their own.

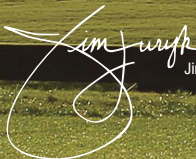
In terms of responsibility, be sure to read this month's story on how to keep an eye out for bad behavior on the range (page 20). Whether it's pilfering range balls and buckets or hurling clubs and reckless swinging, we all need to be on the lookout for behavior that might bother other golfers—or even endanger them. As more new golfers come to our ranges to learn the game, it's up to us to provide a safe environment and the direction needed for a peaceful—and fun—practice experience.

Rick Summers
CEO & Publisher, GRAA
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Golf Ranges: Where the Fun Starts

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The Impact of Clubfitting: Consumers and Retailers

Clubfitting is still an under-used path to range profits **BY TONY STARKS**

In 2011 Golfsmith, Sports Illustrated Golf Group and Sports & Leisure Research Group combined to create an expansive study outlining the impact clubfitting has on golfers, manufacturers and retailers. The data revealed clubfitting to be one of the most untapped and profitable opportunities in the golf business.

In the preceding year, only 30 percent of equipment purchases by core golfers (defined as those who played eight or more rounds in the past 12 months) were custom fit. And furthermore, only 11 percent were fit using a launch monitor to measure spin rate, ball speed, trajectory and launch angle (see chart below left).

The conclusion is clear: There exists a large pool of experienced golfers out there who have not been fit for the clubs they're playing. The reasons, according to research, aren't entirely clear. Perhaps they're unfamiliar with custom-fitting's benefits, or believe (incorrectly) that clubfitting

is primarily of benefit to highly skilled players. For a driving range or practice center, clubfitting is a potential cash cow. Custom-fitting drives greater purchase expenditures on new equipment across the board, from drivers and irons to woods and hybrids (see chart below right). In addition, clubfitting accelerates the purchase process and garners greater satisfaction from your customers because they're getting a product that is going to help them hit better shots and in turn have more fun.

The golfer who has more fun – again, according to hard data – is going to play more golf. ■

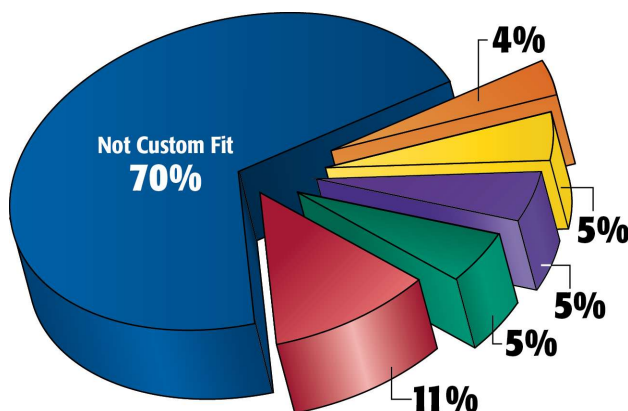
Clubfitting: An Untapped Opportunity

Basic Fitting: 19%

- Took measurements
- Used video simulator and took measurements
- Hit balls on a range, watched ball flight and took measurements
- Hit balls off a loft & lie board and made club adjustments

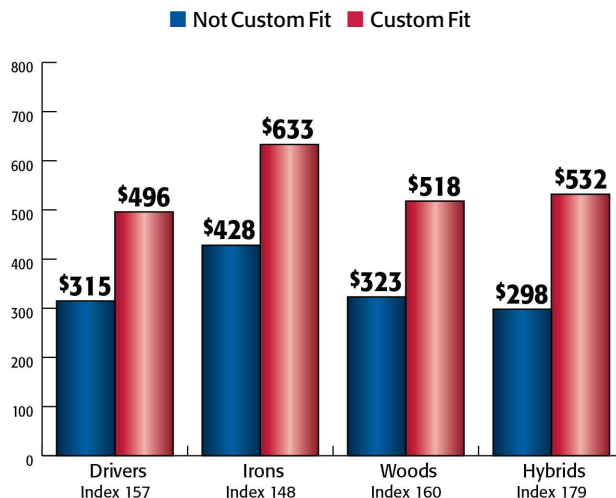
Premium Fitting: 11%

- Used a launch monitor



Custom Fitting Drives Greater Purchase Expenditures on New Equipment

Spending among those custom fit is significantly higher across major product categories



