



# GRAAA

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

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

- Q&A with Bob Sowards: When his last student leaves the range, Bob Sowards gets busy tuning up a first-class golf swing – his own.
- Video File: Susan Roll discusses the benefits and tools of the custom fitter, including new options for designing ball flight.
- Range Profile: Wolfdancer Practice Complex outside Austin is expansive, innovative and apparently habit-forming.
- Product Lines: Teeing up each ball interrupts the process of repeating a sound swing. Solving this problem was the mission of Power Tee, whose founder Martin Wyeth tells a good tale of his company's rise.
- Range Renovation: This rejuvenated Florida award-winner now has a namesake Tom Fazio Short Game Center, where golfers enjoy the great architect's signature scoring-shot complex.

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 21, No. 4  
April 2013

**P R A C T I C E • T E A C H I N G • F I T T I N G • M A R K E T I N G**

## Short-Game Showcase

**Tom Fazio Sculpts a Gem at Emerald Dunes**

### Also in this issue:

- Q&A with a Top Player-Teacher
- Gilchrist Academy: Coach's Vision
- Customized Golf Schools in Austin
- The Power Tee Success Story





# Page 30 Power of the Tee





# Page 38 **Finely Crafted Emerald**





20



24



30



34

# Golf Range

MAGAZINE

Volume 21, Number 4



April 2013

## Features

### 20 Along with Tournament Titles, He's Got a Full Teaching Book

When his last student leaves the range, Bob Sowards gets busy tuning up a first-class golf swing—his own. Here's how Sowards approaches the twin challenges of teaching and competing. **Interview by Steve Pike**

### 24 Wolfdancer Practice Complex Stands among the Tops in Texas

The Lost Pines practice haven alongside the award-winning Wolfdancer course outside Austin is expansive, innovative and apparently habit-forming.

**By Scott Kramer**

### 30 Putting Range Technology at the Golfer's Feet

Teeing up each ball interrupts the process of repeating a sound swing. Solving this problem was the mission of Power Tee, whose founder Martin Wyeth tells a good tale of his company's rise.

### 34 An Academy Where Practice Truly Meets Play

Gary Gilchrist pictured his central Florida golf academy as a place where the line between learning and take-it-low performance would be thin or perhaps totally erased.

**By Anthony Pioppi**

### 38 Learning Center Gets VIP Treatment in Emerald Dunes Upgrade

This rejuvenated Florida award-winner now has a namesake Tom Fazio Short Game Center, where golfers enjoy the great architect's signature scoring-shot complex.

**By Scott Kramer**

## Departments

### 2 Teeing Off

### 8 From the CEO: Golfers Can Find Respite at the Range

### 10 Weather Effect: Courtesy of Pellucid's golf-focused research, a map displaying and measuring recent climate conditions.

### 12 Video File: Susan Roll of Carlsbad Golf Center in Southern California discusses the benefits and tools of the custom fitter, including new options for designing ball flight.

### 14 Golf Range News

### 16 Traffic Builders: Some range revenue-builders are direct and in-your-face—others use the psychology of spend-more-to-save-more as a way to coax higher sales.

### 46 GRAA Preferred Vendors

#### GRAA Advisory Board:

David Beltre, Chelsea Piers; Mark Caster, PGA, Top Golf; Darrell Crall, PGA of America; Patrick Eggeling, PGA, Old Oaks Country Club; Bruce Fleming, Makefield Highlands Golf Club; Bruce Gerlander, PGA; Lou Guzzi, PGA, Lou Guzzi Golf Academy; Katherine Jemsek, Jemsek Golf; Mike Malaska, PGA, Superstition Mountain Golf & Country Club; Tony Martinez, PGA, Keeton Park Golf Course; Greg Mason, PGA, Legend Trail Golf Club; Del Ratcliffe, PGA, Sunset Hills Golf Course; Susan Roll, PGA, Carlsbad Golf Center; Mike Woods, PGA, Haggin Oaks Golf Complex.

#### 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; **Executive Vice President:** 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; **Advertising Production Manager:** Julie Yuen; **Internet Manager:** Matt Frey, PGA; **Operations:** Tom Gauss, **PGA Relationship Manager, Ambassador Program:** 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

**Allied Association:**  PGA

# IMPROVE YOUR GAME ONE DEGREE AT A TIME

**Mitchell**  
GOLF EQUIPMENT COMPANY

**SUPERIOR CLAMPING**  
For Precision Bending

**PRECISE READINGS**  
Within 1/4-Degree

**DUAL SLIDING GAUGES**  
Right & Left-Hand Ready

**ADJUSTABLE FACE FIXTURE**  
90° Shaft Plane At All Times

**UNMATCHED DESIGN**  
Built To Stand The Test Of Time

**STEELCLUB**  
SIGNATURE  
**ANGLE MACHINE**  
Scan To See Product Video



Mitchell® Machines #1 On Tour Worldwide

800-437-1314 | MitchellGolf.com

Mitchell® Golf is your complete source for club repair supplies, tools and training.

**10% OFF**

Steelclub Machines Code: **APR13**

Restrictions apply.



# CREATE LOYALTY



## DRIVE More Traffic to Your BUSINESS!

Acquire, Nurture  
Retain, Grow

Loyalty-Rewards Program +  
Intuitive, Automatic  
Email Campaigns

**SandDollar**  
marketing solutions

www.sand-dollars.com  
610-334-4103

## Golfers Can Find Respite at the Range

There's no doubt we live in a hectic age, where time is at a premium and everyone's perpetually on the go. As a society, we work long hours and weekends, check voicemails and send text messages between family obligations, and generally find ourselves wishing we had an extra few hours in each day.

Maybe this seems like an apt description of the customers on your range, especially those squeezing in a quick bucket during lunch hours or on the way home from work. But I think it's important to remember that in today's fast-paced world, golf is one of the activities people often like to enjoy at a more leisurely pace. And for many of your customers, the range is an oasis from deadlines and meetings.

That's exactly the sort of place profiled in this month's Academy Outlook story (*page 34*), which focuses on the Gary Gilchrist Golf Academy near Orlando, Fla. The expansive range and practice facility were designed by architect Tim Liddy, who calls it "one of those places where you can spend all day."

The design of the academy's practice area is centered around what were three par-4 holes that were part of a golf course in the facility's former life. Players can hit to a number of target greens from either end of the range or from a number of different lies around the landing area to create an endless variety of on-course situations.

The Gary Gilchrist Golf Academy range is unique, but I'm seeing a number of other facilities making their ranges a comfortable place for golfers to spend extended periods of time. Maybe they're serious golfers who want to practice every facet of their game for an hour or two in lieu of a four-hour round of golf. And maybe they're casual players who like the idea of spending an hour hitting balls and relaxing with their friends and families – for those customers, I know of ranges that have installed comfortable seating and offer bar service during evening hours.

To be sure, a good number of your customers are still likely to be fitting in their range time between other items on a long to-do list. But be aware that some new ranges are being built with flexibility – and extended stays – in mind, and that approach may be appealing to more golfers than you might think.

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

We specialize in  
Steel Pole Engineering,  
Design and Manufacturing:  
Over 1000 Golf Netting  
Systems in North America

**Coastal Steel Poles feature  
STRYK 5388 FACS®  
Flexible Anti-Corrosion System**

- Anti-corrosion coating system used on Alaskan Pipeline
- No fungal growth in humidity or water-immersed environments
- Provides resistance to damaging effects of UV radiation and air pollutants
- Will not crack in extreme weather conditions or pole movement caused by high winds
- Forms a solid coating to prevent corrosion or oxidation
- Prevents corrosion even when scratched or damaged
- Resistance to acidic or caustic compounds that accelerate coating failure
- Used in highest netting system in North America - 180 ft.
- Not one Coastal Steel Pole has ever failed
- Licensed engineering in all 50 states and Canadian Provinces



