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

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

- Capital Investing: Change the Routing to Add a Range – The old lament about being "land-locked" and lacking space to add or improve a range should yield to ingenuity.
- Video File: Customer Loyalty and What Drives It – Rick and Patty Kline go the extra mile to win repeat business at their Sittler Golf Center in eastern Pennsylvania.
- Traffic Builders: Whether you're a country club or a stand – alone, the driving range can attract, retain and create bonds with your customers.
- Marketing: Success in 10 Minutes a Day – A consultant and author who has won awards for range operations offers this advice: Push distractions away and schedule time for promoting, publicizing and marketing your business.

Keep it fun and thanks for supporting the GRAA.

Best Regards,

Rick Summers, CEO
GRAA
rsummers@golfrange.org

RANGE NEWS UPDATE • VIDEO: REPEAT BUSINESS • STATS ON AVIDS

Golf Range MAGAZINE

Volume 20, No. 5
May 2012

PRACTICE • TEACHING • FITTING • MARKETING

Theme Park for Practicers

Inside the Luxury Learning Center at Berkeley Hall

Also in this issue:

- 10-Minute Marketing Solutions
- No Range? Move Some Holes
- Add Quality Staffers (Cheap)
- Birth of the Fitting Cart

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Golf Range MAGAZINE

Volume 20, Number 5 May 2012

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

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

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Change on the Range

I recently returned from a trip to Bandon Dunes Golf Resort on the Oregon coast. This amazing facility is home to four of the top-ranked public golf courses in the country. You might think this would be enough, but Bandon Dunes isn't resting on its laurels. This month marks the opening of Bandon Preserve, a unique par-3 course with 13 holes, and the facility has long had one of the country's largest practice facilities.

Even high-end properties such as Bandon Dunes are paying close attention to offering a wide variety of golf experiences for its customers, from the range to short courses to family tees. The shifting sands of time, technology and consumer behavior impact every golf facility, and we are seeing many interesting responses around the country. The Capital Investing feature in this month's *Golf Range Magazine* (page 24) shows how some facilities are finding ways to renovate or add ranges and practice areas – despite land and budget constraints.

As the story points out, and many of you know firsthand, many classic golf courses were laid out without a range, or with a small range shoehorned into dead space as an afterthought. As golfers have become more interested in serious practice sessions, and as the range continues to evolve as the hub for player development and new golfer activity, these smaller ranges are often not adequate for a facility's needs.

Even modern ranges are running into similar constraints, thanks to the ongoing march of golf equipment technology and the distance benefits it has brought to many golfers. Ranges that were built to contain reasonably long hitters 10 or 20 years ago may now need retrofitting to keep long hitters from bombing their practice drives beyond the landing area.

As the game of golf continues to evolve, there are excellent ideas being pursued for renovating and rethinking how our golf facilities and ranges are designed, and what purposes we hope they serve. I've heard of several great ideas personally – from adding targets and fitting areas to creating practice holes and short game areas – and I invite you to read this month's Capital Investing story to see some excellent examples of facilities that have recently made their own changes. We can't predict what future trends may develop, but we can be ready to take advantage of the new opportunities that come along.

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

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For Immediate Payback, Appeal to the Avid Golfer

While avid players make up less than a quarter of range users, they account for more than half of all range visits. BY TONY STARKS

There has been a strong push for creating new golfers as of late, and rightfully so considering the downward trending participation numbers released by the National Golf Foundation in recent years. Data suggest a shrinking pool of players, which makes player development and the generation of new golfers more important than ever for the future of the industry.

But what about the present? The here and now. How are you going to boost your numbers before next month's budget meeting? Perhaps the best response to that is cater to avid golfers – those who play in excess of 25 rounds of golf a year. According to research from the NGF, avid golfers make up 23 percent of on-course range users but account for 51 percent of range visits. Compare that to new/beginning golfers who make up 18 percent of range users but only account for 12 percent of range visits.

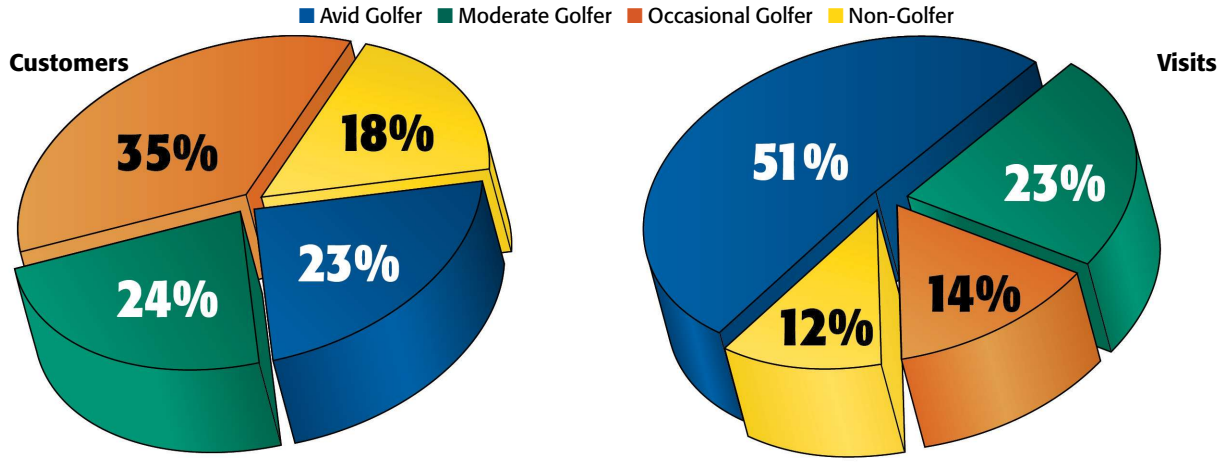
It can be tough to know who is an avid golfer and who is not. If you're at an on-course facility that has a customer database that tracks rounds played, it's a little easier to identify those avid players. To get them coming back and utilizing the practice range more often, offer special incentives such as a free bucket of balls for every fifth round played or a six month range membership for playing 15 rounds at your course within a year. Be creative with your offerings.

> "Avid players are some of the strongest contributors to the golf economy."

For the stand-alone range, identifying avids is more of an art than a science. In most cases, you can spot a beginner right away based on their awkward grip, poor alignment and unbalanced finish. But avids are a little trickier, because there are a lot of golfers with good looking swings who only practice or play every so often. So don't be afraid to ask people how often they play golf or how often they practice, that's often the only way you'll find out. From that point it's all about coming up with creative incentives to get the avid player coming back to practice at your range. Create a range "happy hour" where for a certain time slot in the evening you have two-for-one buckets for frequent customers, or draft lesson plans for advanced players that include discounted range usage throughout the series of lessons.