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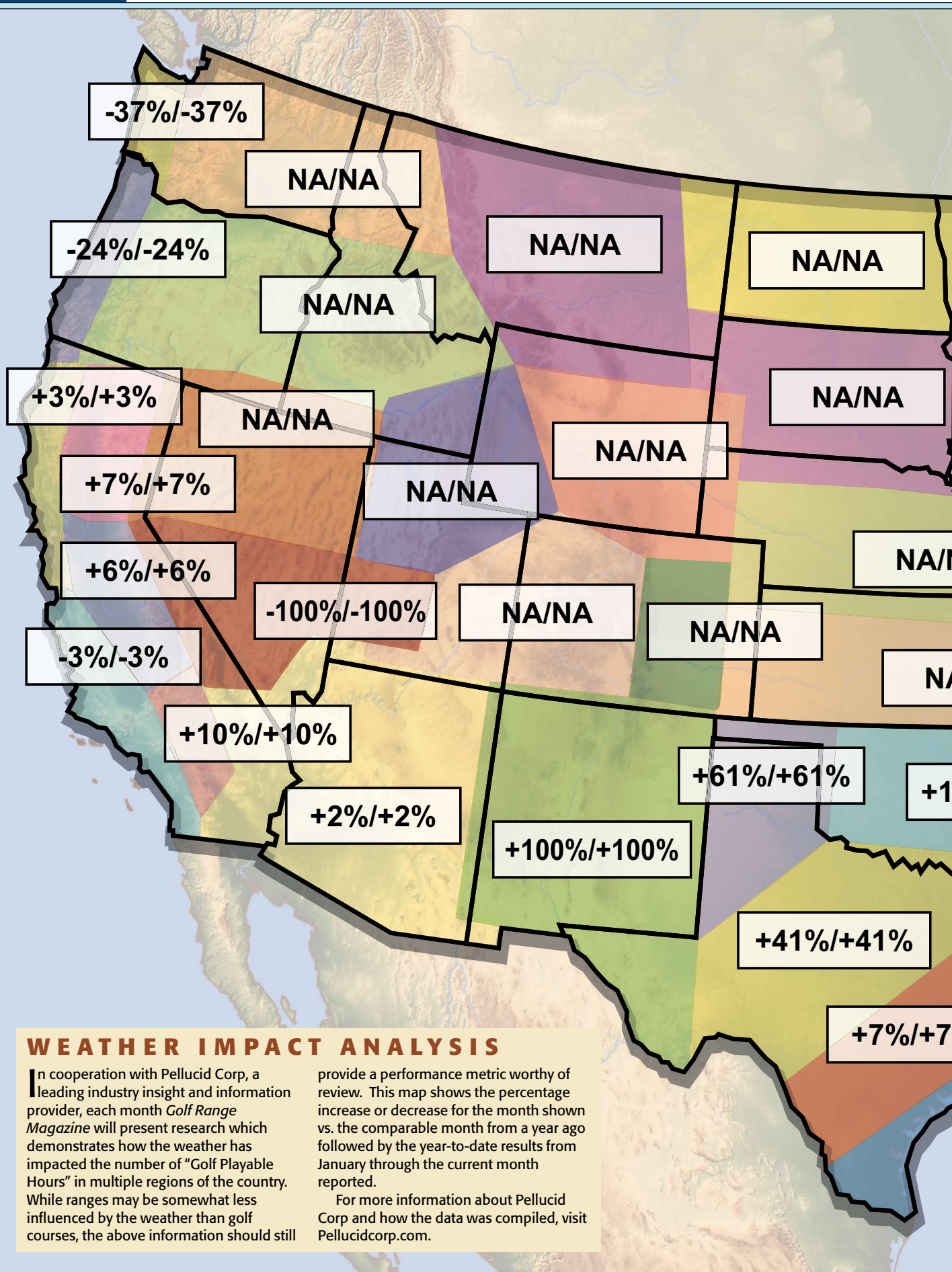
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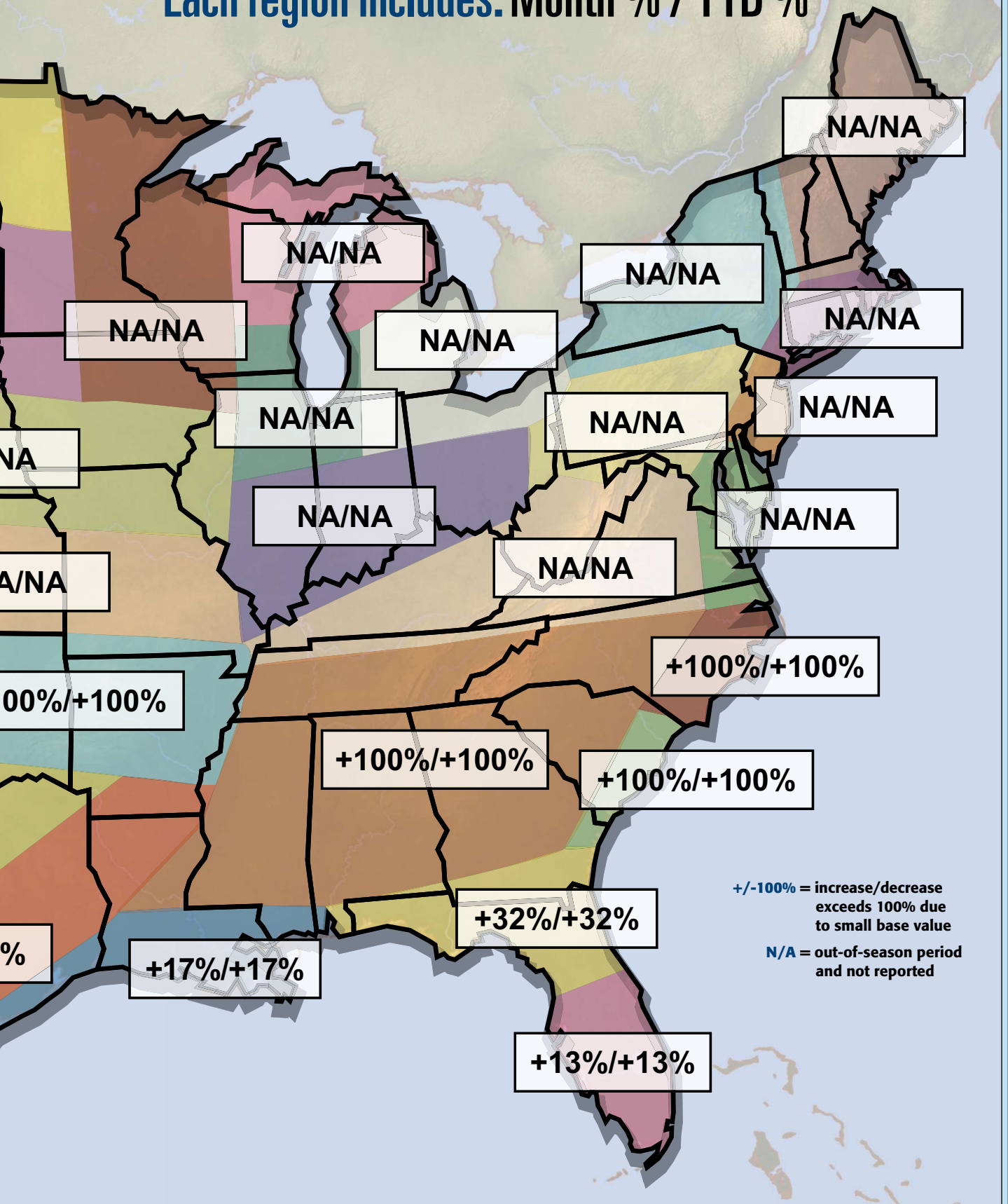
WEATHER IMPACT ANALYSIS

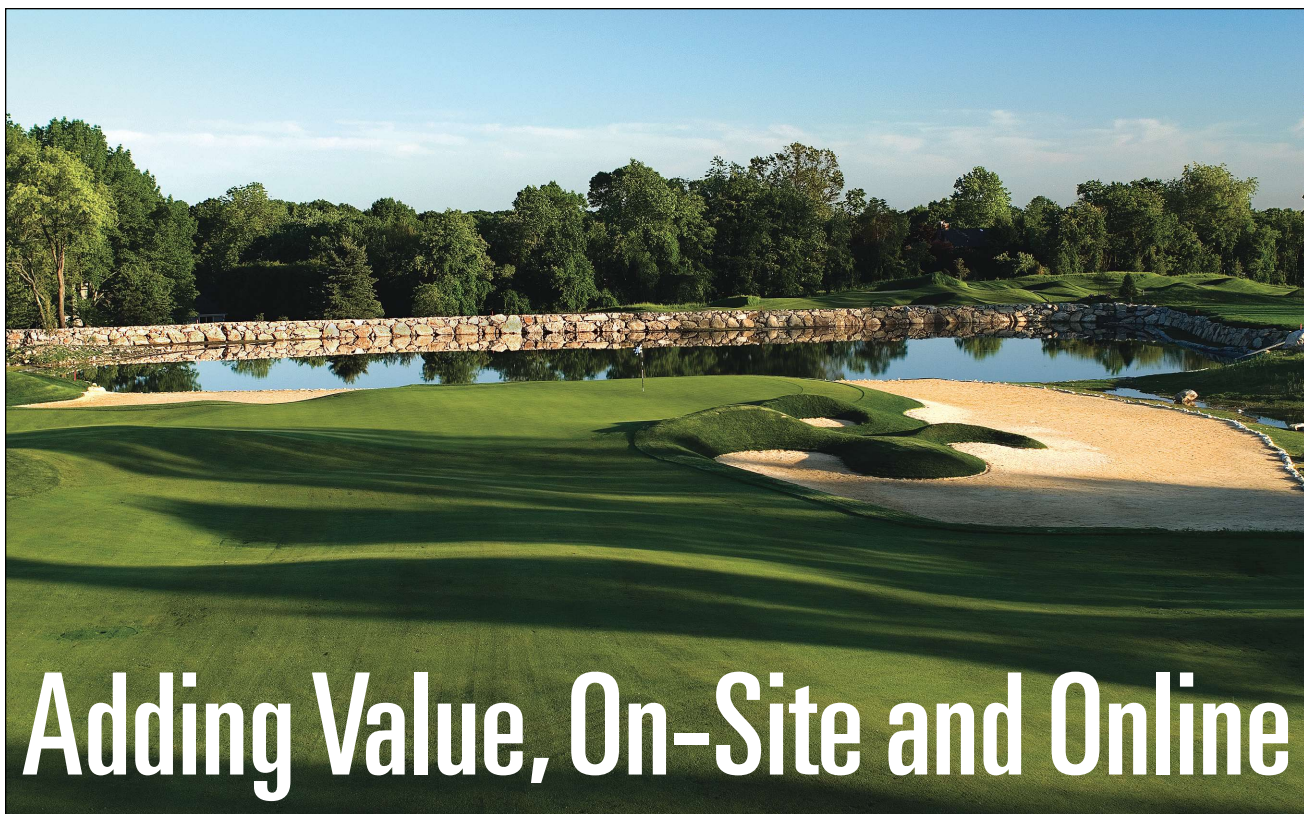
In cooperation with Pellucid Corp, a leading industry insight and information provider, each month *Golf Range Magazine* will present research which demonstrates how the weather has impacted the number of "Golf Playable Hours" in multiple regions of the country. While ranges may be somewhat less influenced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