*The Undisputed Industry Leader*

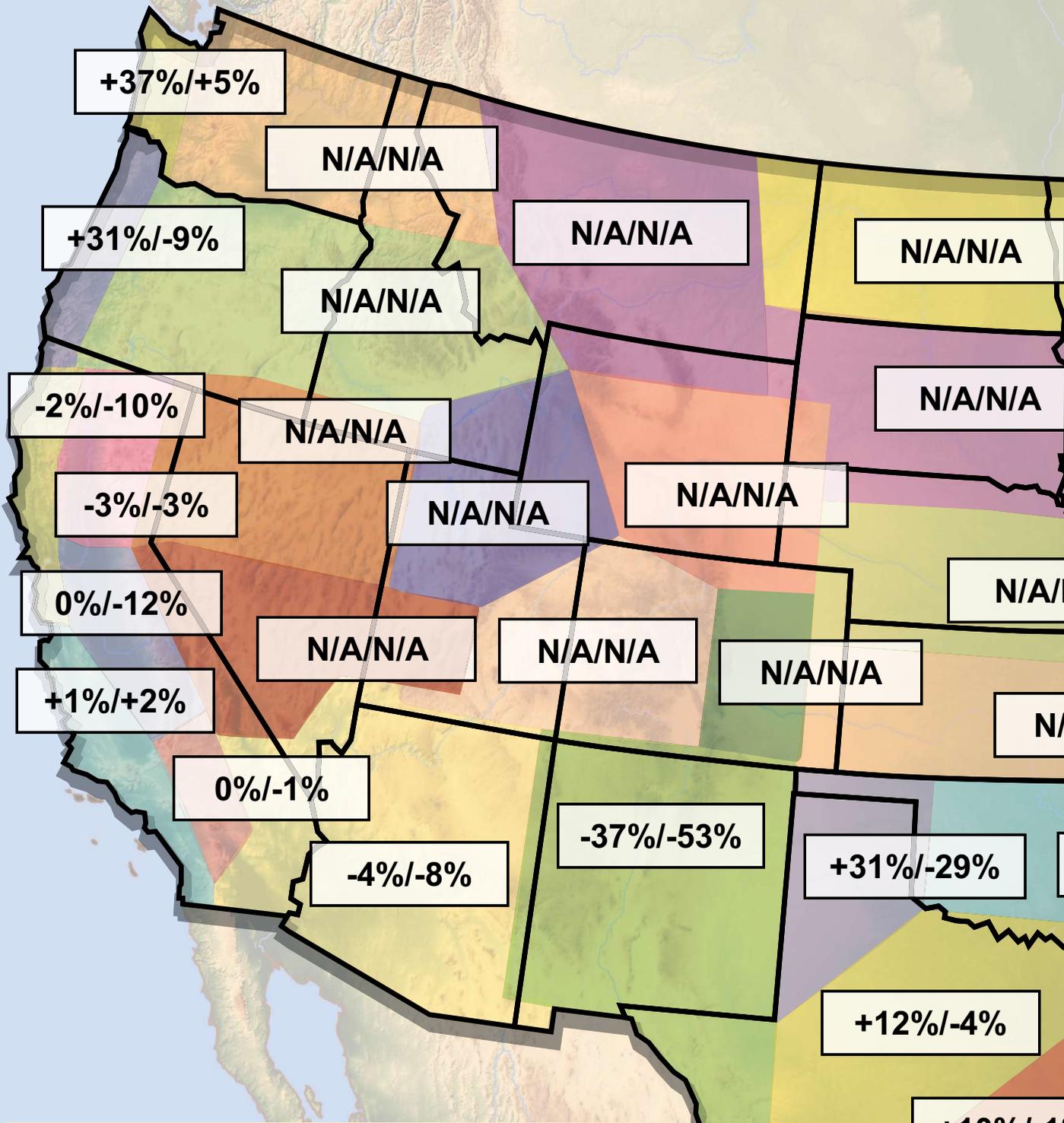
**www.CoastalNetting.com**  
**800-726-3354**

Coastal Netting Systems • P.O. Box 1946, Bakersfield, CA 93303

Engineered Netting Systems • Steel Pole Manufacturers

*Field Office Locations*

Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Maryland,  
Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, Nevada, New York,  
Rhode Island, Texas, Vancouver-BC Canada



### WEATHER IMPACT ANALYSIS

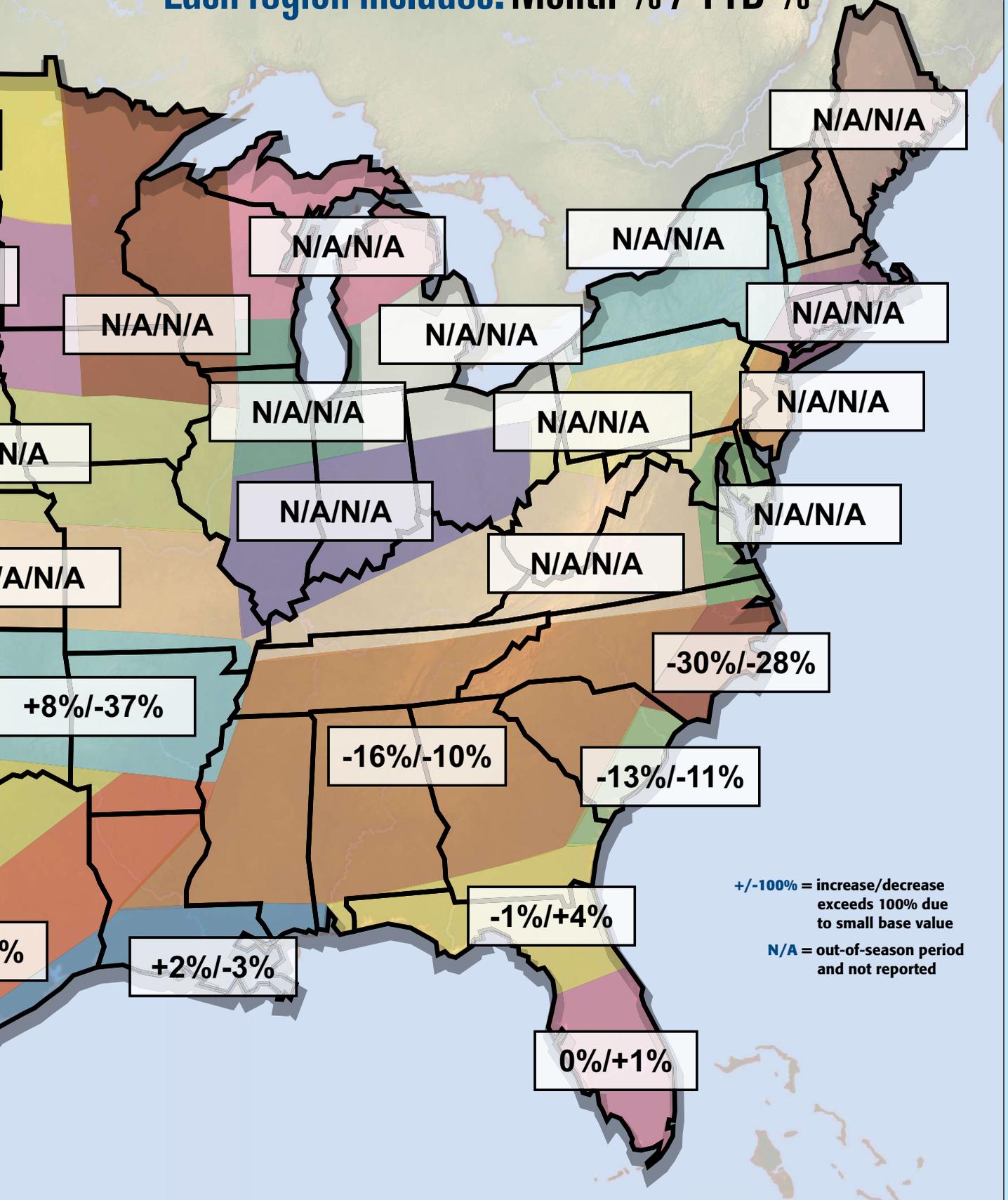
In cooperation with Pellucid Corp, a leading industry insight and information provider, each month *Golf Range Magazine* will present research which demonstrates how the weather has impacted the number of "Golf Playable Hours" in multiple regions of the country. While ranges may be somewhat less influenced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

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

For more information about Pellucid Corp and how the data was compiled, visit [Pellucidcorp.com](http://Pellucidcorp.com).

# Golf Playable Hours: February

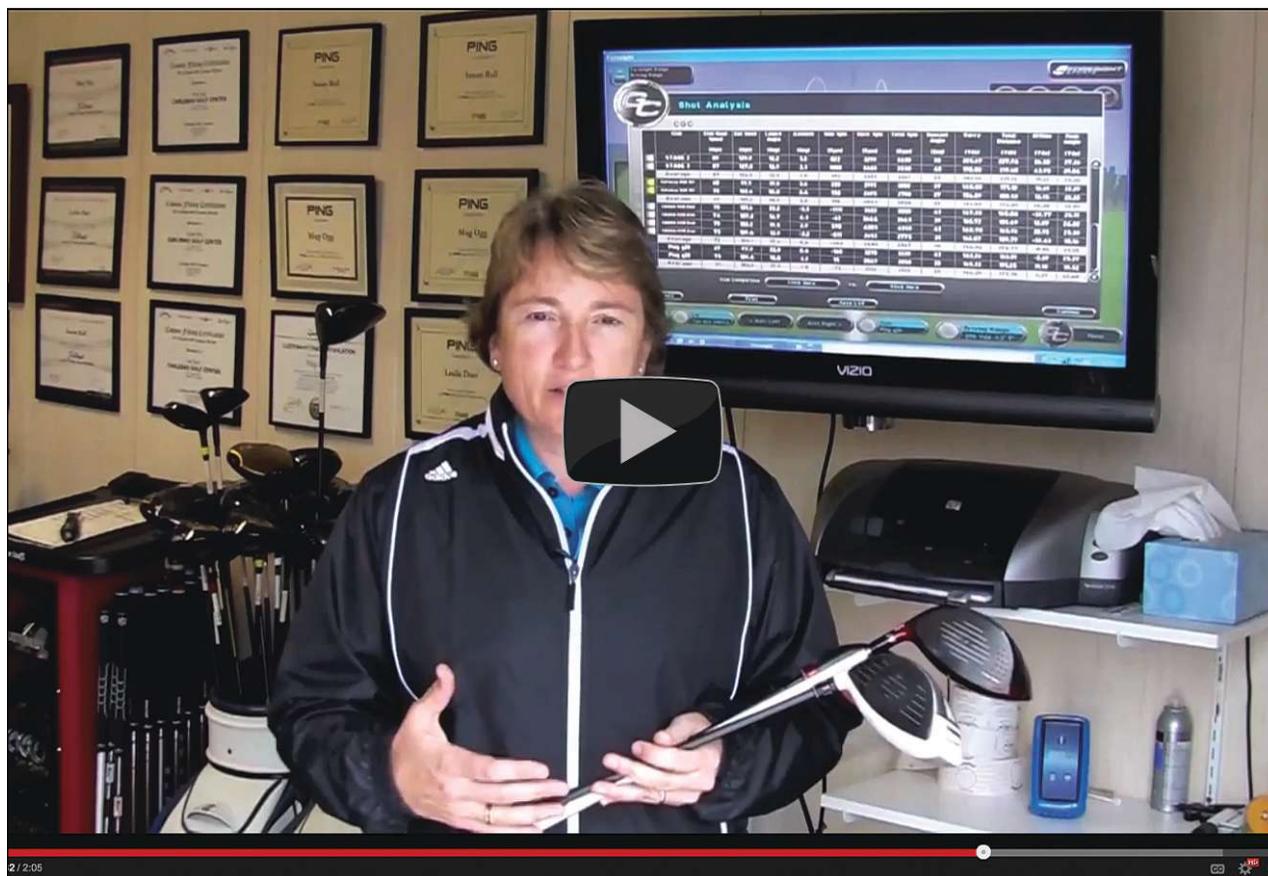
Each region includes: Month % / YTD %



# Clubfitting Tech and Ball-Flight Options

Susan Roll of Carlsbad Golf Center in Southern California never takes her eye off the clubfitting market – she’s on camera here discussing the advanced benefits and tools of the custom fitter