Avid players are some of the strongest contributors to the golf economy. You want them frequenting your facility because they're the ones opening their wallet to feed their passion for golf. ■

On-Course Visits by Customer Type, 1999



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

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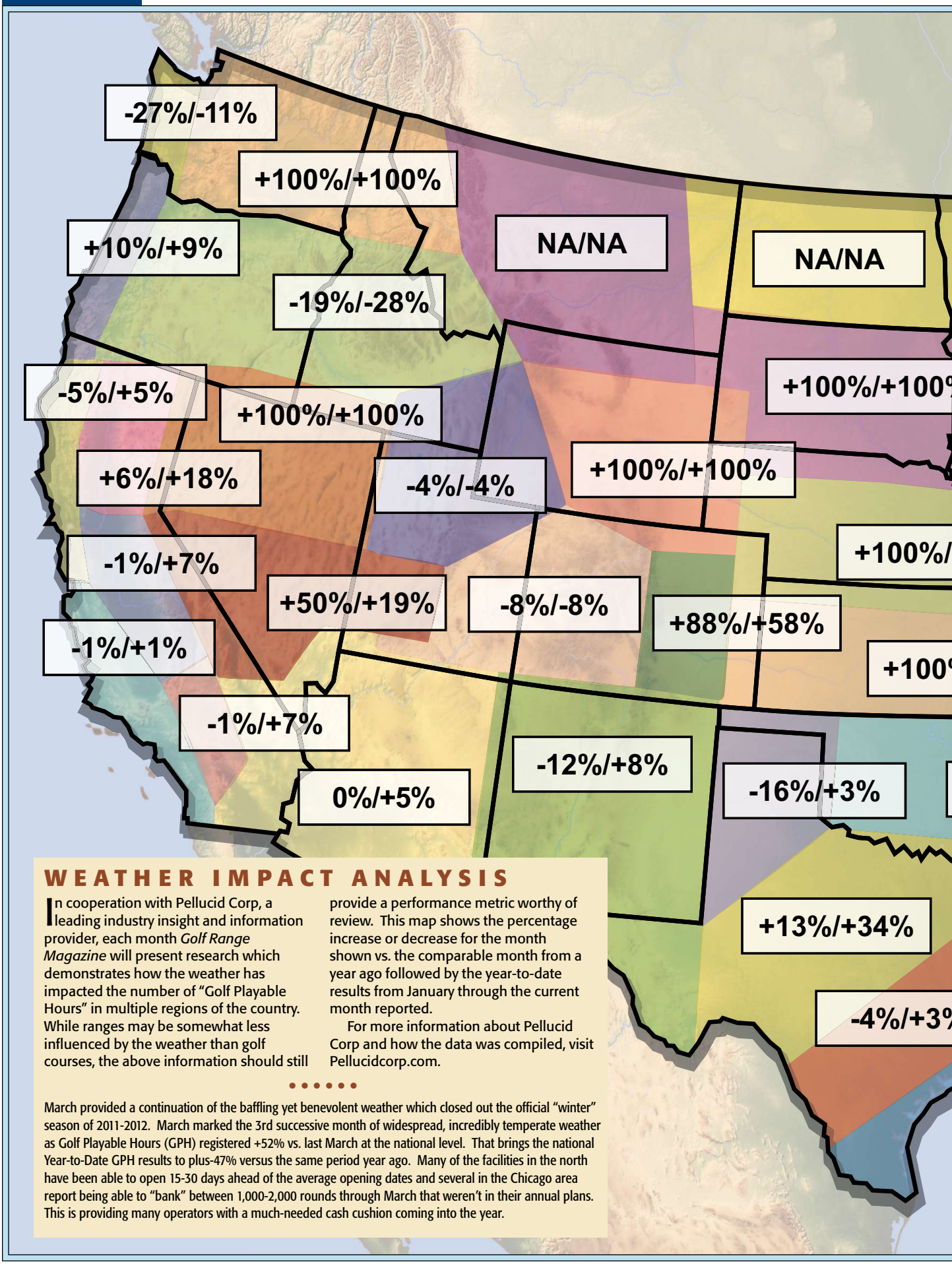