Each region includes: Month % / YTD %





Adding Value, On-Site and Online

Consumers look for little extras from the facilities where they spend their money regularly. That can be in the form of bonus usage or Internet-only promotions and discounts. **BY TONY STARKS**

Traffic is crucial to the success of any retail business, whether your customers arrive on foot or through a digital portal. This month we'll take a look at two clearly contrasting facilities. One is a high-end public golf complex near a metropolis, with a par-72 layout designed by one of the biggest names in course architecture. The other is a small but successful stand-alone driving range in a town with a population of less than 2,500 citizens. There's something to be learned from each of these case studies.

Pounding the Range at Pound Ridge

Located about one hour north of New York City, Pound Ridge Golf Club (*pictured above*) is an upscale public golf complex located in affluent Westchester County. Opening its doors in the post-boom year of 2008, the par-72 Pete Dye design was named to *Golfweek's* list of "America's Best New Courses" and has continued to rack up awards. Far from resting on its laurels, Pound Ridge has shown a high-energy marketing effort from the

get-go. Among the efforts pursued by owner Ken Wang is an attractive practice program aimed at building loyalty.

In its current version, the practice range program has pounced on a fair-weather opportunity and included some golf, as well. During the fall and winter of 2011–12, weather permitting, Pound Ridge players enjoyed unlimited range balls on the practice range for \$40 per person per hour. Availability was noon to 3:30 p.m., seven days a week. For an additional \$10, golfers could hit unlimited range

balls and also play nine holes of golf (including use of a golf car) after 2 p.m.

While the pricing scheme may greatly differ at another facility (the lowest tier of pricing for an 18-hole round at Pound Ridge is \$100) there's still much to be said for the idea of allowing unlimited range access during the offseason as an added value for golfers, particularly if your course shuts down its permanent greens for

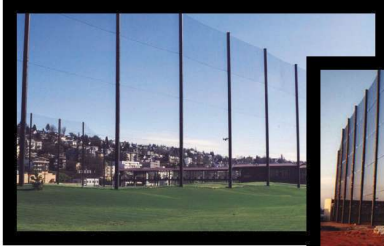
Internet specials and incentives put your facility in the golfer's online "path," even if volume isn't robust.

the winter. "Our region experienced mild temperatures and exceptional conditions this fall," says Wang. "The new practice range program allowed our golfers to extend the golf season and work on their games during mild winter days."

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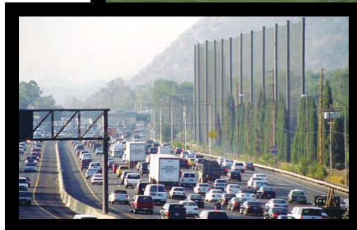
Seattle



Georgia



New Jersey



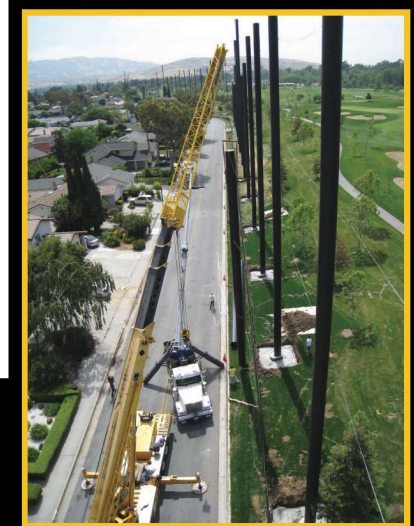
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As winter begins to wind down and spring awakens, Pound Ridge is making further adjustments. They're continuing to offer 9-hole rates (a policy that was only instituted in 2011) and including complimentary use of the range and practice grounds with all rounds. The range features a newly designed chipping area to round out its generous features. "Now entering our fourth full year, Pound Ridge provides Metropolitan area golfers an upscale, daily fee golf alternative on par with the best private clubs," says Wang. "Continuation of the nine-hole rate from 2011 and providing complimentary range usage are examples of our response to the desires of today's modern player looking to experience the course via flexible rates."

Keeping Up With the (Digital) Joneses

In order to stay relevant in any market, you will generally need to change with the times. Over the past two decades, Pagoda Golf Area in Sinking Spring, Pa., found ways to stay relevant throughout several phases of the golf industry.



If off-season weather cooperates, devoted players will respond to incentives.

In the late '90s, they built a well-manicured miniature golf course to attract more family play and later added a bar & grill to encourage patrons to stay around and spend a little more of their entertainment budgets.

In the last 10 years or so, the world has experienced the meteoric rise of Internet shopping. People can make big retail decisions at their desired

pace from the comfort of their own home. It's a trend that's not likely to dwindle anytime soon.

"I don't know where this retail thing is going in the future, but I can tell you that the public is getting used to shopping for just about any product or service on the Internet," says David Rupp, PGA head professional at Pagoda Golf Area and a three-time Philadelphia PGA Section Merchandiser of the Year. "I do have a 'Buy-Online' option on our website, but we're not substantial enough to compete with the big box stores in terms of online sales with equipment, apparel and other merchandise. But we've found a way to make ourselves pertinent in that arena."

Rupp primarily sells gift certificates and lesson packages on the Internet. The gift certificates can be used for a variety of purchases, such as range balls, merchandise in the pro shop or food and beverage items in the grill. Even though Internet sales do not comprise a huge percentage of Pagoda's total revenue, Rupp believes it's essential that they offer the service to their customers.

"Nowadays, people research everything online before they make a purchase or even before they decide where they're going to go play golf," says Rupp. "It's important that we have the option available for our customers to buy online. It shows that we're up with the times and informed on what our customers want." ■