One criticism of the old-time golf instructor is that he could only “teach his own swing.” Faced with a student who couldn’t relate to that style, this teaching professional would be stymied. In the early days of on-site clubfitting, a similar snag sometimes occurred. Changing clubs specs so as to produce a certain ball flight, the clubfitter/teacher sometimes forgot that his or her own preferred trajectory might not be what the player wanted to see. Susan Roll, in this upbeat and inspiring video message, touches on that point. “With the technology we have today, we can produce some really interesting ball flights,” says Roll. In other words, it’s possible to get the golfer making very solid, consistent swings with the driver, fairway woods and hybrids then actually choosing among various flavors, so to speak. That’s where it does, indeed, get interesting—for both the professional and the player. ■





## More than **300** range owners have found a way to drive more range revenue despite the tough economy.

These are not easy times for anyone. Range owners and managers have to watch every penny. But some range operators have found a way to retain and attract more customers — and get them to spend more time and money at their driving ranges.

Best of all, they've upgraded their ranges with no capital investment and minimal risk.

Does it sound too good to be true? Well, it is true, and we've got the customers to prove it. We can show you why golfers are driving **5 million balls a day** off Power Tee® automatic tee systems in the US, Canada and Europe, and why Power Tee systems are installed in more than half of all commercial driving ranges in the UK.

We'll show you how our no-risk **free trial** and **unique leasing program** can lead to permanent increases in range revenues, customer satisfaction and loyalty.

*To find out how, call Martin today at 1-877-POWERT1 (1-877-769-3781) or visit [www.powertee.com](http://www.powertee.com).*



**PGA**  
Official Supplier  
UK & Europe



**Power Tee**®  
The Automatic Choice

*World Leader in Range Automation*

# A Wide Range of News

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

With April upon us and the season's final programming decisions needing to be made, a reminder is in order about Bring Your Kids to the Range Month, happening July 1–31. This calendar item is a spur to any and all public-access practice facilities to put some energy into the family-visit



category. Simple tactics are likely the most valuable. For example, last summer during BYKTR Month, **Parkland (Fla.) Golf & Country Club** put out a rousing invitation to families via Facebook and the semi-private club's newsletter. The golf staff backed that invitation up with a series of promotions. There were two entire weeks of free golf and range use for juniors – one of those segmented to junior girls only. Likewise there was free mid-week clinic for all juniors and then a free Saturday clinic just for junior girls. In promotional efforts like these, the power of suggestion is there to be leveraged.... Seadrill Limited, a leading offshore deepwater drilling company, is giving new meaning to the phrase "island green." For the purpose of entertainment and practice, the company is installing **XGOLF Simulators**, a technologically-advanced golf simulator, clubfitting and instructional system, for use on eight drillships. The ships will be positioned in various locations worldwide, including the United States, Norway, West Africa and elsewhere. XGOLF already has been installed on several of the drillships, with additional installations being scheduled.... To stick with the ocean theme, **the Four Seasons Resort Seychelles** – located on a small island of the same name north of Madagascar—recently put the Indian Ocean into service as the landing area for its driving range. Mind you, the Seychelles isn't somewhere that typically features on golfers' radar screens. Its entire golf complement consists of one nine-hole on the mainland of Mahé. Positioning the destination's oceanfront setting and its islands' limited landmass as a selling point, the Four Seasons Resort Seychelles has launched a Sunset Golf experience that turns the surrounding ocean waters



The 2013 Arnold Palmer Invitational will be remembered as the event that capped off Tiger Woods' 877-day journey back to the top spot in the World Golf Rankings. However, there were a couple of very memorable shots from other players in the field which were worthy of a "King's" applause. **These are the type of shots you CANNOT practice on the range.** The Golf Range Association of America does not recommend attempting to replicate this shot. I wonder, if Sergio had fallen from the tree would "all the King's men" been able to put him back together again?

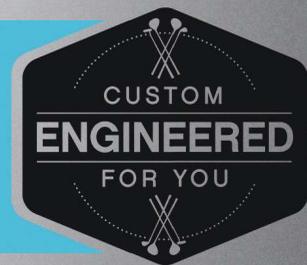
into a landing area.... If you're the staff equipment buff at your facility, you may already know the popular blog site **GolfWRX.com**. Each week, the site takes you inside the ropes and on the range for that week's PGA Tour stop—providing site visitors with a close-up look at exactly what clubs are in the bags of the world's



top players.... Wisconsin winters are not for the faint at heart, thus it was surprising to learn that Milwaukee's first indoor golf practice facility just opened its doors earlier this year. However, the facility may not be standing for long. Currently, the 6,000-square-foot facility known as **Fore! Milwaukee** is located in Milwaukee's Historic Third Ward and operated by PGA Professional Tim Grogan – golf instructor at the nearby Missing Links Golf Course and former head coach of the Marquette University men's golf team. It includes a driving range with eight hitting bays, each within a netted area, and a putting green.

The facility also includes a retail department. Unfortunately, General Capital, the investment firm that owns the structure, plans to begin demolishing the building later this year to develop a six-story apartment building for students at the nearby Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design. Until then, Grogan plans to operate Fore Milwaukee at the downtown spot before finding another location. He wants to stay in or near the Third Ward, saying the facility is already drawing a lot of interest from golfers who live in the neighborhood... After 19 years, PGA Professional David Graf left his role as head professional at the prestigious Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio, to take on a new venture last fall. Along with Jim McGurk, Graf is the co-owner of **The Golf Performance Institute of Toledo**, known as The Golf PIT. Taking over the former Maumee SportsMall Driving Range, Graf and McGurk remodeled, updated and made improvements to what was already one of the area's best practice facilities with the goal of making The Golf PIT the area's go-to spot for everything golf. The Golf PIT practice facility includes a 20-acre driving range with 52 hitting stations, 23 heated stalls, two indoor teaching bays, 200 yards of grass teeing area, a short game facility, putting green and executive golf course. ■

**LONG IS GOOD.  
LONG AND CONSISTENT IS BETTER.**



RELIABILITY  
FROM LONG  
RANGE

**G25™  
HYBRID**

TRADITIONALLY  
SHAPED WITH  
PROGRESSIVE CG  
LOCATIONS. THEY  
LAUNCH HIGH, FLY  
FAR AND LAND SOFT.



**ENGINEERED FOR  
GAME ENJOYMENT**

**ALL-AROUND  
PERFORMANCE**



PROGRESSIVE  
SOLE WIDTHS  
AND THINNER  
TOP LINES  
DELIVER  
VERSATILITY  
AND APPEAL  
TO GOLFERS OF  
ALL ABILITIES.

**DISTANCE + FORGIVENESS + FEEL**

THE CUSTOM TUNING PORT  
(CTP) IS INTEGRATED INTO  
THE SOLE TO RAISE THE  
MOI FOR MORE DISTANCE  
AND FORGIVENESS.



Distance isn't the only thing G25™ irons will add to your game. You'll also get consistency and control. Every 17-4 stainless steel head has been custom engineered with a sleek, versatile design that's packed with maximum forgiveness. To get distance you can count on, visit a PING® Fitting Specialist or ping.com.

©2013 PING P.O. Box 82000 Phoenix, AZ 85071 MG0413

**PING**  
PLAY YOUR BEST™

# Read Signs, Buy Cards, Practice and Improve

Some range revenue-builders are direct and in-your-face—others use the psychology of spend-more-to-save-more as a way to coax higher sales.

BY TONY STARKS

A couple of East Coast teaching professionals have used very different tactics for increasing range revenues at their respective facilities. In one instance, simple but effective signage has resulted in more lessons and more golfer traffic on the range. In another, implementing a unique frequent-range-user card has produced a similar bump in traffic, meanwhile creating a new revenue stream and boosting profits.

## The Power of Signs

Do you believe in signs? Not black cats crossing your path and similar omens, but real signs—the kind that deliver a message and get people to stop, read and think a moment. PGA Teaching Professional Frank O’Connell definitely believes in signs, having used them as tools to grow his teaching business.

O’Connell places various signs around the driving range and short-game practice area at the Championship Course at Incline Village (Nev.), where he teaches during the summer months. The signs display various golf tips, addressing things like putting, bunker play and successful practice habits. O’Connell adds his contact information at the bottom of each posted message so that golfers can reach out to him if they’re interested in formal instruction.

According to O’Connell, the signs have proven highly successful in drumming up short game lessons. “I’ll place signs near the practice greens with short tips about putting, such as ball position and weight distribution,” describes O’Connell. “People will try out these tips, see how well they work and then call me up for a more in-depth lesson.”

The signs have been such a successful tactic that O’Connell is considering adding a tip jar next to them this upcoming season, so golfers can show their gratitude by throwing a few

bucks his way. “Every season I have 20-30 people come to me and say how much the small tip helped them, so I thought a tip jar would provide another way for them to show their appreciation,” he reasons.