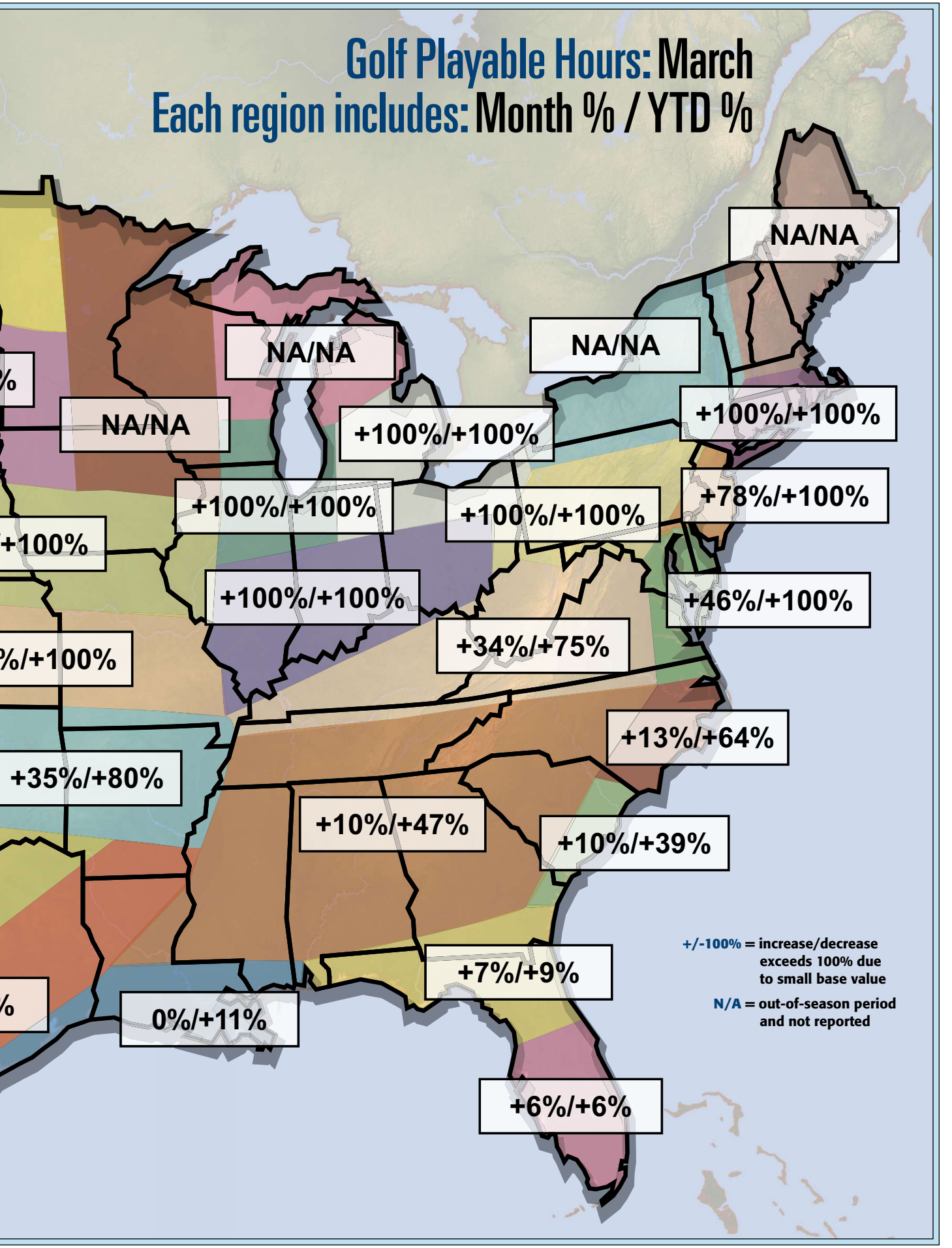
WEATHER IMPACT ANALYSIS

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.

March provided a continuation of the baffling yet benevolent weather which closed out the official "winter" season of 2011-2012. March marked the 3rd successive month of widespread, incredibly temperate weather as Golf Playable Hours (GPH) registered +52% vs. last March at the national level. That brings the national Year-to-Date GPH results to plus-47% versus the same period year ago. Many of the facilities in the north have been able to open 15-30 days ahead of the average opening dates and several in the Chicago area report being able to "bank" between 1,000-2,000 rounds through March that weren't in their annual plans. This is providing many operators with a much-needed cash cushion coming into the year.

Golf Playable Hours: March
Each region includes: Month % / YTD %



Owners Who Inspire Customer Loyalty

Rick and Patty Kline go the extra mile to win repeat business at their Sittler Golf Center in eastern Pennsylvania—but they aren't shy about asking for that business, either.

There are hundreds of huge, impersonal corporations operating customer-loyalty programs, then there are the Klines, Rick and Patty. The couple's Kutztown, Pa. range has a friends-and-family atmosphere that naturally makes for return visits. In fact, the Kline children were raised right on-property, in the living quarters their parents established upstairs from the golf shop. Over the years, the array of amenities and services has expanded while the core-golf elements of teaching, practice and clubfitting have been finely honed. Equipment sales are a serious endeavor–one that has earned the operation a "Best 100 Fitters in America" award from *Golf Digest*. This video clip shows the proprietors in their element, explaining how they appeal to area golfers and the structures they use to keep the Sittler Golf Center front-of-mind with their clientele. ■

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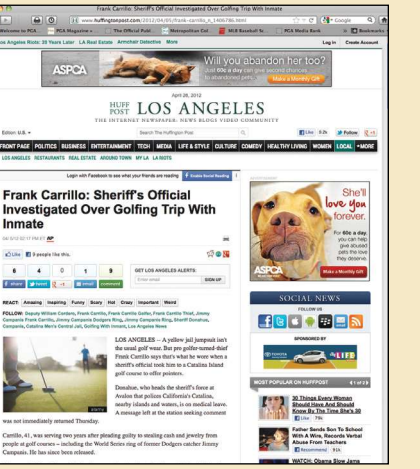
A Wide Range of News

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

The **40th Annual Republican Women's Golf Clinics** were held last month at various locations in the Northeast …. The April 2012 update on golf participation from the **National Golf Foundation** was led by these data points: Some 25.7 million Americans played golf in 2011, essentially even with the prior year; the recessionary effect on golf participation seen recently in year-over-year golfer declines is flattening; and, roughly half of all golfers are females,

Sea Pines Resort in Hilton Head Island, S.C., announced the "RBC Heritage Experience Package" providing golfers the chance to be at the resort under the conditions and atmosphere of the acclaimed PGA Tour event held at Harbour Town Golf Links. As part of the deal, golfers get a practice station with customized name plates and one hour of professional instruction. ***Note to clubs:*** *This name plate idea is catchy—clubs should consider creating them for range-plan members who also sign up for lesson packages.*

juniors and minorities …. **Callaway Golf Company** introduced its new udesign™ by Callaway personalization and customization platform. udesign by Callaway, an online customization tool, gives golfers purchasing a RAZR Fit Driver the unprecedented ability to design their own version of the company's hot new club that is already in the hands of Phil Mickelson, Ernie Els and Alvaro Quiros …. **Positive Swing Inc.,** a non-profit organization that provides free sports programs for inner-city youth, the physically and mentally handicapped as well as other underserved groups, received a Champions in Life Grant from the Indiana Sports Corporation. Positive Swing holds golf clinics at an indoor range called Golf Dome in Indianapolis …. **HD Golf Ventures LLC** has plans for a premier golf entertainment facility in St. Charles Ill., with 70 driving range bays and an outdoor patio. Doppler radar technology and high-speed cameras would enable patrons to see a map of their real-time ball flight, and play could be simulated. With food and alcohol served, the facility would combine a traditional driving range with a bowling alley environment. Concerns are raised, however, as nearby residents expressed issues about



noise, lights and traffic …. This next story could be material for a movie. Frank Carrillo, a former **pro golfer turned jewel thief**, is in jail in southern California. But Carrillo got out, temporarily, to help a Los Angeles County Sheriff shave a few strokes off his handicap. He made quite a fashion statement standing on the range wearing his yellow prison jumpsuit. The sheriff is currently under investigation …. Herb Page, **men's golf coach at Kent State University**, is taking over the 2 Club Golf Learning Center in Macedonia, Ohio. ■

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A Range of Purposes

Whether you're a country club or a stand-alone, the driving range can attract, retain and create bonds with your customers

BY TONY STARKS

The range is a teaching hub—it's where golf instructors help students literally build a game from the ground up. But it is much more than that. For private clubs, it can be a meeting ground where the head professional first learns the needs and aspirations of new members. Elsewhere, it's the bait that draws golfers in to experience auxiliary components such as a short course. This month's Traffic Builders will explore three facilities that leverage their ranges with energy and imagination.

New Members and First Impressions

Jeffrey Kiddie, the 2011 PGA Merchandiser of the Year for private facilities, has been helping new members feel welcome at Aronimink Golf Club in Newtown Square, Pa., by using his range as a mainstay of the member orientation program.