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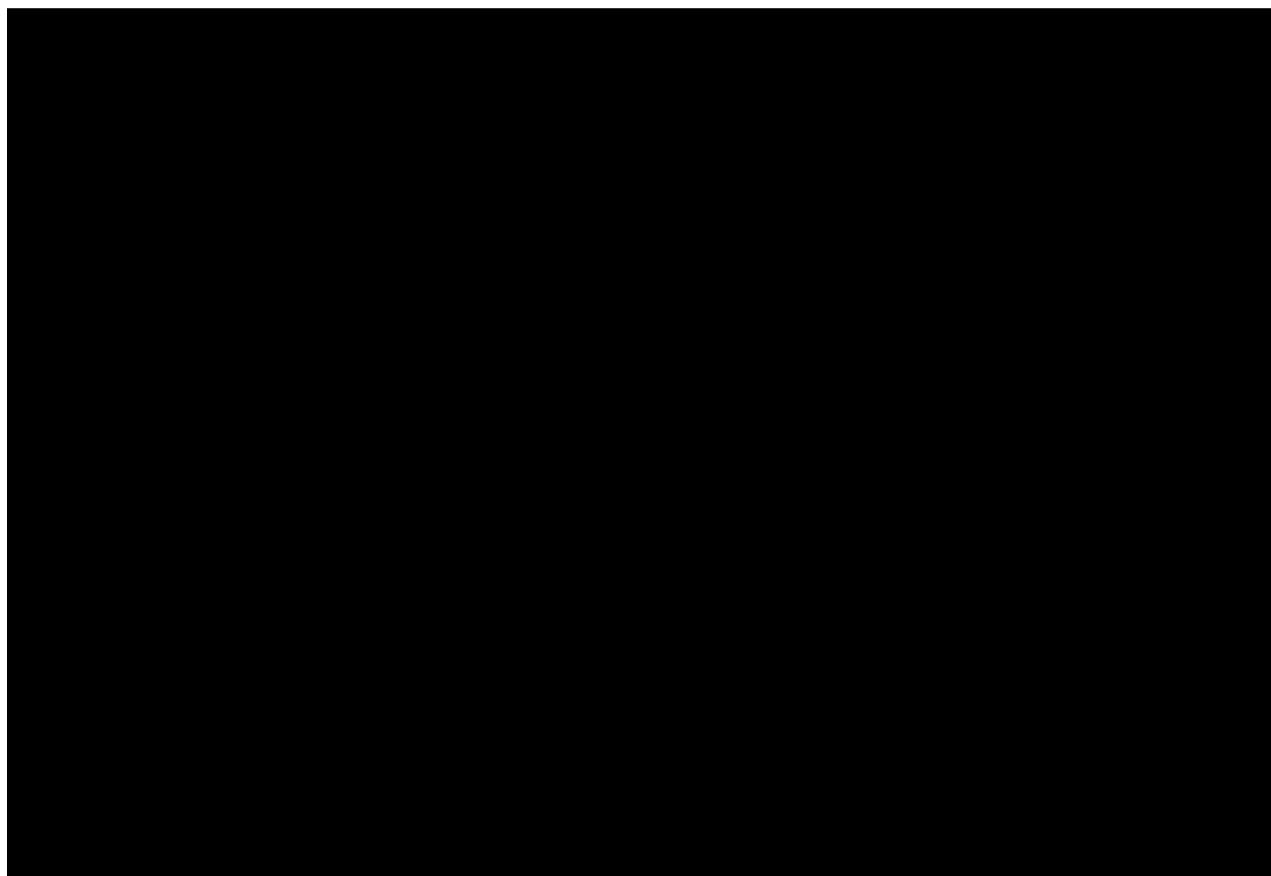
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Teachers' Video Tips Build Value

Instructors are constantly filming students to find skill flaws. One club uses its teaching staff as its on-camera talent in a series of micro-videos that members watch enthusiastically

Most golf instructors would agree that video analysis is a helpful teaching technique. If used effectively, video instruction can accelerate the learning process, validate a professional's analysis and measure student improvement. But what happens when the cameras turn away from the student and zoom in on the PGA Professional?

At GlenArbor Golf Club in Bedford Hills, New York, the professional golf staff has taken another step with video. "Our staff has produced an instruction library containing hundreds of video clips. Now, in addition to emailing a video analysis, we can also attach one or two drills or tips that are specific to the needs of the student," says Head PGA Professional Brian Crowell. The club's PGA Director of Golf, Rob Labritz advises keeping the clips short, fun and focused, "There are many sources for video golf tips these days, but students really appreciate seeing their actual instructor on-camera." The tips are also featured periodically on the GlenArbor website for members to click on as a reminder. ■





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Keeping it Fun while



Tour players Jim Furyk (hitting) and Zach Johnson engage in some horseplay on the practice grounds before the 2006 Ryder Cup. Remind your staff that innocent fun can go awry at any time during those long, busy days at your range.

Range patrons have a lot on their mind besides safety, etiquette and possible damage to wrong. BY JOHN TORSIELLO

Maintaining Order



MONTANA PRITCHARD/THE PGA OF AMERICA

range property. It's up to your trained staff to stay diligent so that things don't go badly

People act out their emotions brazenly when they're behind the wheel of a car, for reasons psychologists have studied since the term "road rage" was coined. There's a similar but more tongue-twisting phrase, "range rage," that applies to at least one patron of the Fairways and Greens Golf Center in Knoxville, Tennessee. The root of the problem, explains membership director Dave Sumilas, was the decision by a 50-something man "to take up golf and learn the game fast." A recipe for disappointment, indeed.

"When this guy would come here to practice," says Sumilas, "his frustration would get so bad that he would curse and slam his clubs on the concrete pad. We talked to him about trying to control his behavior." It's common for range operators to keep an eye on beginning golfers in their teens and early 20s, but Sumilas doesn't jump to any conclusions. "We see improper behavior from all ages," he notes.

The two deadly sins of the misbehaving range patron seem to be fits of rage and larceny. "We consistently have range clubs snapped in half or thrown out onto the range," commented John Holodinski, owner of the Branchburg Golf Center in Branchburg, N.J. "We've also caught people putting range balls in their bags." Not just the balls but the baskets go missing, as well, something people outside the industry find hard to believe. One range owner explained basket theft in a droll but weary tone, saying: "Well, depending how many balls they steal, they may need something to carry them in."

It makes sense that frustration could rise to a boiling point more quickly on the range than the course, simply because one terrible shot after another can be hit without any delay. That's something else to remind new

"Ironically, the poor behavior we see comes mainly from regular customers."
— Matt Clay

employees about. A case in point would be the golfer at Turning Stone Resort in Verona, New York who pulled a complete nutty with R.J. Todd, director of golf, as an eyewitness. "This golfer got so upset and frustrated that he kicked over a den caddy filled with balls, spread the balls on the ground

and start swinging in every direction," says Todd. "He was hitting shots all over the range and almost hitting another customer." Todd says the irate customer wound up throwing his bag into a nearby pond.

Matt Clay, general manager at the Del Mar Golf Center Del Mar, California, says his range's steel baskets go missing regularly—although "only jumbo baskets"—to the tune of about 75 a year. Clay has even had customers come to blows over bothersome cigarette smoke floating down the tee line. Ironically, says Clay, a majority of poor behavior at his facility comes from regular customers, golfers who visit the facility two to three times a week. "A sense of entitlement sets in," Clay says, "and they tend to break our rules much more than new golfers."

While Mike Passmore, owner of Simply Great Golf Academy in North Myrtle Beach, S.C., says bad tee line behavior can happen at any age, "groups of teenagers usually sends up a warning flag." Seems the kids like to get creative and often become unsafe and distracting to other customers. "Their Happy Gilmore imitations can get out of hand." Todd also sees more problems with teenagers. "They are trying to show off for their buddies."

"Most improper behavior I have noticed has been usually in the 18-to-25-year-old group," says Steve Campanaro, a PGA golf professional at Turning Stone Resort. Joe Tanis, director of golf at Crystal Springs Resort in Hamburg, N.J., believes improper behavior is no laughing matter.

"The safety and enjoyment of all customers is so important and if someone is out of line and reckless, others could be in danger."

And, sadly, accidents do happen. "I've seen a person walk into another person's back swing and get hit with the golf club in the face," says Passmore. "It was horrible. Unawareness of other golfers and the damage a golf club can do to a person is the most dangerous."

Range owners/operators constantly try to mitigate bad behavior and prevent it from occurring.