O’Connell’s teaching philosophy, as reflected by his signs, places strong emphasis on the short game. As he



## How to Practice

To improve your game you must do the following:

- \* Make a commitment to do what is necessary to become better
- \* Be willing to make changes in every area of your game
- \* Schedule time to practice and play
- \* Be realistic about how long it will take you to achieve lasting improvement
- \* Believe in the instruction provided by your teaching professional



INCLINE  
VILLAGE

Frank O’Connell  
PGA Certified Instructor  
775-832-1146

## How to Practice

### Guidelines for Proper Range Practice

- \* Importance of ball position
- \* Never make a swing unless you are aiming at a specific target
- \* Periodically change your target
- \* Only have one swing thought with each swing
- \* Do not stay on the range any longer than you can stay focused
- \* Becoming a Master at the Basics
- \* The 80/20 Rule
- \* Odd/Even
- \* How to Start Your Practice



INCLINE  
VILLAGE

Frank O’Connell  
PGA Certified Instructor  
775-832-1146

The Original Tour Towel  
by XSITE GOLF

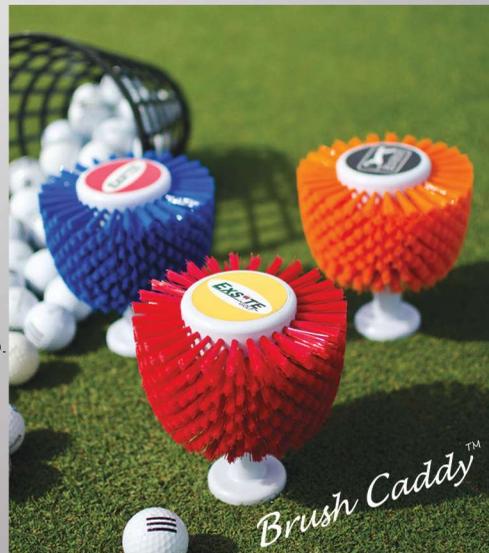
Clean Up Your Game!

- Only Towel that conforms to your shoulder
- Personal ID tag if lost or found
- Light Weight / Super Absorbent
- Additional cushioning when carrying your bag
- 4 different Microfiber Golf Towels
- Also The Ace Tennis Towel



The **Brush Caddy™** is the only stand alone club cleaning device that allows a player to clean their clubface after each shot while warming up at the practice facility. A unique amenity for any Driving Range or Country Club that wants to offer something different to the membership. This one of a kind brush is also portable so a player can take it with them to the chipping area, bunker, or to the next course their going to play. The **Brush Caddy™** can be customized for any event, school, or charity and can also be used as a gift for a promotional drive, closest to the pin contest or as a gift bag item.

What makes your facility stand out from the rest?



So... Clean up **your** game! Let your clientele try the **Brush Caddy™** just one time, you will find that your service level will be second to none.

**XSITE**  
GOLF

To order visit [www.exsitegolf.com](http://www.exsitegolf.com)  
Call for wholesale pricing 980-722-4282

**XSITE**  
GOLF

Products Endorsed by: John Huh (PGA 2012 Rookie of the Year), Azahara Munoz (LPGA Touring Professional) and Miguel Rivera (8 Yr. PGA TOUR Caddy)

Designed in the USA  Patented



With automated range cards, purchasing more buckets—for yourself or for guests—means paying a lower per-bucket price.

rightly points out, most amateurs spend the majority of their practice time working on the full swing and then wondering why they can't score. The Championship Course at Incline Village provides an extensive short-game area with two practice bunkers and 6,200-square feet of putting green—which has provided a great platform for O'Connell to help his students improve.

Getting out among the people is another practice that has helped O'Connell grow his business over this past year. Instead of giving his lessons on the distant back end of the range, as most teaching professionals do, he reserves the first three hitting bays located nearest to the ball dispensing machine. Owing to this strategy, every person who hits balls on that range must walk directly by O'Connell as he conducts his lessons, which gives him greater exposure.

"People will pause a few seconds and listen in to the lesson I'm giving and kind of get a preview of my teaching style," he says. "Yes, occasionally they'll interrupt the lesson but that's when I nicely tell them that I'm busy at the moment and then hand them my card. I let them know that I'll be glad to answer their questions if they'd like to call or email me later on. I've attracted a lot of business that way." The numbers confirm that statement, as these

strategies have resulted in a 25 percent increase in lesson revenue for O'Connell in 2012 as compared to the previous year.

#### **Range Card Yields High Returns at Makefield Highlands**

It's been a year since Makefield Highlands Golf Club in Yardley, Pa., implemented a new frequent-range-user card, and the resulting traffic has exceeded the expectations of teaching

---

**"When golfers use the range more, they also tend to play more and spend more."**

**—Bruce Fleming**

---

professional Bruce Fleming. Since April of 2012, the facility has sold nearly 3,000 frequent user cards—fueling approximately \$175,000 in range revenue in 2012 alone.

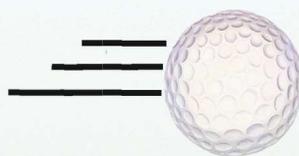
The card offered at Makefield is slightly different from the traditional range pass, where golfers pay an upfront fee for unlimited buckets. Instead, this card allows golfers to purchase buckets of balls in bulk in order

to receive deeper discounts.

"A standard basket of balls at Makefield Highlands costs \$5, but with the frequent user card, customers can get them for as low as half price, depending on the number pre-purchased," says Fleming. "Once the card is purchased, the golfer takes their card to the range and swipes it, similar to a credit card, and a bucket is subtracted from the golfer's balance." This streamlined procedure allows the customer access to the driving range without having to come into the golf shop to purchase range balls every time they visit, until it's time to recharge the card. Also, there is no expiration, so customers don't have to use the buckets within a specific time frame.

According to Fleming, the system was very easy to set up, as the company that provided the hardware also uploaded the software package to their computer systems and had everything up and running in about an hour. There have also been tremendous benefits in ancillary spending as result of the range card. "When golfers use the range more, they want to play golf more and tend to spend more on merchandise as well as frequenting our food & beverage department," describes Fleming. "As far as we're concerned here at Makefield Highlands, this is one of the best ways to drive business to our range." ■

# Easy Picker Golf Products



# RANGE-EXPRESS

## Wireless Ball Dispenser System

Easy Picker Golf's latest innovation in wireless technology, **Range-Express** Software with real-time access to all accounts and compatibility with all POS computer systems.

- Completely Wireless and Real-Time – No need to manually transfer data from dispenser to main computer as with other ball dispenser management systems.
- Accountability – Tracks tokens, cash, pin numbers, media cards and credit cards.



Pro Shop Computer



New!  
Easier to  
Read  
Display

## Go Wireless! with **Range-Express**

*Sun City Grand purchased the Range-Express System to replace an older, out of date computerized system that was failing and causing us much heartache. After two years of research we switched over to Range-Express which allows us to easily monitor sales and dispenser events/activities at the click of a button from any computer on our network. I would recommend Range-Express for any course that is looking for a computerized range system.*

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Hochman, PGA, GCSAA

Director of Golf Operations

Sun City Grand Surprise, Arizona

Sales 800.641.4653 | Fax 239.369.1579

[www.easypicker.com](http://www.easypicker.com)

Email: [salesdept@easypicker.com](mailto:salesdept@easypicker.com)



Media Cards

# Along with Tournament Titles, He's Got a Full Teaching Book

When his last student leaves the range, Bob Sowards gets busy tuning up a first-class golf swing – his own. Here's how Sowards approaches the twin challenges of teaching and competing.

INTERVIEW BY STEVE PIKE



Bob Sowards at Quail Hollow C.C., winning the 2010 Ohio Open.

**T**he *New York Times* headline on the Friday of PGA Championship week in 2011 had a ring to it: “Teaching Pro Shoots 69 in First Round.” Underneath it ran a fairly lengthy story describing the play of Bob Sowards at the Atlanta Athletic Club. Among PGA Professionals who work as full-time instructors, Sowards, 44, is one of the truly excellent players. His students at the private New Albany Country Club in Ohio appreciate both talents, noticing how one seems to flow into the other.

This past winter, Sowards pulled off an impressive trifecta, becoming the first man to win three titles on the PGA Winter Championships season. He won the 50th PGA Match Play Championship, the PGA Senior-Junior Championship (with Rick Schuller of Chester, Va.) and the PGA Stroke Play Championship. It makes sense that

even a brief stint on the PGA Tour – Sowards played 22 big-tour events in 2008 and earned \$264,000, then played a full Web.com season in '09 – provides vital experience when competing elsewhere. But winning golf tournaments is never an easy trick. “The past couple of years I’ve played well,” says Sowards. “I changed out

my driver and got one that really fits me. I found I could swing hard at it knowing it wasn’t going out of the fairway. That added a whole new dimension to my game.”

As a teaching professional, that’s what Sowards seeks to accomplish for students – bringing new dimensions to their games physically and mentally. *Golf Range Magazine* wanted to ask Sowards about walking the line between the player and teacher mindsets, and what it means for his everyday work with amateur golfers.

**GRM:** One great benefit of playing at a high level is the company you keep, and what you can learn by observation. Would you agree?

**Sowards:** Oh sure. I’ve observed and

**“Very cool way to practice!”**

*-David Phillips*



## **KNOW YOUR DISTANCE.**

Ernest Sports' portable launch monitor is launch monitor technology for any golfer. Take the guesswork out of club selection, improve your game and gain an advantage on the course. The FREE smartphone app provides abundant data points to enhance your practice sessions. No wonder it was voted "Best New Product" of the Year at the PGA Show - and has received praise by top professionals.