"When someone joins the club, or upgrades to a golf membership from non-golf, they go through an orientation that includes a mini-lesson on the range and an introduction to all of our clubfitting offerings," describes Kiddie.

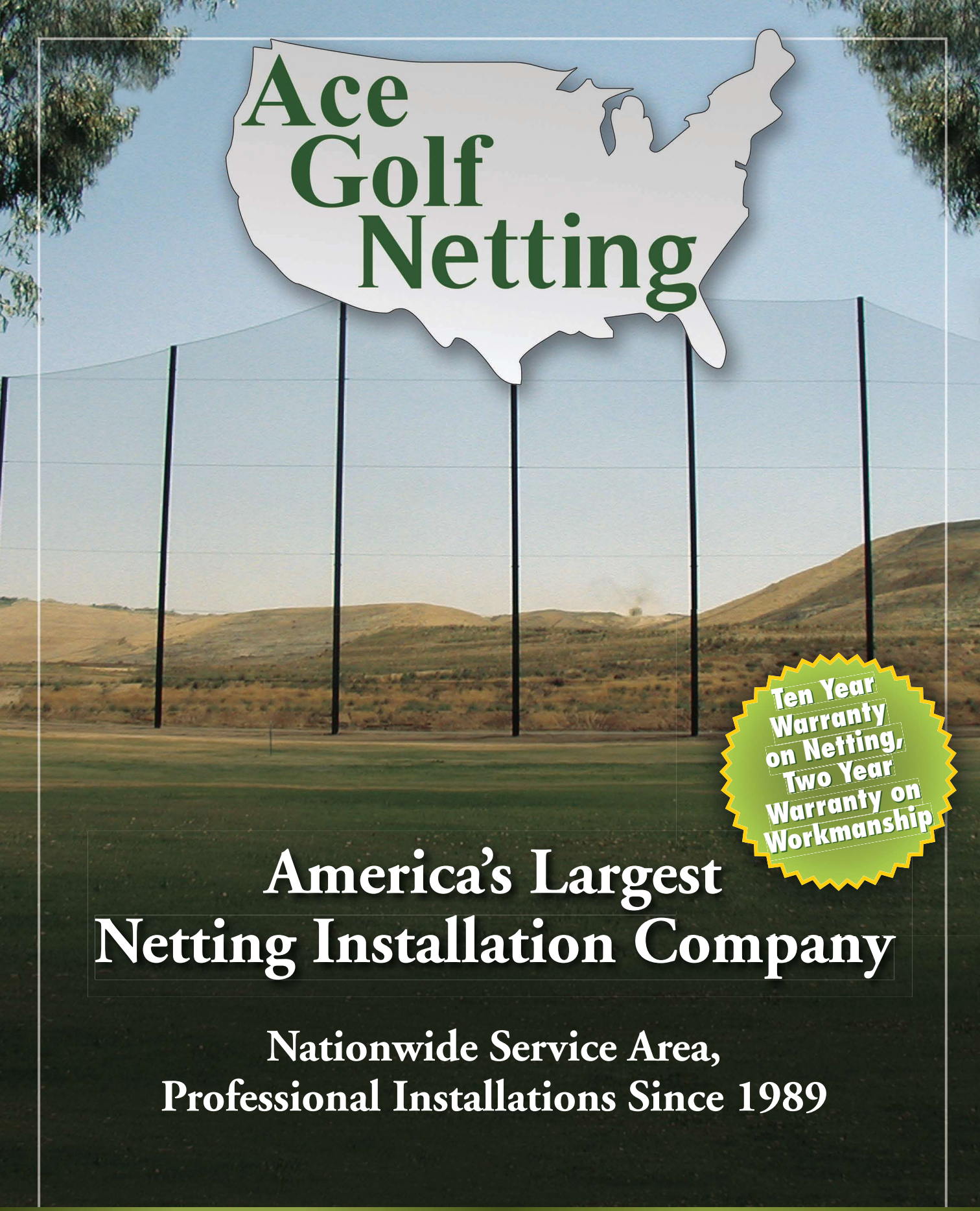
The brief lessons give Kiddie an opportunity to assess the ability of his new members and ask questions about their goals as it pertains to golf. "Are they a single-digit handicapper looking to break par for the first time or are they a relative beginner looking to make a par for the first time? The range is the ideal place to find out what the specific needs of your members are and how to address them," says Kiddie.

The initial lesson also lets him scope out their equipment and make suggestions based on what he sees. Whether it's the need for new grips, new spikes in their golf shoes, getting properly fitted or even just needing a new glove, observing your members on the range opens the door to increased golf shop sales. It also establishes a precedent—the golf professional takes a direct interest in your gear.

Kiddie uses this opportunity to introduce a member to the five different fitting systems he offers at Aronimink: Titleist, Cobra, Ping, TaylorMade and Mizuno. "I'd say 99 percent of our iron sales are custom fit and about 75 per-

Jeffrey Kiddie, last year's top PGA merchandiser, understands that sales in the shop can start with attentive assistance on the range.

RUSSELL KIRK/GOLFLINKS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It's not dramatically different from a cluster of practice greens, but the nine-hole par-2 short course at the Columbia Super Range in Everett, Wash., provides a place to practice holing out with a wedge or putter in a uniquely fun and even competitive environment.

cent of our driver sales are sold during a lesson or a fitting," he explains. "With that being the case, our time on the range with members is time well spent.

"It might be tough to quantify the exact number of members who've taken additional lessons or bought equipment from us, but as we develop relationships the vast majority of members takes lessons from someone on staff," Kiddie reports. He adds, with some emphasis: "At least half of them buy their equipment from us."

Short Course, Tall Returns

Bucket after bucket, golfers hit the range with the goal of sharpening some skill area. While range balls make up the primary revenue source for a majority of practice facilities, those who offer on-course opportunities add another revenue stream. Even if they are not 18-hole, par-72 courses, practice facilities with short-course offerings help scratch the golf itch.

Columbia Super Range in Everett, Wash., provides a unique nine-hole, par-2 course for golfers to work on their short game. The course features a natural grass teeing ground for each hole.

"I think it's what sets us apart from other driving ranges," says PGA Head Professional Steve Reuhl. "They just don't have a little short game course where you can work on chipping and putting."

Range customers come from an eight-mile radius — lesson customers will travel 20-plus miles.

This course is paired with lesson programs as well. When golfers sign up for a series of five lessons, Reuhl takes them onto the course for one or two of these lessons to supplement the previous time spent on the range. Reuhl also encourages his students to use the course for short game practice during their free time. More so than a practice putting green, it sets the stage for competitions—a primary means for getting in the "reps" that allow for true improvement.