"Our staff monitors customer behavior in all areas of the practice facility,"

MEMO TO STAFF: THE STAKES ARE HIGH

In recent times, the most serious punishment to a golf facility involving range accidents reached the seven-figure level. In an out-of-court settlement, \$1 million in compensation was paid by a daily fee course in Tampa, Florida, to a golfer who lost the use of one eye. Westchase Golf and Country Club had gone to trial to defend itself, on the premise that the injury was caused by the golfer's own shot ricocheting back at him. Under the doctrine of "assumption of risk," a consumer can be disqualified from injury compensation when it's clear that he voluntarily engaged in hazardous activity and knew (or should have

known) the risk of harm.

In this case, the range ball bounced off a granite marker used to separate the hitting stalls. Expert testimony produced a convincing argument that alternate material like light rope should have been used instead.

That's when the settlement was offered – at the maximum available under the insurance policy Westchase was carrying. Golf clubs and golf balls move at high speed, and golfers stand in close proximity when a range is busy. It's up to every staff member, even the entry-level personnel, to be able to spot an accident about to happen.



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says Passmore. "Our staff is trained to be diplomatic when approaching a golfer that has not followed signage and personally explained guidelines." Holodinski puts the focus on well-behaved patrons, whose needs have to be protected. "We have taken a strong stance that this is a family facility," he says. "We enforce the rules and police the range on 15-minute intervals. Initially, you always want to be diplomatic. Occasionally, the behavior is so over the top we will ask the customer to leave." R.J. Todd agrees, viewing the skill of issuing a diplomatic request/warning one of the basics for range employees. "It should never be difficult to approach someone and ask them to follow the rules of golf and observe golf etiquette or they will have to forfeit their privileges."

Tanis also has members of his staff police Crystal's Springs' sprawling range to monitor and immediately deal with inappropriate behavior. "The range marshal here is like a starter and is able to police the range to keep people in check," says Sumilas. "For the kids, we have a junior pro-



This is a safety-oriented setup on range without fence-style barriers. There is no hard object that a ball could strike, and the bagstands are positioned to keep a clear area for players in their backswings.

gram that teaches the rules of the range." Signage can help maintain a peaceful and safe range. Observes

Passmore, "Signage is important even if you have regular monitoring of your customers." Signs like "Have a Safe and Great Practice Session," "Be Respectful and Aware of Other Golfers," "Never Walk into a Golfer's Swing Path," and "Hit Balls From Designated Areas Only," work best, he adds. Often, a green grass range is adjacent or near a golf course with its ever attendant beverage carts and snackshacks. Off-course ranges sometimes have a food and beverage amenity and that can result in booze on the tee line. Some range owners/operators allow it, others don't.

"We don't allow alcohol on the range but it can find its way there," says Clay. "People may bring a few beers in the evening. This is something I don't police nor am I going to walk the line to look for beer cans. I have to pick my battles and that is one that is challenging and I don't feel is worth my time." There seems no getting around the fact that someone, sometime, will behave inappropriately on the practice range. But diplomacy, a pro-active management style, policing, and signage can go a long way toward creating and maintaining a safe and friendly environment for all customers. ■

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Striped Balls against



the Desert Sky

As Palm Springs welcomes a younger demographic, a great place for lessons, practice and shorter-dose golf has proven necessary. Avondale Golf Club fills that niche nicely. **BY SCOTT KRAMER**





It's rare during peak season to see nary a golfer stroking putts on the Avondale practice putting green, which is groomed impeccably to match overall conditioning standards at the club.

Even as you read this, Palm Springs is battling a misperception. Locals bemoan the conventional view of their desert home as an early-bird-special outpost where retirees mosey down familiar fairways in their customized golf carts. In reality, this area two hours east of Los Angeles is experiencing a surge of younger, more affluent sun-seekers. Some of the new arrivals have purchased vacation homes while others are departing the urban clamor to open businesses in the Coachella Valley, a 15-mile stretch of desert civilisation bordered by Palm Springs on the west and Indio to the east.

Smack in the middle lies the gated enclave of Palm Desert, home to Avondale Golf Club, a 43-year-old private facility with golf by the nine-time PGA Tour winner Jimmy Hines. Like several others in the area, this private-community course is known for its beautiful setting and

impeccable conditioning. But what really sets Avondale apart is its vast practice facility, which has speedily become a vibrant and high-traffic amenity for resident members.

Even more than the typical Palm Springs establishment, Avondale is benefiting from the influx of younger,

avid-golfing members who regularly bring guests to both the course and the range. After all, you can't beat the \$5 guest fee for unlimited use of the four-component practice area that consists of a 290-yard-deep, all-grass driving range with natural turf-only tees; massive putting green; chipping greens with three hole locations; and a separate bunker practice area.

"We've upgraded our turf conditions on the range and brought in new, top-quality practice balls, new flagsticks, new flags—every possible feature to match the high standards of our golf course," says Erik Johnson, director of sales and marketing at JC Golf, the San Diego-based management company that took over operations in November of 2010. "Our bunker practice area, short game area, range and putting green are

maintained at an optimal level.” For the new managers of Avondale, this provides a unique selling proposition. “As you travel around this region,” Johnson says, “you quickly see that high-end practice facilities like ours are hard to find. You pull up to this facility and you just naturally want to go hit balls.”

Using the practice grounds as a point of entry was JC Golf’s plan all along. Since it took over, average age of the Avondale membership has dropped to 66. That may sound old to someone in the northern tier of the U.S., but for Palm Desert it isn’t. Many of Avondale’s neighboring club communities have memberships averaging nearly 10 years older—a level at which attrition due simply to age becomes a major factor. JC Golf added aggressively priced corporate and junior membership categories—by “junior,” they mean people under age 50—that have helped it bring in the next micro-generation of members. The company also added a fitness facility, clubhouse bar with panoramic views of the mountains and course, renovated restrooms and locker rooms, and many course improvements—all of it designed to catch the fancy of the newly arrived.

“Regardless of how old the golfers are, this club in general is extremely active,” says Johnson. “Ninety-five percent of the membership is comprised of truly extreme avid golfers who come out and practice before and after golf. And they play five to six rounds a week here, on average. This is a pretty darned cool place. It’s very old school in some ways, reminding me of the Chicagoland clubs I grew up around. The membership is extremely social, so there are lots of games and tournaments, including member/guest events. Thus, we perpetually get a lot of guests out here at the range. The 20 hitting bays are typically full, when the temperature isn’t extreme.”

Brandon O’Neill, general manager of Avondale Golf Club, says he likes to add personalized details, too, such as staging practice balls in perfectly formed pyramids, to keep a professional appearance. Not that

he has control over it, but members “love the fact that the driving range faces the beautiful desert mountains,” says O’Neill. That’s the type of backdrop where you can easily see the entire ball flight—as opposed to the bright desert sky at other local ranges where it’s tough to visually follow shots.

Then there’s the top-notch instruction program that features head pro Shaun Mingus and his first assistant. There are also two female course members who teach, as well. One is Kelly DeFeo, a PGA professional who also works at The National Golf Club of Kansas City’s

“This is a pretty cool place—it reminds me of the Chicagoland clubs I grew up around.”

—Erik Johnson

Deuce Course during the summer months, and Kathy Hite-James, who played on the LPGA Tour and won the 1981 Corning Classic. That alone depicts the strength of Avondale’s membership. The staff also uses a Callaway clubfitting system to generate gear sales from its improvement-minded patrons.

Being that Palm Desert is a Hollywood getaway, many celebrities also grace the fairways around town. Avondale is no exception. While the club is not pretentious in any way, it does attract frequent famous visitors, including five-time PGA Tour winner Lon Hinkle, two-time Super Bowl champion quarterback John Elway, actress Pamela Anderson, and several college football coaches, among others.