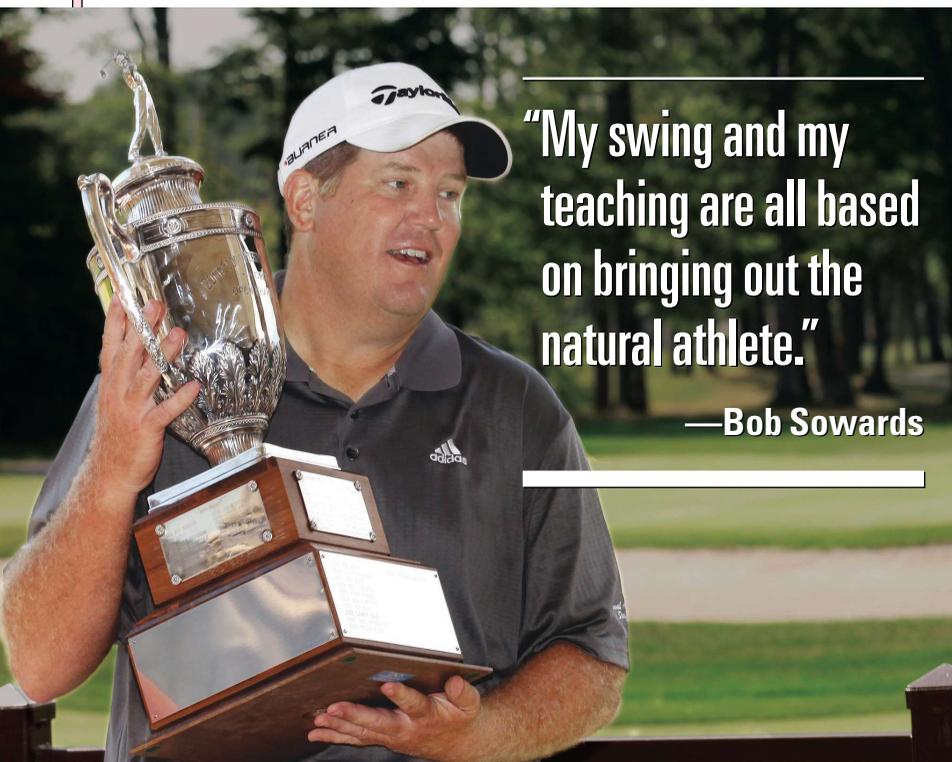
**Small size. Small price. \$249.<sup>99</sup>**

# **ES12**

PORTABLE LAUNCH MONITOR

[ErnestSports.com](http://ErnestSports.com)

**855.354.4653**



**“My swing and my teaching are all based on bringing out the natural athlete.”**

**—Bob Sowards**

played with many of the best in the world, players from my own generation and those who came before – all the way to Jack Nicklaus and Tom Watson. I have picked their brains and learned a lot about how they think on the golf course.

**GRM:** Is that a core skill you are teaching every day – how to think on the golf course?

**Sowards:** It absolutely is. I try to make that a priority in my work with good junior players. I want to get them on the course as much as possible and teach them how great players think. It’s amazing how much the mental game is a part of it. With juniors who keep improving, once we reach a certain point in their swing, the game becomes 90 percent mental and psychological. Most juniors succeed on raw talent – they don’t actually know how to play golf.

**GRM:** Do you ever worry that you will drift into the habit of simply teaching your own swing?

**Sowards:** I don’t. There are players I work with who have the same type of swing faults I have, which might make me an appropriate teacher for them. But I want to pattern myself as more of a Butch Harmon guy. By that I mean

I focus on teaching to the golfer’s strength and improving their weaknesses as opposed to trying to build a model swing.

**GRM:** How can a golf instructor avoid the pitfall of teaching their own swing to students?

**Sowards:** Everybody is different. I’ve worked with a lot of instructors who meet the student for the first time and start teaching right off the bat. They start the process without a plan, which is not ideal. I begin the relationship with an assessment of a new student, asking what their goals are. For example, I play a cut; most of the people I teach want to play draws, so it’s a little different move. I’m not going to try to impose my game on someone else. At the mental level, out on the course, most of the great players think in a very similar way. So, I share as much of that as I’ve been able to learn.

**GRM:** What do you consider a common turning point to be, on the way to true improvement?

**Sowards:** Often that point comes when the student starts taking their hands out of it – quieting their hands down. We work toward that by talking about position and big muscle control. There’s always the question of what

comes first, confidence or performance. I would say that they feed into each other. You know it’s all working when we can get on the course and the player can actually score and do the little things great players do. Usually you can see it developing along the way, before it actually happens.

**GRM:** Can a true feel player be a good teacher?

**Sowards:** Most players these days are visual learners. They “see it.” There aren’t many true feel players out there anymore, what with the equipment we play and all the technology. But ultimately the best players have to have a feel for what it’s like to make a certain move. They may see it, but they ultimately have to feel it and trust it under pressure.

**GRM:** Do you worry that taking swings apart will make your students – or even you – too mechanical?

**Sowards:** I’m definitely not a mechanical person. We work on some positions and we work on the rotation, but my swing and my teaching are all based on bringing out the natural athlete. I want to keep it as simple as possible and build on what develops. If you come to me and say I want to get rid of my slice and learn to hook it, that’s pretty easy. But if you want to play on tour, we’ll have to improve a lot of other things than just your swing.

**GRM:** Is there such a thing as too much information – transmitted from the teacher to the student?

**Sowards:** Without a doubt. And even if it isn’t you, the teacher, imparting all that information, the golfer can still be overloaded. We have a player at New Albany who is an engineer. He has spent his entire life being into details. That’s how his mind works. But when he gets to the golf course, he has to bring a feeling of trust and focus on one thing in his golf swing instead of eight different things. I’m a big believer in keeping things as simple as possible. That’s the only way you can get into the zone as frequently as possible. You can’t be thinking about connecting the dots from A to B to C and play your best golf. ■



# LONGER

# STRAIGHTER

# BETTER FEEL

## THE PERFECT 3-SOME



The new Aldila Trinity™ combines all 3 Aldila patented design technologies into a single shaft design. We could bore you with the details but what really matters is the Trinity is longer, straighter and offers better feel than any other golf shaft. Available now through leading club manufacturers and distributors.

**ALDILA**  
#1 graphite shaft in play on Tour

aldila.com



# Wolfdancer Hears a Different Tune

To work on your swing tempo, or absolutely any other aspect of your golf game, tune in the Lost Pines practice haven that complements the mighty Wolfdancer course outside Austin.

BY SCOTT KRAMER



**T**here's music in the air at Wolfdancer Golf Club in Cedar Creek, Texas. And we mean that literally. As you make your way onto the practice facility at Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort, it's immediately clear this is not your typical driving range. Lightly but affectingly, in this otherwise quiet and secluded location, country tunes pipe through the loudspeakers.

It gives visitors "that Austin Hill Country experience," boasts PGA director of golf operations Kelly O'Donnell, playing on the fact that his town is known as the live music capital of the world. "Only one percent of golfers we've heard from don't like it, if that. We've got local flavor in the music we play, some Willie (Nelson), Asleep at the Wheel, and some national stuff. But it's mainly local Central Texas musicians

that we feature."

The long warm days of high season have always tested golf staffers, now at Lost Pines there is all-day music to go with the steady ball-hitting. "Sometimes it can drive us mad, because when you work a full day you may hear the same song three times," says O'Donnell. "But it's pretty cool for golfers. You can hear music throughout the entire resort, and we just extend that out to the golf range."

If the music and Texas-friendly staff don't make you feel instantly welcome, then this handsome and spacious range surely will. Voted "Best Practice Facility" in Central Texas by Avid Golfer magazine, the range sports 13 acres of opportunities for game improvement, including 10 target greens at various distances lined with bunkers for a realistic golf practice experience. There are extensive Bermuda grass turf tees for consistent and clean surfaces to hit crisp iron shots from, an isolated short-game area with unique elevation changes to two well-bunkered target greens, and a pair of practice putting greens. Says O'Donnell: "There isn't a short game shot that you cannot become proficient at by practicing



Leading Golf Products Since 1931™



Quickly open with a simple push of the button

Retractable Blades



# CUSTOMIZABLE

Anything from simple text to logos can be printed onto the CHAMP Zarma FLYtee and CHAMP FLIX Divot Repair Instrument to increase your brand awareness. Get your FLYtee and FLIX Ball Marker logoed today and start playing with two of the hottest new products on the market.

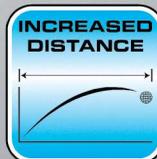


Customizable Ball Markers  
2 Week Lead Time

- Extreme Distance
- Extremely Accurate
- Extremely Durable



Shallow Cup provides extreme accuracy and distance  
Impact Ribs are durable and long lasting



INCREASED DISTANCE





here.” At the far end of the range, there’s a tee reserved for member ball-hitting and private instruction.

No other range in the Hill Country region is as elaborate or as well thought-out. “This is a range on steroids, because of its sheer mass size,” says O’Donnell. “There are seven teeing areas, spread out. None have permanent hitting bays, but we set up probably 30 stations a day. If we need to, we can line up 100 tees in a row.”

As O’Donnell ticks through the many positive traits of this practice complex, one understands what an everyday frustration it is for the golf professional saddled with a cramped, awkward, non-amenitized range. “Believe me,” he says, “this range was not squeezed in as an afterthought. The builders worked hard to present it this way. It has a definitive wow factor when you first see it. It’s designed to have the playing characteristics of a course, and its size allow us plenty of leeway.” On a pad in his office O’Donnell has sketched out a short-game course on the range for juniors, though he hasn’t set it up yet. “I will do that this summer for juniors and families,” he says resolutely.