While Columbia Super Range does not market its par-2 course individually, the amenity's value has done all of the talking. The facility charges $7.75 for a bucket of balls and access to the par-2 course with no time limit, compared to $5 just for a bucket of balls. The course is an enticing, and inexpensive, option for golfers wanting to sharpen their short-game skills after spending time range honing their full swing. "It doesn't get nearly as much play as the range, but for people who are serious about getting better, they will spend some time out there," Reuhl says.

A Lesson in Range Revenue

PGA Professional Danny Elkins has owned the Georgia Golf Center in Roswell for the past 15 years along with his business partner, and fellow

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Students who trust their golf instructor may go AWOL due to lack of funds, but the teacher can expect them back when finances improve.

PGA Professional, Chris Asbell. Over the years, Elkins has run a fairly successful operation at the standalone driving range – which he says stems from his activity as a golf instructor.

"We opened the range originally because we wanted to have full control over our teaching schedule and revenues," says Elkins, the 2005 Georgia PGA Golf Professional of the Year.

According to Elkins, driving range customers generally come from within a five-to eight-mile radius of the facility, but lesson customers will travel upwards of 20 miles if they find the teacher who's the right fit for them. And once a golf instructor develops a reputation as a superior teacher, people will travel great distances for a lesson.

"There's no question that a good teaching program can benefit the range business as well," says Elkins, who is also a former Teacher of the Year in the Georgia Section. "Your students will stick around after their lessons to hit balls, and they'll tend to come back to your range when they want to practice because of their familiarity with you. As a teacher, if you're walking the range scooping baskets or policing the tee line and you see one of your students, you'll stop for a second and say 'OK, let's look at a couple and see how it's coming along.'"

Over his 27 years teaching golf in the Atlanta area, Elkins has developed quite the Rolodex of students – the majority of his lessons have come through recommendation and word-of-mouth marketing. But the weak economy has created a decrease in lessons of late and forced Elkins to try new things to build business. Understanding the importance of marketing in today's climate, he and his business partner made the decision to bring in a third party, as an investor and part owner, to handle all the marketing operations.

"Our marketing plan focuses more on the range than on the lessons, because I have confidence that the lesson business will come back strong," says Elkins. "We're using social media and other new forms of communication, but our goal is to just let people know who we are, what we offer and where they can find us. We feel that having our new marketing efforts and our already intact lesson portfolio will create a platform for continued business success at our range." ■

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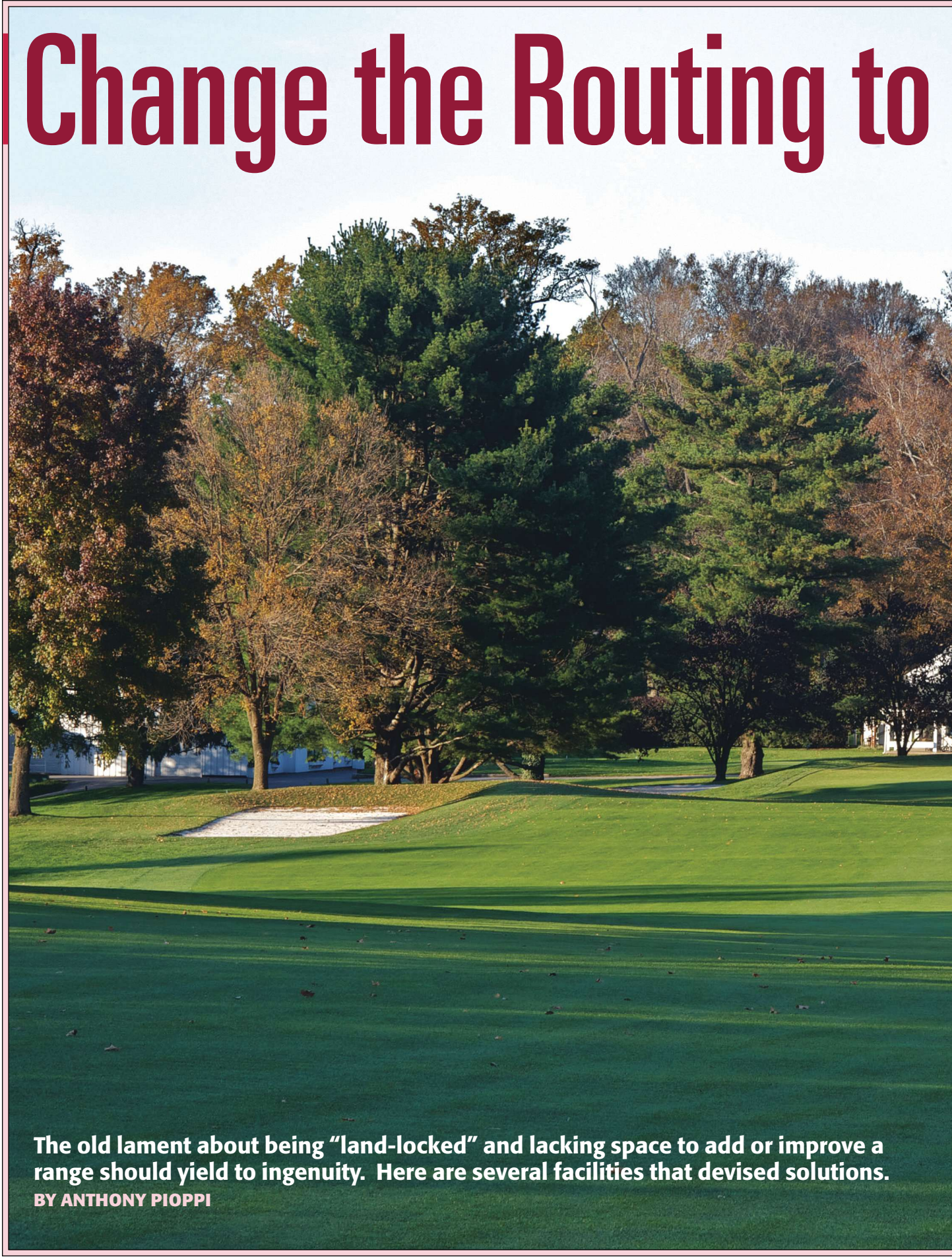
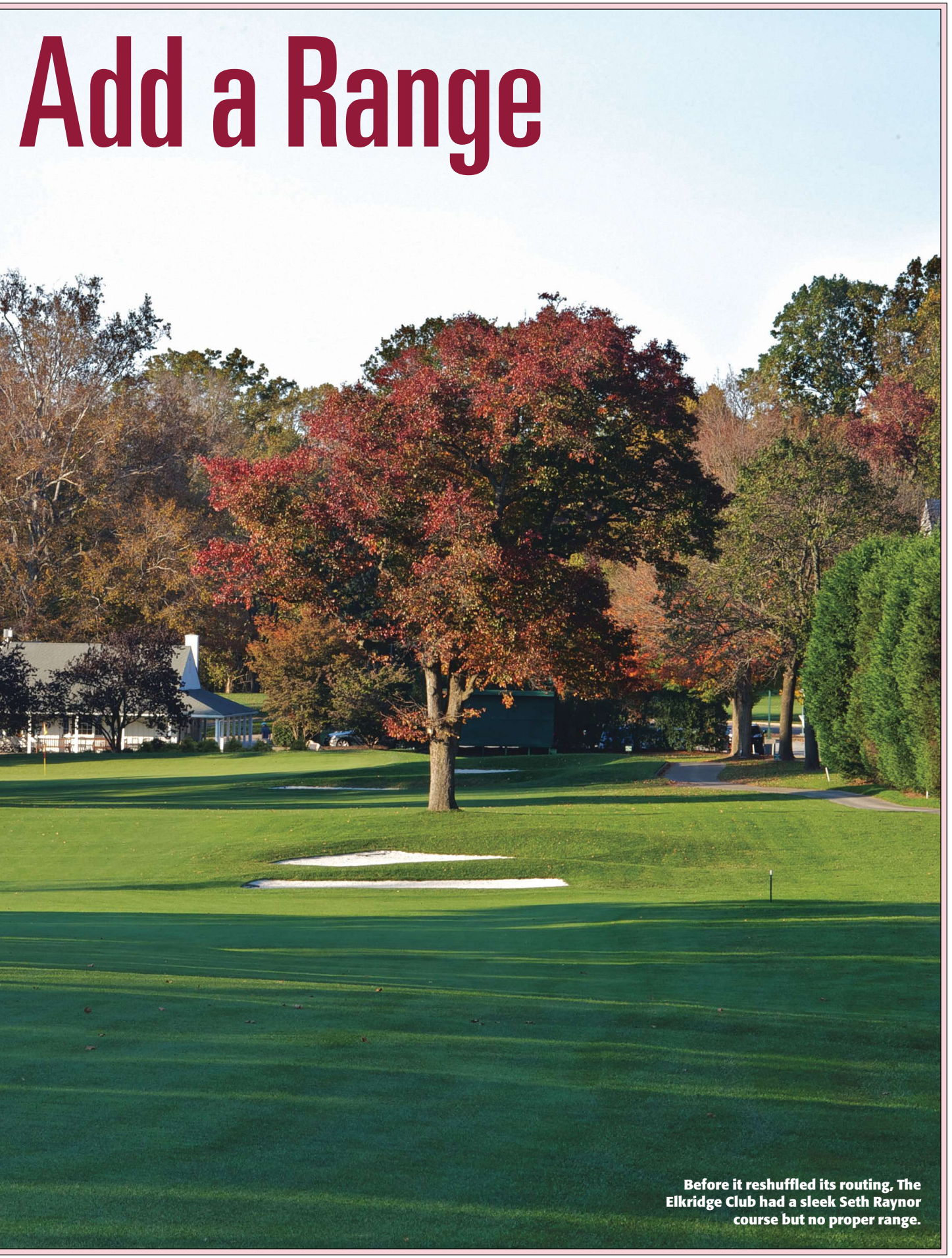