But the real star here remains the practice facility. And once you see first-hand the vibrancy of youth infiltrating the range, you get an appreciation of what’s to come in Palm Desert. ■

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Marquee Teachers Work to Grow Game



As a senior staff instructor with the Hank Haney Golf academies, A.J. Avoli helps turn newcomers into golfers.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HANK HANEY GOLF



Led by one of the biggest brand names in instruction, the crew at Hank Haney Golf pounds away at player-development programs with an eye to the sport's future.

BY EMILY KAY

The famous instructors burnish their reputations by mentoring serious golfers blessed with superior talent. On televised tournaments, you'll see them sharing nuggets of wisdom with pros from the various tours. We might guess that these name-brand teachers are blissfully ignorant of the industry's anxiety over flagging participation. But that's not the case. Butch Harmon rolls up his sleeves to help tomorrow's customers through The First Tee of Southern Nevada. David Leadbetter rounds out his academy's menu of offerings with a school for families and a "non-intensive" Beginner to Winner program, which welcomes raw newcomers.

Among all top-ranked instructors, Hank Haney may have player development most firmly embedded in the structure of his operation. "That's really our main focus," says Steve Johnson, managing partner of Hank Haney Golf. "Back in '91, when Hank and I started the company, we based it on Hank's belief that golf is a game for everybody. Hank is known for helping the top players, but his passion is for helping anyone wanting to learn the game. Our focus as a business is bringing new people to the game."

Haney Golf achieves that by offering reasonably priced start-up packages to newbies and lapsed golfers who left the game because it was too expensive, took too much time, and was just too difficult. For \$199, a would-be golfer gets seven hours of soup-to-nuts instruction in 1.5-hour weekly chunks, plus ownership of a pro-line 6-iron, wedge, and putter.

Beginner Series I includes work on the short game, chipping, putting, and the full swing. It also involves basics such as suggested golf attire, which for

a rookie may include tennis shoes, shorts, and a T-shirt. Because getting the ball off the ground is key to keeping any golfer coming back, instructors have perfected a sequence of lessons that's almost guaranteed to have a student knocking balls in the air before the end of the first session.

"Hank is known for helping top players but our focus as a business is bringing new people to the game."

— Steve Johnson

The approach must work, since 75 percent of beginners return for the five-week Series II lineup, according to Johnson. From there, golfers graduate to Beginner Series III and then transition into individual lessons. But how does the school attract folks who, as Johnson says, don't even know where to go to get started? While traditional radio and newspaper advertising got the academy up and running, most promos now run through the school's website. And while Haney does not really teach anymore, his 140-character Twitter tips are a huge hit with his more than 35,000 followers. Taking full advantage of technology, Haney now offers a free Hank Haney eCoach Mobile iPhone App that lets golfers send him video images of their swings—or even questions about how to begin thinking about holding a club—for free analyses they can view on their iPhones.

"In three days, we had 18,000 downloads of the app," says Johnson, who notes that the first assessment is complementary, with each subsequent video evaluation costing \$29.99. "Our goal is to make the process fun."

Taking the capabilities even further, Haney's coaches soon expect to offer live, 15-minute lessons over the

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Hank Haney headlined a two-day schedule of presentations by world-class instructors at the PGA Teaching & Coaching Summit at the Asia Golf Show in Guangzhou, China.

web. “I can stand in front of a video screen, analyze a swing, tape some [tips] for them, and send it back to

them,” Johnson says. Students would click on a YouTube-like link for the lesson.

“It will be inexpensive [\$29.99], quick, and easy, and people will use it,” says Johnson. “It doesn’t take the place of a hands-on lesson, but it’s a great supplement if you aren’t able to get hands-on instruction.”

With all the various ways that Haney Golf reaches new players, Johnson notes that nothing takes the place of a tried-and-true methodology aimed at new swingers. “A lot of people think that you kind of make it up when you’re teaching beginners,” Johnson says, “but they need a more defined plan than anyone because they don’t know anything.” ■

ACADEMY NEWS BRIEFS

■ **The ANNIKA Academy**, LPGA Hall of Famer Annika Sorenstam’s boutique golf instructional school, has hired Gary Lorfano as senior director of sales and marketing. Lorfano brings some 20 years of experience in the golf industry, including sales and marketing executive roles with the Arnold Palmer Golf Academy and Nicklaus/Flick Golf School.

■ Stevinson Ranch Golf Club kicked off the start of its **new Stevinson Ranch Learning Center and Golf Academy**, featuring instructors Dave Harmon and Larry Mathews, with a grand opening celebration. When construction is complete, the academy will anchor the

practice facility for the club, which is the first known golf course in the U.S. to run mostly on solar power.

The Learning Center will offer instruction, state-of-the-art swing-analysis equipment, golf fitness programs, short-game schools, and club-fitting. Golf World’s Readers Choice Awards rated the Stevinson, Calif.-based links-style track the fifth-best public course in America in 2010.

Harmon, a certified Titleist Performance Institute professional, has more than 30 years of experience teaching the swing and coaching golfers.

Mathews, who joined Stevinson in 2007, heads up the First Tee Program at

Stevinson Ranch, which began in April 2011. He specializes in club-fitting for Titleist and Henry-Griffitts.

■ New ownership of **SunRidge Canyon Golf Club** is moving quickly to add luster to the instruction scene at the Phoenix-area daily-fee course. As of mid-November, SunRidge Canyon Golf Club in Scottsdale became the site of a new Jim McLean Golf School—the only one in Arizona. The instruction facility is located on SunRidge Canyon’s practice facility with a permanent structure to be built in 2012 to house the school. McLean’s stable of instructors began accommodating students in November 2011 with frequent visits from McLean to help establish the operation.

■ **Andy Plummer** and **Mike Bennett** are at work on a new DVD to further showcase their “swing that is remaking golf.” Fans of the Stack & Tilt method can look for a new training video featuring seven PGA Tour pros who use the method, Plummer told us.

■ **Jeff Ritter Golf** has relocated to the Raven Golf Club Phoenix. In addition, a new partnership has been created with Tour Striker Golf Academies to deliver a series of innovative golf schools and group clinic programs.

■ **The Jane Frost Golf Academy**, headquartered at Sandwich Hollows Golf Course on Cape Cod, has added the Edel Golf Putter Fitting system and product to its program. Frost, who has been ranked in the top 10 of Golf Digest’s Top 50 Female Instructors, trained on the Edel system for several months last year before taking clients through the laser-based process to produce custom editions of the high-end Edel Golf putter.



■ Mike Bender, 2009 PGA of America National Teacher of the Year and one of *Golf Digest*’s Top 10 Greatest Teachers in America, has moved his **Mike Bender Golf Academy** to Magnolia Plantation Golf Club in Lake Mary, Fla. The move last fall was part of an overall upgrade that all academy facilities will undergo in the coming months.

“We have been fortunate to have had tremendous growth in our academy over the past few years including doubling our teaching staff and we needed to find a facility that has the ability to grow with our needs,” Bender said on his website. “Magnolia Plantation is the perfect fit for where we are heading.”