In O’Donnell’s eyes, there’s no suitable competition. “Most of the

ranges in town are just an opportunity to warm up before you go play at a facility,” he says. “There’s a small range down the highway from us. There’s currently one range on the south side of Austin, and one on the north side.”

Wolfdancer is the name of the adjacent 7,205-yard golf course. Designed by Arthur Hills/Steve Forrest & Associates, it has been a perpetually acclaimed layout since its 2006 opening, earning loads of local and national accolades. Still, a few golfers stop by just for serious improvement sessions, skipping the

Wolfdancer adventure while laying down \$20 as a range fee that gives them unlimited use of the facility, including practice balls. Golfers paying the green and cart fees get warm-up balls included. The golf course does remain the primary draw. According to O’Donnell, some “99 percent of all range users are here to play Wolfdancer Golf Club. I’d say 70 percent of our course play is from the hotel and the other 30 percent is made up of locals, including our nearly 100 members.” Unlimited use of the practice facility is included in the annual membership fee.

---

## The Golf School at Wolfdancer delivers a customized learning experience—its curriculum chosen entirely by the student.

---

Another feature that distinguishes the Lost Pines complex from other Austin golf venues is its on-site academy. The Golf School at Wolfdancer Golf Club delivers a unique customized golf learning experience in that there are no set agendas. A guest can customize his or



# Business is better with the right Drivers

## Enroll in the new PepsiCo/PGA National Program for these exclusive offerings:

- Golf Retirement Plus™ program benefits
- New facility fountain and bottle & can incentives
- Comprehensive beverage offerings with preferred pricing
- Complete, reliable equipment servicing solutions
- Merchandising best practices



Call 1-866-PEPGOLF or visit  
[PGALinks.com](http://PGALinks.com) to learn more.



**PGA**

her instruction experience. All lessons are based upon the golfer's learning style and individual needs.

"We approach each individual or group with the a-la-carte option to work on what they want to work on," says O'Donnell. "Every golfer has different strengths and weaknesses, so we're very flexible in our lesson plan to meet their needs. We won't tell people what we don't like about their swing. Instead, we teach to their needs. I am old school, so we don't have state-of-the-art technology. I believe that Mr. Jones does not need to know his swing speed. All of that is good for some people. Some of that technology is cool and I've used it, but where do you take it from there? If we had more members, there might be more of an interest in it."

Wolfdancer's instructors—four are Class A PGA professionals and three PGA Apprentices—are equipped with Titleist and Callaway fitting carts. O'Donnell finds that many golfers get fitted on their own and don't make heavy use of the resort's club customization skills. He does host a few demo days every spring, however.

Out on the Wolfdancer course, sand saves are a demanding part of the scoring package. The Lost Pines range is well equipped with challenging practice bunkers to hone your skills in.



The school also runs pre-structured golf schools, mainly for corporate groups, families and couples. And then there are the very popular on-course playing lessons. "They're really valuable," says O'Donnell of the on-course sessions. "We don't want the golfer watching the pro play. We may take our clubs along, but we go out with a clipboard and take notes about the student's game. We focus on their course

management."

The facility's lesson strategy is working. The staff teaches approximately 600 lessons a year, and that's on the rise. Roughly 80 percent of those lessons are given to Hyatt Regency resort guests, but locals coming in for instruction will clearly increase, too. That's because while the entire golf facility – including the practice range and golf school – are marketed solely on the Hyatt Regency, Wolfdancer Golf Club and Visit Lost Pines websites, "word of mouth has been awesome, as well," says O'Donnell.

And if golfers don't hear about Wolfdancer through the grapevine, perhaps they'll hear the gunfire emanating from the driving range. Twice a week, at the back end of the practice facility, corporate guests participate in skeet shooting. "The first few times it scared the living crap out of us," says O'Donnell. "It's a cool amenity. They just shoot clay. Most people haven't done it before they get here, and they love it." O'Donnell is comfortable now with the rifle noises, but he still prefers the sound of honest country music wafting over his range. ■



# GOLF BALL BARRIER NETTING

# TEX-NET

- ✓ Range Lighting Designed and Installed **NEW**
- ✓ Nationwide Turnkey Installations
- ✓ Engineered Steel & Wood Poles
- ✓ Manufactured in the USA
- ✓ Hi Tenacity UV Impregnated
- ✓ 10 year warranty
- ✓ Polyester Netting
- ✓ Free Quotes



**TEX-NET INC.**

[www.texnetusa.com](http://www.texnetusa.com)

**800-541-1123**

Fax: 609-499-8227

763 B Railroad Ave. PO Box 92

Florence, NJ 08518

# Putting Range Technology at the Golfer's Feet



Teeing every ball up interrupts the process of repeating a sound swing. Solving this problem was the mission of Power Tee, whose founder Martin Wyeth tells a good tale of his company's rise. **INTERVIEW BY THE EDITORS**

**N**ow in its fourth year of operations in the American market, Power Tee symbolizes the entrepreneurial energy that's been flowing into the golf practice and instruction sector. *Golf Range Magazine* has followed the exploits of Power Tee, under the leadership of founder and CEO Martin Wyeth (right). The list of the company's client golf facilities is a stellar one, from St. Andrews and the Wentworth Club in the UK all the way to Haggin Oaks in Sacramento, Calif. As Power Tee continues its marketing effort in America, the editors asked for a brief update on the company's progress and its near-term plans and goals.

**Golf Range Magazine:** Can you give us a brief history of your company?

**Martin Wyeth:** Back in 1994, I was practicing golf at my local driving range. After hitting a relatively long and straight shot, I would tee up a new ball and hit it completely differently despite what I believed was an identical swing. It occurred to me that by having the ball automatically replaced, I could work on individual aspects of my setup and swing without changing everything every time I teed up a new ball. This was the "aha!" moment that

inspired the Power Tee and the first prototype was built to deliver the ball at a chosen height and replace it automatically after each swing.

**GRM:** Was it clear to you right away how a device like this would function?

**MW:** Since I am an engineer, I produced a working machine fairly quickly and demonstrated it to a number of golfers. Almost without exception, their reaction was, "When can we try one on a range?" Within two years we had tested

more than 2 million balls in a factory environment. Soon we had sold more than 350 machines. Still, we weren't satisfied with the design, so we spent four years developing an improved system. When we finally launched the MKII machine, it was an immediate success. Reliability soared and cost of service dropped, as did the cost of installation and production. After five years of automating ranges and making good profits for our customers, we became profitable ourselves.

By 2009 we had automated more than half of the commercial ranges in the UK. In the same year, Power Tee won the Queen's Award for Innovation, Britain's most prestigious business award. Along with my wife, who is a chartered accountant and a major part of the company, I was invited to Buckingham Palace to meet the Queen to receive the award. At the end of 2009, we relocated to the USA to

# WORLD'S BEST BALL PICKER ... PERIOD!

**YOU NEED TO SEE IT  
TO BELIEVE IT!**

Visit [www.standardgolf.com](http://www.standardgolf.com)

**IT'S THE ONLY GANG PICKER  
IN THE WORLD THAT BACKS  
UP WITHOUT GETTING  
TANGLED OR DAMAGED.**

- ▶ No need to exit the vehicle to untangle gangs.
- ▶ **LOW-PROFILE** – reaches under trees, sweeps close to yardage markers.
- ▶ Powder-coated finish ensures a superior, longer-lasting appearance and better rust resistance.
- ▶ Assembles in less than 15 minutes.
- ▶ U.S. and foreign patents pending.

## **MAGNUM SCRUB-PRO GOLF BALL WASHER**

- ▶ Cleans up to 12,000 balls an hour.
- ▶ Exclusive "dimple brush" design cleans even hard-caked dimples.
- ▶ Virtually ready-to-run right from the crate.

*Polyethylene body  
and a tubular steel,  
powder-coated  
frame for  
maximum  
durability and  
rust-resistance.*



Now it's even easier to order with ...

**SG EXPRESS** 1-866-743-9773



[www.standardgolf.com](http://www.standardgolf.com)

**STANDARD  
GOLF COMPANY**



launch the American operation. We are excited to introduce Power Tee to America and demonstrate that, unlike other automatic tee systems, ours actually works!

**GRM:** To what do you attribute your success in Europe, where you have installed Power Tee systems in more than 300 driving ranges over the last 10 years?

**MW:** Our European customers tell us that Power Tee systems generate a clear profit, not only by increasing ball sales but also by attracting a wider customer demographic to the range.

**GRM:** How many customers do you have in North America?

**MW:** Our systems are currently installed in 13 ranges in the U.S. and Canada.

**GRM:** What would you identify as the biggest advantage to using an automatic tee system?

**MW:** There are different advantages both for golfers and range owners.

For golfers, the biggest advantage is that they tend to hit a higher number of rewarding golf shots, so they have less frustration and more fun. They develop confidence in their own ability more quickly, and this reflects well on the teacher and on the teach-

ing facility. For range owners, when golfers have more fun, they tend to hit more balls and visit the range more often. This generates higher revenues and can create a competitive advantage for ranges that offer Power Tee systems on their tee line.

**GRM:** Many driving ranges offer grass tees as a primary attraction for golfers. How does Power Tee compare to grass?

**MW:** One of our biggest successes in America to date is the Leatherman Golf Learning Center in Charlotte, North Carolina, which converted two-thirds of its grass hitting stations to Power Tee systems. Range operators tell us that, while grass is a great warm-up surface and provides the ultimate in realism for accomplished golfers, the quality of grass drops dramatically during the day, which frustrates many golfers. Beginners and high-handicap golfers develop confidence far more quickly hitting from a Power Tee.

**GRM:** After a range becomes a Power Tee customer, what advantages do they most often mention once they have done business with you for a season?

**MW:** Our customers tell us that they like the state-of-the-art image our systems give their facility and the fact that

Power Tee has helped them stay competitive despite the difficult economy.