The old lament about being "land-locked" and lacking space to add or improve a range should yield to ingenuity. Here are several facilities that devised solutions.

BY ANTHONY PIOPPI

Add a Range



Before it reshuffled its routing, The Elkridge Club had a sleek Seth Raynor course but no proper range.

FLOYD LANKFORD III

This aerial view of Pine Hills Country Club in Wisconsin shows the practice range at lower left, alongside the par-5 sixth hole, as reconfigured by architect Ron Forse.

The famed course designer A.W. Tillinghast was onto something back in 1936 when he voiced an opinion the *Hartford Courant* saw fit to echo. According to the Connecticut newspaper, Tillinghast "recommends a practice ground for work on driving, approach shots and putting" and observes that "this feature of golf course construction is frequently ignored."

Indeed it was, such that courses built before the '50s could find themselves hemmed in by development and stuck with just 18 holes plus a clubhouse. Here in 2012, changes in recreational patterns and the golfer's connection to his sport make that scenario undesirable. A range, in other words, isn't really an option. In fact, even courses with fairly impressive practice facilities are looking to upgrade them as a market advantage *(see sidebar article, page 28)*.

Meanwhile, for clubs that find themselves landlocked or lacking funds to acquire useable adjacent acreage, the only option is to carve out space on the existing site. Likely that would mean rerouting the golf course, which is what Riviera Country Club in Coral Gables, Florida, had to do.

Originally one-half of the 36 holes belonging to the Biltmore Hotel in Miami, Riviera was split off and sold during the Great Depression. In 1993, course architect Brian Silva was retained by the club to address its lack of practice facilities. His solution was to take several fairways on either side of what would become a new driving range and bend them outward, repositioning their centerlines some 50 feet each. A short game area and a replacement hole were also constructed. The altering of the course necessitated that bunkers and greens be relocated. Cost estimates on adding a practice range to a club are predicated on how much of the existing layout has to be altered, but some experts put the cost between $250,000 and $750,000.

Riviera's decision to add a practice amenity was based on a desire to modernize. "A major part of it was the need to be more current in meeting member needs," says Silva, who returned to do more work at Riviera over the years. Following the addition of the range and practice area, a new clubhouse was also built – but having a place to hit balls was clearly Job One.