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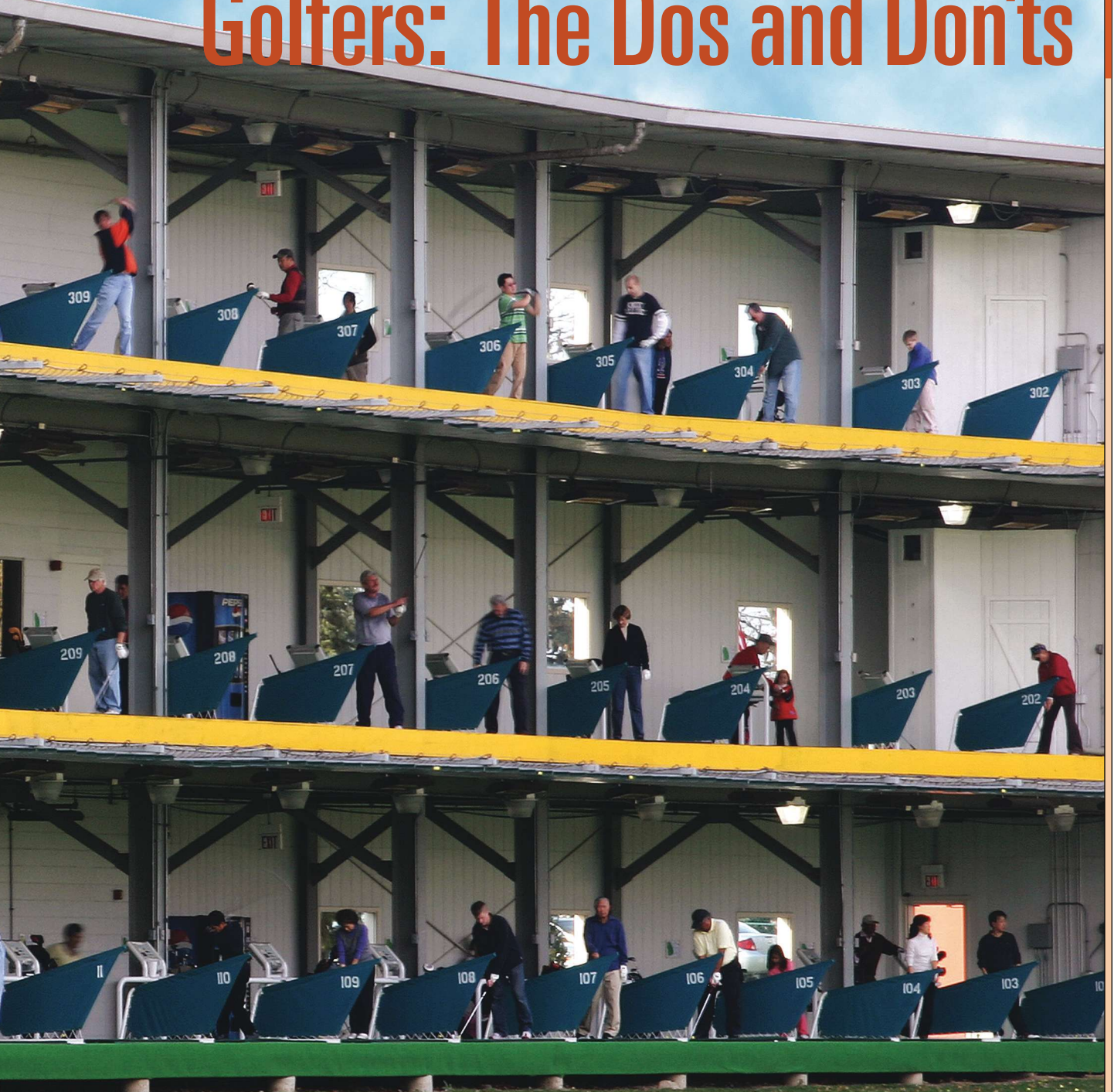
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Close Encounters with Practicing Golfers: The Dos and Don'ts



1 Walk the Line is more than just a Johnny Cash classic. For range personnel—especially instructors—it's an opportunity to add value and build your business, if done correctly.

BY JOHN TORSIELLO



Instructors at large, off-course ranges have more golfers to interact with but limited opportunities, especially when it's busy.

says the range is where “customer touches” can be plentiful. “When people come out to play 18 holes of golf, you probably come in contact with them once, maybe twice,” says Hogge. “On the range you get more chances to observe their experiences and they absolutely have more access to you as someone who could provide help.”

Some golfers are shy and private about their ball-hitting, perhaps even wishing there was a shower curtain they could pull to establish full privacy. Others aren't so much introverted as confused about when the teaching professional's meter starts running, or concerned that they will be pressured into taking a lesson. Those customers are the ones to be most sensitive toward. However, if the connection gets made correctly they can come out of their shells.

“You're always observing body language and very briefly and casually making eye contact,” says Hogge. “When I pass my regular students on the line, that's an easy call. I wait until they hit one solid and then say, ‘Good shot—are you hitting them all like that?’” In cases where the golfer says yes, Hogge will keep walking. “If the guy starts to give a longer, more detailed answer, that's the opening to offer some help,” he says.

Brian Panek, manager of golf and facilities for the Des Plaines Park District in Illinois, concurs, saying that it is important for range professionals to get to know their customers. “All people are different, some don't want to ever be bothered and the only interaction they want is when there is an issue with the automated tee system, while others love to converse with staff and talk about daily happenings and what's going on with them in their personal life.” The question of how to interact partly depends on the style of your facility. Golf Center Des Plaines is a “destination”-style range with multiple decks and all the amenities. Instruction service is provided by Golf Tec, which brings its own branded identity to the facility—one that knowledgeable golfers would naturally

Long before Ben Hogan spoke in mythical terms about “The Secret” of the swing, weekend players often imagined they were a tip or two away from ball-striking mastery. The golf instructor whose daily routine puts him in contact with the practicing public will naturally seem like a walking vault of information—including, perhaps, that one magical pointer.

Then again, some of the golfers in the hitting bays seem to set up a no-interaction zone around themselves. In today's environment, few if any professionals would consider “hustling lessons” in the old sense of the term—but do average golfers know this? And if so, how are many are quietly hoping for an interaction with a staff instructor?

“Many times a golfer nearby will overhear something we're telling one of our students, or see a student hitting the ball well, and start a conversation,” says Steve Ruehl, head golf professional at Columbia Super Range in Everett, Washington. He adds that this interaction very often results in the golfer signing up for a lesson or two. “Generally what draws attention is not specific instruction as much as it's the manner in which we work with our students.

“The range, not the golf course, is where you get multiple chances to interact with golfers.”

—Eric Hogge

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Eric Hogge, a PGA professional who owns a Louisville, Kentucky range and teaches in the winters at PGA Village in Port St. Lucie, Florida,

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Justin Bentley, who teaches at Golf Center Des Plaines, can use the Golftec brand as a conversation-starter.

feel positively toward.

George Connor, director of instruction at the Academy of Golf at Gillette Ridge Golf Club in Bloomfield, Connecticut, subtly works his magic on the tee line. When he has a few minutes in between lessons, he'll visit with someone he knows is hitting balls, usually a student. He strikes up a general conversation about how they are doing and what's new in their lives.

Connor uses a K-Vest (a 3D wireless biomechanic vest measuring rotation, pitch and tilt of the body and swing movement) during many of his lessons. When a student is training with it there is a lot of visual and audio feedback emanating from a nearby computer. As the student moves into the correct position the computer will play music. "I always make sure the speakers are turned up loud enough to get some neighbor's attention without making it too loud as to preclude productive practice," Connor says.

John Hafara, director of instruction at Waters Landing Golf Park in Germantown, Maryland, always has his cell phone handy when walking the practice line. "It's really easy to stop by someone who is hitting balls and without them even knowing take a picture of their swing and posture. I'll go up and ask them how it looks to them. I'll adjust their posture and stance a bit and have them hit balls. I've even sent photos to my customers when they leave so they can later see the difference." Hafara says that such interaction "quite often leads to a customer coming to me for help, in the form of a

lesson or two."