The overriding benefit all of our customers cite is that their golfers absolutely love using the machines. Our customers that market Power Tees, rather than simply adding them as an extra feature, take Power Tee's earning potential to a new level.

**GRM:** During product development, what were some of your more important breakthroughs or discoveries? Did they come about in any particularly surprising way?

**MW:** There have been very few 'Eureka moments' throughout the development of Power Tee. Lessons that we learned in winter were different to lessons we learned in the summer and fall. Working with Wentworth Club and St Andrews is entirely different to working with a 100 bay super range such as Haggin Oaks. It took 5 solid years of constant engineering improvements and dedication to learn how to automate driving ranges and a further 5 years to develop the machine to a point where it is as good as it is now.

**GRM:** Tell us about your iPhone app.

**MW:** The Power Tee iPhone app (free on Apple's iTunes App Store) will show you the location of the nearest range equipped with Power Tee systems—as well as the location of all Power Tee-equipped ranges worldwide. It is a great way for our customers who use social media marketing to direct would-be golfers in their area to their facility.

**GRM:** What are some of Power Tee's goals for the coming years?

**MW:** Our number one goal is to maintain quality of service to our customers and to ensure that people understand the difference between Power Tee and its American forerunners. Any system can tee up a ball automatically for a few hours, days, weeks or even months. Our product works month after month, year after year in all seasons while requiring minimal service from the range operator. This level of reliability is an absolute must for automation to be commercially viable at any driving range. ■

# Turn your Range into a **PROFIT CENTER**

go to [www.CoverShotsGolf.com](http://www.CoverShotsGolf.com) to try our Profit Calculator



"CoverShots has demonstrated to the golf industry that it is dedicated to innovation and quality service, which is a supplement to the teaching skills of PGA Professionals everywhere."

—Brian Whitcomb, Past President,  
The PGA of America

- CoverShots has been Proven to increase Range Revenue
- Mobile Canopies from 24 to 104 foot Clear span
- Since 1997 CoverShots has been providing cost effective tee line coverage for ranges, golf courses and teaching academies
- Our Quality is recognized: Official Mobile Canopy of the TPC Network; Preferred Mobile Canopy Supplier to PGA Golf Properties GRAA Preferred Vendor Preferred Vendor for Nicklaus Academies



**30 PTC**

located at Paradise Valley Golf Center, Fairfield, California

 **PGA**  
Learning & Performance  
Preferred Mobile Canopy Supplier  
to PGA Golf Properties

 **NICKLAUS**  
ACADEMIES  
Preferred Vendor

 **GRAA**  
PREFERRED VENDOR

  
Official Mobile Canopy of the  
Tournament Players Club Network

  
COVERSHOTS™  
by Mobile Canopies, Inc.

[www.CoverShotsGolf.com](http://www.CoverShotsGolf.com)

1-888-881-2433 • [www.CoverShotsGolf.com](http://www.CoverShotsGolf.com)  
108-A South Kerr Ave., Wilmington, NC 28403

# An Academy Where Practice Truly Meets Play

Gary Gilchrist pictured his central Florida golf academy as an environment where the line between learning and take-it-low performance would be thin or even erased totally. **BY ANTHONY PIOPP**

**T**he longest walk in golf, Gary Gilchrist always felt, is from a warm-up session on the range to the first tee of the golf course. And yet it shouldn't be that way, according to the South African-bred teaching professional, now based now in central Florida. The goal is to have students so prepared, he says, that the first swing of the day, and every one after, is made with calm confidence. Good coaching alone can't do it—the right environment is also necessary.

Gilchrist had such a place in mind several years ago, as he imagined the exact sort of practice complex he would want in a self-designed headquarters and training facility. He was visualizing a place where students could hone skills that are vitally important on the golf course by training in a scenario that mimicked playing a round of golf. He knew that if he succeeded, his students would be able to seamlessly translate skill-sharpening on the range to low-scoring rounds of golf. Indeed, he would be eliminating that long and uncertain walk.

For the first four years of its existence, the Gary Gilchrist Golf Academy (GGGA) was based at the Mission

Inn Resort and Club in Howey-in-the-Hills, Fla., just north of Orlando. The students, usually numbering about 65, lived in condos at the nearby Sarabande Golf and Country Club. In 2011, after Sarabande owners had abandoned their golf course and put the entire property up for sale, Gilchrist made a decisive move. He purchased the Sarabande buildings and grounds, including the condominiums and overgrown course, and renamed it Bishops Gate. A few of the condos have residents who are not students at the academy, but otherwise the property is wall-to-wall Gilchrist golf.

"When they announced they were selling Sarabande, I knew it would be

a great opportunity for us," Gilchrist recalls. He also knew that the services of a professional course architect were needed, even though there was a golf infrastructure fully in place already. The call went out to longtime Pete Dye associate Tim Liddy. He was brought on board to design the ultimate learning facility and that's when it really became interesting.

Years earlier, Liddy and Andrew Summers, an investor in the GGGA, met while sitting next to each other on a plane flight. When Gilchrist first spoke to Summers about creating a unique practice facility, the investor recalled his conversation with the Indiana-based Liddy and suggested Gilchrist call him. Working either solo or in partnership with Dye, Liddy had been busy in the prior decade on course remodeling work on properties like the vaunted River Course at Kingsmill Resort in Williamsburg, Va.

What Liddy did first was turn three holes of the former course into a practice area. That part of the acreage opened for use in 2012. He is in the process of converting the remaining golf course to a nine-hole layout on which some holes will have two greens while others will have multiple teeing grounds, giving the new routing an 18-hole feel for those who play it twice. Also, the first four holes, which are scheduled to open in August of this year, can be played as its own loop. Holes five through nine, by utilizing multiple greens and tees, can be played as a nine-hole routing. That versatile section of the layout is scheduled to open in 2014.

As distinctive as the golf course is, it is the practice area that gives students at GGGA a tool no other teaching facility has, according to Gilchrist. What makes it unique in good part are the things they didn't do, not just what



The Gilchrist reputation for coaching prowess owes much to Gary's work with Yani Tseng, the youngest player ever to win five major championships

**ACTIVE**WORKS®

The PGA of America's new

# GOLF 2.0 REGISTRATION SOLUTION



## POWERFUL TOOLS

to drive more revenue  
and players for your  
golf programs

- Secure online credit card processing
- Free listing on ACTIVE.com and PGA.com
- Detailed reporting
- Easy price management
- Customizable online forms and waivers
- Free marketing tools

Learn more and get started at:

**www.PGA.com/ACTIVE**

in partnership with



**PGA**.COM

**ACTIVE**  
network..



Set up with swing mirrors along the tee line, the range at GGGGA still features the mature trees, bunkers and fairway shaping it had when this acreage contained several golf holes.

they did. The area of rolling fairway was not leveled off to produce the customary driving range landing area. Instead, the course's three converted par-4s form a distinctly course-like landing zone, and will continue to be maintained as fairways. Scrub growth and small trees that separated the holes were removed but large oaks were left so that the feel of a golf course remains.

In addition to a large practice tees at both ends of the area, a putting green and two chipping greens at the home end and putting green at the far end, Liddy added four target greens on the edges of the fairways. Now, not only can players hit to those greens from the tees, they can also take their shag bags into the fairways and practice from whatever spots they select out there.

According to Liddy, the students are taught in groups of eight, and the multiple greens will allow groups to be stationed at the same time throughout the facility.

By bringing the trees into play and hitting from a nearly infinite number of angles to the practice putting surfaces, students can more efficiently learn to move and curve the ball. The site has a surprising amount of elevation change and rolling topography for central Florida.

"We wanted something where you could hit all the shots," Liddy says. Adds Gilchrist: "You can hit draws and fades around obstacles. You can hit

downhill, uphill, sidehill shots of all kinds. You can create any situation you want to create." Even back at the tee line, all is not typical. Portions of the practice tees are intentionally undulating so players can practice off different lies there, as well.

---

**"Practicing at this academy, you can create any shot or situation you want to create."**

— Gary Gilchrist

---

Already students have found specific locations ideal for honing their skills as proven by worn areas in the fairways. "The idea is flexibility," says Liddy said of his rule-breaking design. Even some of the areas of the four-level primary practice tee are built with narrower segments to simulate teeing grounds on a golf course. "It feels like golf holes rather than a driving range," comments Ben Pauluhn, CEO of Lake County Sports Services, the company to which the Gilchrist Academy outsources management of its catering and property maintenance functions.

Gilchrist grew up in Durban, South

Africa, spent two years at Texas A&M before turning professional and winning the South African PGA Tour Q-School. He captured three titles on the South African PGA Winter Tour. Later, he joined the David Leadbetter Golf Academy in Florida as a teacher and then moved on to Director of Golf at IMG's David Leadbetter Junior Golf Academy. He went from there to a position at the International Junior Golf Academy in Hilton Head, S.C. The longtime coach and teacher is convinced that his new facility will lead to better learning and better golfers. He is certain the unique layout will "inspire them to practice more."

It's a sound bet that Gilchrist knows from whence he speaks. According to his website, he has coached two U.S. Amateur champions, two U.S. Junior Girls champions, one NCAA women's champion and one U.S. Public Links champion (Michelle Wie). He has also taught many professionals including former women's world No. 1, Yani Tseng, Charles Howell III and China's first fully exempt LPGA Tour player and world no. 3 Shanshan Feng. Also under Gilchrist's tutelage are the PGA Tour's D.A. Points, and PGA Tour rookie Morgan Hoffmann, who is GGGGA's first student to go from the academy to college and on to the professional ranks.