In the late 1980s the Elkridge Club in Baltimore, Md., took out two holes of its Seth Raynor design to add a range that is nearly 300 yards long and 100 yards wide. One of the Raynor putting surfaces on an eliminated hole became a practice green. "It was a definite need we had to fill," says Bill Baker, the current Elkridge golf committee chairman. If not for the generosity of an Elkridge member, the expansion would have been far more costly. This member donated property abutting the club, giving the design firm of Ault and Clarke an area on which to build

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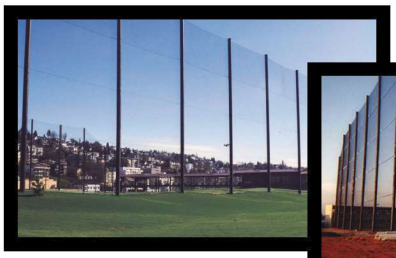

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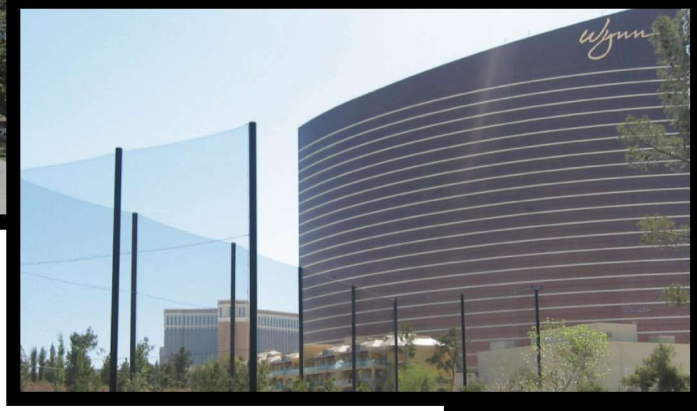

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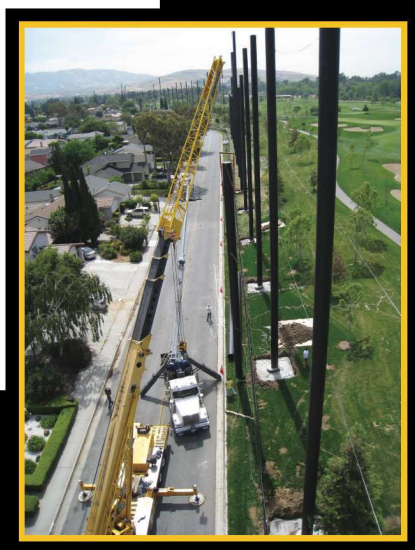

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Prior to the new range, Baker notes, there was an area between two existing holes that was only wide enough for one person to hit golf balls. That meant only one golf professional could give a lesson at a time, and hire a shagger to pick them. It was a facet of Elkridge that did not match up to many nearby golf facilities. The alteration has been embraced by many of the Elkridge golfers, even in the offseason. "I can tell you that a lot of people use that range," Baker said. "Different pros give lessons at the same time and we've added a row of mats that are used in the winter."

With the increased distance the golf ball flies as a result of technological advances, ranges that were once adequate have been outdated. In some instances, requiring practicing players to use only restricted-flight golf balls solved the length problem. In other cases, such as at Pine Hills Country Club in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, the answer was to reposition a golf hole. The range at Pine Hills was not part of the course's original 1928 Harry B. Smead design but was wedged into the property in the 1950s. It served the purpose for approximately 50 years until driving distance got stretched out.

Re-routing holes to build a range tends to cost from $250,000 to $750,000.

"The new golf ball and driver technology, that's what really brought this about," explains architect Ron Forse, who redesigned the sixth hole at Pine Hills. With the increased length, golf balls from the range weren't just making it to the rough line of the sixth hole, but carrying into the first landing area in the fairway, creating a dangerous situation. Longtime Pine Hills superintendent Rod Johnson explains that pine trees were used for a period to stop balls from making their way to the sixth hole. Once the trees matured, he estimated it took a carry of 230 yards to fly them. The conifer fence worked well for a number of years, until technology made it obsolete.

The sixth was originally a par-5 of 475 yards that arced from right to left around the end of the range. For the adjusting of the hole, the club purchased land and that allowed Forse to straighten the dogleg by moving the new fairway and greensite counterclockwise. He was able to retain the original teeing area and the beginning portion of the Smead fairway. The hole now plays 510 yards from the back tees. With the extra space added to the driving range, a carry of 300 yards is needed to reach the new hole.

A bonus for Pine Hills members is that the original sixth green and the final 100 yards of the Smead fairway have been kept up and turned into a very popular short game practice spot. It's located a good distance from the clubhouse and, according to Johnson, many people enjoy the seclusion as they hone their skills. "You're on your own out there," he says. ■

Nathan Crace, Something of a Specialist, Tweaks Annandale Practice Complex

Annandale Golf Club, in the Jackson, Mississippi suburbs, has hosted the PGA Tour's Viking Classic (formerly the Magnolia Classic) since 1993. The club's Jack Nicklaus Signature course covers 250 acres of rolling land built around an antebellum-style clubhouse. In 2010, Watermark Golf's Nathan Crace was brought in to make improvements to the practice facilities. The key to the plan was redevelopment of what had been a sod nursery between the maintenance buildings and the 10th tee. Working with Annandale superintendent, Al Osteen, and a club committee, Crace envisioned changes that would not only create a new short game area and make much-needed improvements to the existing driving range tee, but also screen off the maintenance facility and isolate the teeing area for the 10th hole.

New tees on the 10th hole were shifted toward the 18th green and mounding was created around the entire short game area so members practicing their short game skills "would feel like they are in their own world," as Crace puts it. The existing chipping green was relocated to make room for a new indoor teaching facility adjacent to the practice tee. As now constituted, the short game area consists of two large practice greens on opposite ends of the facility, enabling golfers to hit a multitude of shots ranging from short chips and flop shots, to greenside bunker shots and full wedges from more than 100 yards. And by simply changing direction, members can now practice long fairway bunker shots onto the adjacent driving range.

Annandale Golf Club, a PGA Tour stop, retained architect Nathan Crace to improve an already superior range and practice grounds. Thanks to ingenious (and fortunate) siting, this teaching/learning building doubles as a halfway house, generating ancillary revenue through food-beverage sales.

"Because of the way we will mow the approaches," says Crace, "you could practice shots from the rough, move over five feet and practice the same shot from an area mowed at collar height." No two practice sites are the same, he asserts, but the goal of variety and flexibility is always the same. "Whenever I design a short game area," Crace says, "my main objective is to take the property the client has available and produce a facility where practicing golfers are limited only by their imaginations."

The strategic elements of this renovation extend nicely to a new teaching building, built adjacent to the driving range tee. The building features a two-bay practice area facing out to the range, equipped with the latest swing technology. The building also has two restrooms and a halfway snack house on the front to serve members making the turn after nine.

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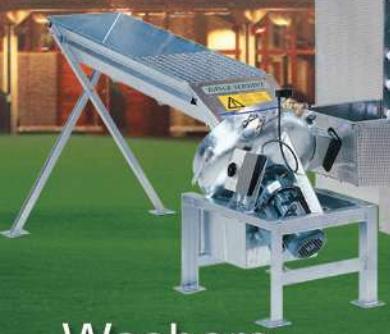

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Long Chip Beats the Short Pitch

Help your students to think of the short pitch shot as a long chip

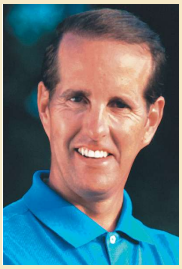
BY BRAD REDDING, PGA MASTER PROFESSIONAL WITH DON JOZWIAK, SENIOR EDITOR, *PGA MAGAZINE*

When faced with a short pitch shot of 30 or 40 yards, many golfers believe they need to hit a high, lofted shot to make the ball stop close to the pin. Hitting this type of shot requires a lot of wrist action and precision. The percentages aren't good for average golfers to pull off that type of swing, and they'll most often make poor contact and end up short of their target.