Employing a velvet glove approach works best when offering advice on the tee line, says Ruehl, "We are very careful with unsolicited advice. Often it is seen as intrusive and we don't want anyone to feel that they are being hustled. That's why it is important to be able to gauge when a person is receptive. If we begin to engage in conversation and they're not interested we know right away and will let them be." Done selectively and with tact, interacting with golfers on the practice line can prove beneficial for both customers and your business. ■

Tips When Walking the Practice Line

- Tread lightly. Pick your spots to begin a conversation with a range customer.
- Study body language and the swing mechanics of golfers as they hit balls.
- Never miss an opportunity to pat someone on the back, especially one of your students.
- Always engage your regular customers/students in conversation to find out what they are working on and what's bothering them about their games.
- Have a cell phone handy. This allows you to take a quick snapshot of a customer's setup or swing and use it to illustrate your comments—again, if the comfort level is established.
- Don't oversell yourself on the range. Let compassion and caring be your calling card.



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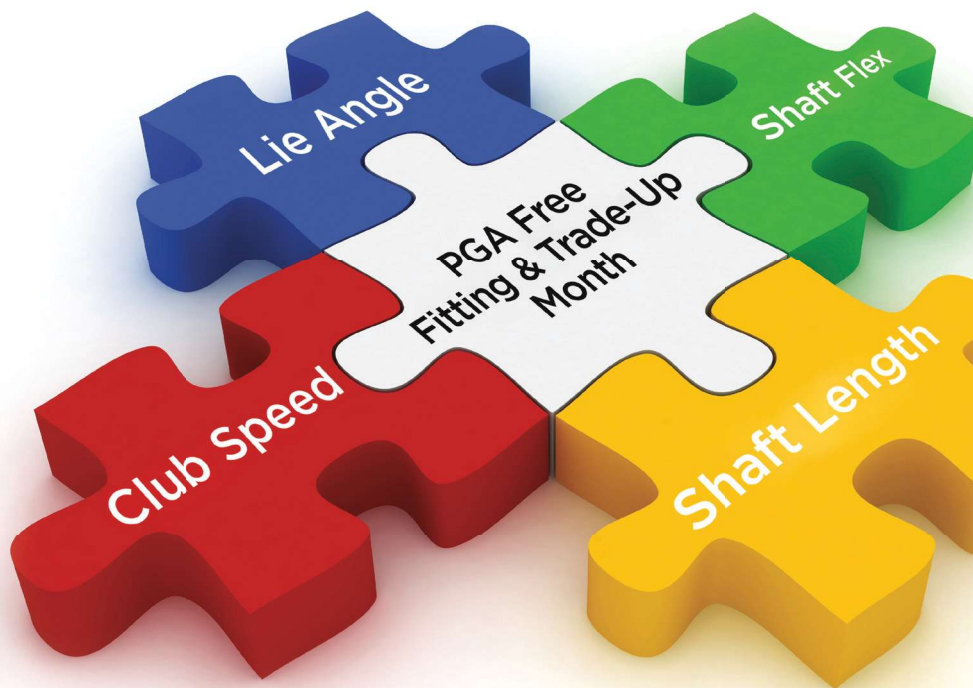


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Ted Lockie Invented the Modern Range Picker in His Spare Time

Some minds never rest from problem-solving and creative innovation. Ted Lockie, course designer and range gear inventor, brought a particular genius to his work **BY ED SHERMAN**

It was the late 1940s and post-war America was once again finding time again for recreation. On this particular afternoon, pace of play was slow at the Oak Park (Ill.) Country Club. Faced with a long wait on a par-3, Ted Lockie plunked down on a bench. As time passed, Lockie rolled his golf ball along the track formed by two adjacent slats in the bench seat. For most people, that would be idle amusement, but Lockie's brain seldom rested. "Ted always was tinkering," explains Bob Wittek, head of the range equipment company Wittek Golf Supply.

Paired with Lockie that day, Wittek watched his playing partner's ball roll back and forth along its track. A minute went by, without conversation. "Finally Ted looked up at me and said, 'I've got an idea,'" Wittek recalls. "He didn't say what it was, but he was definitely onto something."

Born in Riceville, Iowa in 1906, Lockie exemplified Midwestern ingenuity and practicality. Among his major contributions to our industry was his invention of the "Lockie Rubber Tired Range Picker," which revolutionized the way balls were collected on driving ranges. A skilled player with a natural eye for course-building, he is credited with designing or renovating more than 50 golf courses throughout the heartland. He also worked with Gary Adams and TaylorMade on the company's earliest metalwood designs.

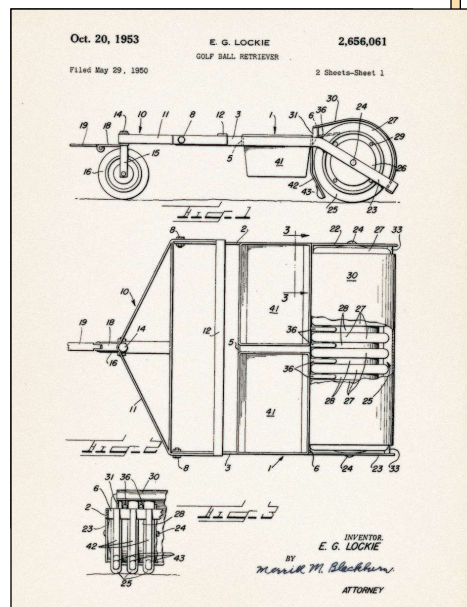
This year, the Iowa Golf Association recognized Lockie's work by making him the historical category selection for their 2012 Hall of Fame Class. People who knew the man say this honor is well deserved. They realized long ago that Lockie's mind and heart were free of the distractions that block creativity and breed unneces-

sary conflict.

"Everyone in golf loved and respected Ted," Wittek attests. "He was a real original, and he helped a lot of people."

Lockie devoted the early part of his life to farming. Not long after he turned 30 he partnered with the future U.S. Open champion Jack Fleck to build a driving range. According to Wittek, Lockie saw what every farmer with a country driving range had noticed—balls getting stuck in the heavy treads of his tractor tires. In that era, the tractor was driven across the range hauling a cage in which a co-worker stood with hand tools for collecting the balls. Lockie knew it was terribly inefficient and without doubt was working on a solution to the problem from the very day he first encountered it. Seeing the balls stuck in tire treads must have kindled an idea, and rolling his ball on that bench provided the spark.

Lockie patented his invention on Oct. 20, 1953. His description of it reads: "The balls will be picked by the resilient tire-like peripheries of the wheels and carried by the rotation of the wheels and deposited into a



The U.S. Patent Office gave Lockie design patent 2,656,061 in 1953 for his "Golf Ball Retriever," described as a "sturdy, simple machine" in the patent abstract.

container carried by the machine to receive the balls." To this day, golf newcomers who get a close look at the picker sweeping by are forgiven for pausing to admire the elegance of its functionality.

"It was an unbelievable invention," Wittek says flatly.

Lockie eventually sold the patent to Wittek's father, Klem, with whom he had a long, close friendship. The invention was renamed the "Wittek Picker." Lockie, though, hardly stopped there. A strong player, he began to design and renovate golf courses through the Midwest. Lockie helped course owner Greg Mason build his first layout, Airport National in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Looking back, Mason was struck by how Lockie's mind worked.

"He could take something so complicated and make it simple," Mason says. "He was one of those guys who if you gave him an idea, you could see the wheels spinning. Then a month later, he'd give you something." In the case of his picker design, Ted Lockie came up with something that changed an industry. ■



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