Only about 10 percent of Gilchrist's students are American. A large number come from China and South America. Students attend Montverde Academy, an independent college preparatory school for grades pre-kindergarten to post-graduate. The campus is located approximately 25 miles from the golf academy. The academy, though, is not just about work. The site borders a lake, the clubhouse has a swimming pool and in the plans are a Himalayas putting green similar to the one found at the Old Course, in St. Andrews, Scotland, and two sand volleyball courts.

Even with all those activities, it's difficult to imagine anyone wanting to leave such a complete and challenging practice area. "It's one of those places where you can spend all day, and I'm sure the kids will," Liddy says with satisfaction. ■

SINCE 1946

# WITTEK



*Wittek is the exclusive Range Equipment supplier to PGA Golf Properties*



3865 Commercial Ave. • Northbrook, IL 60062 • 1-800-869-1800 • [www.wittekgolf.com](http://www.wittekgolf.com)



# Learning Center Gets VIP Treatment in Emerald Dunes Upgrade

The standout practice grounds at this rejuvenated Florida award-winner even has a namesake Tom Fazio Short Game Center, where golfers enjoy the great architect's signature scoring-shot complex. **BY SCOTT KRAMER**





**D**uring Tom Fazio's long and stellar career as a course architect, many a design concept has come in and out of favor. One such trend is the ultra-functional, highly amenitized practice facility. In fact, its rise in popularity is partly owing to Fazio's skill and aptitude for designing them. Certain West Palm Beach, Fla., residents are now quite familiar with Fazio's vision and technique for building practice complexes. On any given day you will find these people, wedges in hand, at the Tom Fazio Short Game Area that opened this past fall at The Emerald Dunes Club.

Emerald Dunes debuted in 1990 and was soon placed among "America's Top 100 Courses You Can Play" by *GOLF Magazine*. In the time since, the course and its practice complex matured, wore down in spots, changed ownership and even went private. In 2011, new owners invited Fazio back, giving him a blank canvas and a big budget – some \$15 million – in the

name of major upgrading and rejuvenation.

Their long punch list of requested renovations was surely familiar to the well-traveled Fazio. Irrigation, regrassing, bunker work and the like was all necessary to achieve that top-shelf look and feel owners deemed necessary for attracting new members. Just as important, however, was

the perceived need to expand and polish the game-improvement facilities available to members. The new Tom Fazio Short Game Area is testament to that desire, situated as it is beside the clubhouse veranda, which also overlooks No. 18 green.

This world-class amenity offers five Champion Bermuda greens, comprised of multiple target greens and chipping greens. A 9,500-square-foot putting surface complements various short-game practice options, and is flanked by six sand traps plus a grass pot bunker, so that golfers can work on every scoring shot from 100 yards in.

The short-game area also features a dedicated 135-yard, par-3 bet-setting hole. It can be played as short as 85 yards – calling for skill with the dreaded half-wedge. What's really special about this short-game area is



# RANGE SERVANT®

THE RIGHT PARTNER FOR YOU



Dispensers

Commercial  
Volume

&

Golf Club  
Volume



Ball Pickers



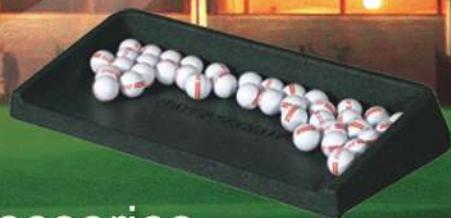
Elevators



Washers

Ball  
Management  
Systems

Accessories



(800) 878-8050

[www.RangeServant.com](http://www.RangeServant.com)

[InfoUSA@RangeServant.com](mailto:InfoUSA@RangeServant.com)

that Fazio made sure all the greens and other playable areas were constructed to USGA specifications and mirror the course's exact playing conditions.

"We've mimicked anything you will encounter on the course," says Fazio. "Practice is an integral part of the game, and this is a spectacular amenity that allows golfers to tune up their scoring techniques. The assignment to build this amenity gave me a chance to make a significant addition to the golf experience at Emerald Dunes."

Golf also involves long-carry shots, we must remember, and this club's driving range is man-sized. Measuring 310 yards long and double-ended, it encompasses eight acres of land. From the front, golfers choose among five target greens, which range from 50 to 225 yards from the center of the tee. A shallow bunker to the side of the front tee is ideal for practicing fairway bunker shots. The range is stocked

with an ever-fresh supply of Titleist Pro V1 balls.

At the range's back end is a 1,500-square-foot Golf Learning Center.

---

**"There was a range here at Emerald Dunes before, but nothing like this new facility."** —Lee Rinker

---

Coaching takes place there in two 500-square-foot teaching bays. They're equipped with high-speed video and state-of-the-art computer training tools, such as the V1 coaching system and a Flight Scope Launch Monitor.

Alongside is a clubfitting and club repair area. A 3,116-square-foot chipping green with a greenside bunker is adjacent to the building, as are four mini chipping greens. Without a doubt, the addition of the Tom Fazio Short Game Area plus the renovation of the range have turned this into one of America's most extensive practice facilities.

"Tom Fazio took the gem of his original design and perfected it," says Emerald Dunes' executive vice president, Ken Green. "We've created a sanctuary for golfers who appreciate a pure golf experience that's challenging yet fun to play on a daily basis. While we've added length for scratch golfers, the course remains playable for all skill levels. And the new world-class Tom Fazio Short Game Area, along with the two-bay indoor Golf Learning Center, generously complements the club's variety of practice



are  
you an  
industry  
insider?



**PGA**<sup>TM</sup>  
MAGAZINE

INDUSTRY INSIDER

[www.pgamagazineinsider.com/intro](http://www.pgamagazineinsider.com/intro) • 215-914-2071



The Learning Center (left) has boosted private-lesson activity at Emerald Dunes. Scoring-shot areas have inspired members to keep improving.

We did a lot of planning up front, and executed it pretty well so that everything has worked out kind of like we were envisioning. There weren't too many surprises."

And how has the addition of the Golf Learning Center boosted Emerald Dunes' instruction business? "We have been doing a lot of teaching in the building," says Rinker. "The video system is very easy to work with and a lot of good golfers really like working with the launch monitors for clubfitting and help with their swing." It's quite likely that the celebrated architect Fazio will be called upon to work similar short-game magic at other clubs where he's planted his flag. The standard to match, as he well knows, is Fazio's namesake practice haven at Emerald Dunes. ■

facilities and game improvement amenities that rival any in Florida, if not the nation."

The range now accommodates up to 35 golfers, 15 on the front end and 20 on the back. "There was a range here before," says Lee Rinker, the former PGA Tour professional who serves as director of golf at Emerald Dunes Club, "but nothing like this new facility." All involved knew that top-grade practice is a new requirement for clubs with high aspirations. "We felt that to be a great club, we needed to have a practice facility where our members would be able to work on all aspects of their games," Rinker explains. "Luckily we had a nice piece of land right next to the clubhouse, and that's where we decided to build the short game area." The rest of the decision-making flowed from there.

Like Fazio, Rinker is truly pleased with the realism of the Fazio Short Game Area, plus the variety of on-course simulation opportunities that it offers. "The short game area has all of the same features as the course," says Rinker. "The grass is the same, the sand is the same and the greens are the same." Seeing the maintenance crew sweep through assiduously, Rinker is witness to the fact that the facility is maintained exactly like the course, meaning green speeds will match what golfers find during their round.

"Many amateurs and pros have told me it is one of the best practice facilities in the state now," Rinker says with notable pride. "Everyone has loved it.





*A Great Way to  
Welcome New Golfers  
to your Facility!*



Get Golf Ready students spent an average of  
\$984 in their first year on golf\*

REGISTER AT  
[PGALinks.com/Registration](http://PGALinks.com/Registration)

**GET** **GOLF**  
**READY**

\*2011 results from Get Golf Ready survey hosted by NGF.

# Golf Range Association of America Preferred Vendors

In recognition of their support and participation, The Golf Range Association of America wishes to thank the following GRAA Preferred Vendors.



SPECIALTY INSURANCE

800-237-3355  
www.alliedspecialty.com  
*Official Insurance Supplier*



800 OK CHAMP  
www.champspikes.com  
*Official Spike and Tee Supplier*



Engineered Netting Systems • Steel Pole Manufacturers

800-726-3354  
www.coastalnetting.com  
*Exclusive Netting Company*



888-881-2433  
www.covershotsgolf.com  
*Official Mobile Canopy Supplier*



800-641-4653  
www.easypicker.com  
*Official Range Equipment Supplier*



888-287-2614  
www.golfwebdesign.com  
*Official Web Designer*



877-769-3781  
www.powertee.com  
*Official Automated Tee System*



866-743-9773  
www.standardgolf.com  
*Official Range Equipment Supplier*



800-541-1123  
www.texnetusa.com  
*Exclusive Netting Company*



800-869-1800  
www.wittekgolf.com  
*Official Range Equipment Supplier*

# Total Access.



When connected to your GC2a via Bluetooth, our **Performance Fitting app** instantly delivers the unmatched accuracy of the GC2 and HMT to your Apple iPad™ in stunning clarity. Intuitive, fully illustrated depictions of ball flight and club head data insure easy analysis of each and every shot. And when your analysis or fitting session is done, your data can be instantly emailed anywhere.

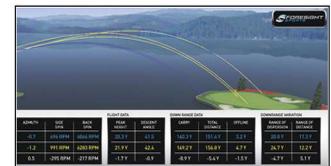
The Performance Fitting app by Foresight Sports. It's a game changer.®



**SIMULATION**



**INSTRUCTION**



**CLUB FITTING**



Complete club head analysis now available with our HMT - Head Measurement Technology. Contact your Foresight Sports sales representative today.



1-858-880-0179 • [www.foresightsports.com](http://www.foresightsports.com)