I prefer to teach my students to hit what I think is the easiest shot in golf: the low, rolling shot into the green. As long as there isn't water or sand guarding the front of the green, most golfers have a much better chance of making good contact and getting the ball close to the pin. ■

SETUP

I make sure my students place their hands forward of the ball with the shaft leaning toward the target to de-loft the clubface. The golf ball should be in the middle of the stance, and I suggest that they use a sand wedge for this shot. I tell my students that the position they set the club in at address is how it should remain throughout the swing. This helps keep their wrists from getting too active



Brad Redding, the PGA director of golf instruction at The Resort Club at Grande Dunes in Myrtle Beach, S.C., is a Certified PGA Master Professional in Instruction and the 2007 Carolinas PGA Section Teacher of the Year.

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BACKSWING

I tell my students to think about swinging the club with their shoulders and arms, not with their wrists. The key is to make sure they keep their wrists firm and that the clubhead stays behind the hands in the backswing. I remind them that the sand wedge has plenty of loft and that the ball will get in the air on its own – if they try to help it into the air by flipping their wrists, they're going to hit it high and short. Their hands only need to go about waist-high on the backswing.

FOLLOW-THROUGH

Once they've hit the ball, I make sure my students keep their wrists firm and stop their hands once they get back to a waist-high position. This abbreviated follow-through will help keep the ball low. Nine times out of 10, this approach will get the ball closer to the pin than a high-lofted shot for most golfers.

The Benefits of Teaching the "Long Chip"

I find there are many benefits to teaching my students how to hit the long chip shot. First of all, it gets them in the mindset of trying to get the ball on the green with an easy-to-execute shot instead of trying to emulate the cute shots they see PGA Tour players hitting on TV. Second, it's a swing they can use in a lot of different situations: punching out from under trees, hitting a knockdown shot into the wind or advancing the ball out of deep rough. It also helps improve tempo for most students, which cuts down on overswinging and helps them make more solid contact and impart more backspin on the ball for better flight.

This Instruction Classic from *PGA Magazine,* March 2009, is reprinted with permission.

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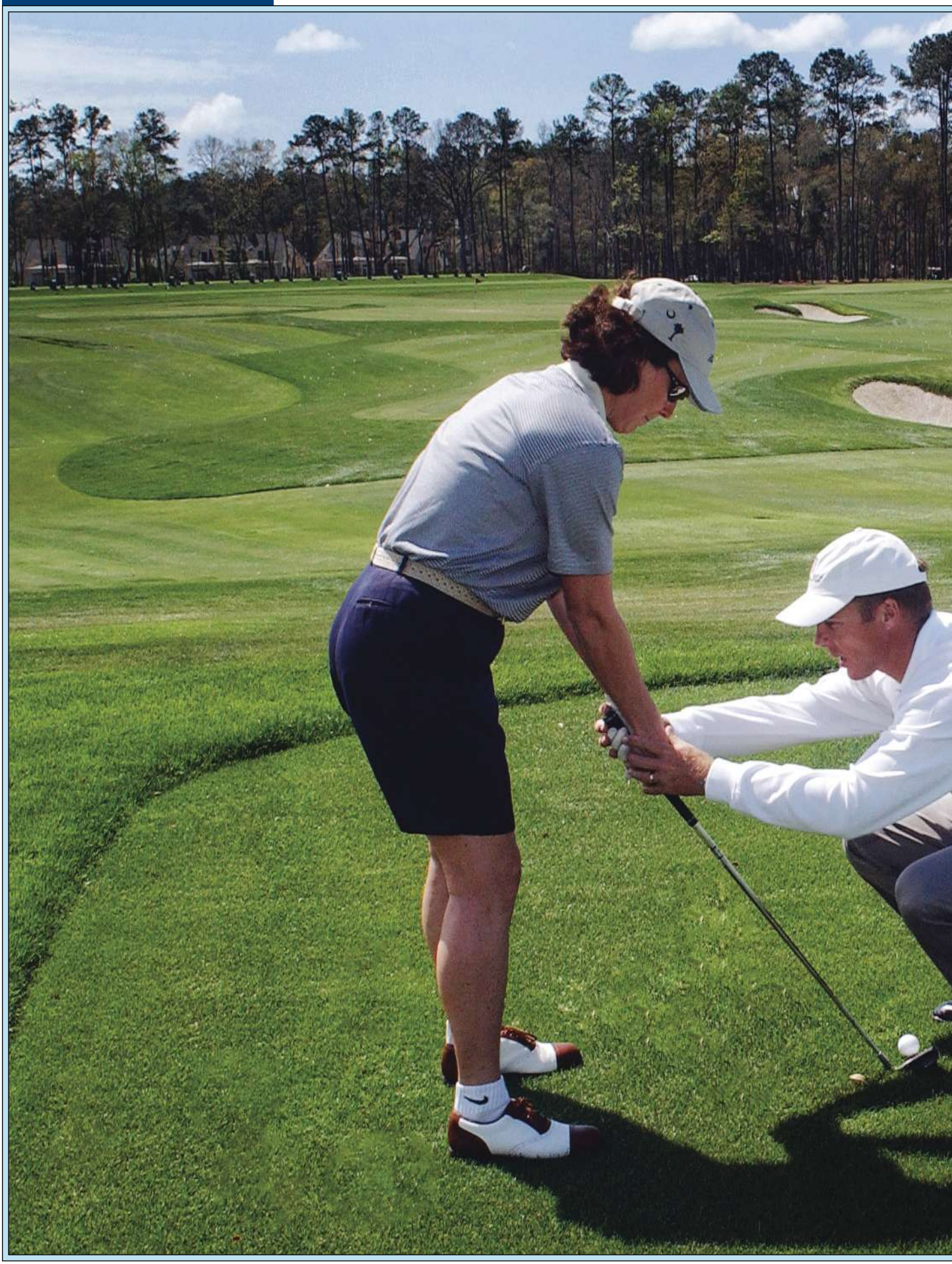

Berkeley Hall's Game-Improvement Theme Park

Inland from Hilton Head is a resort golf community that doesn't get the credit it deserves for making practice and learning a high-end amenity of utmost value.

BY DAVID BARRETT

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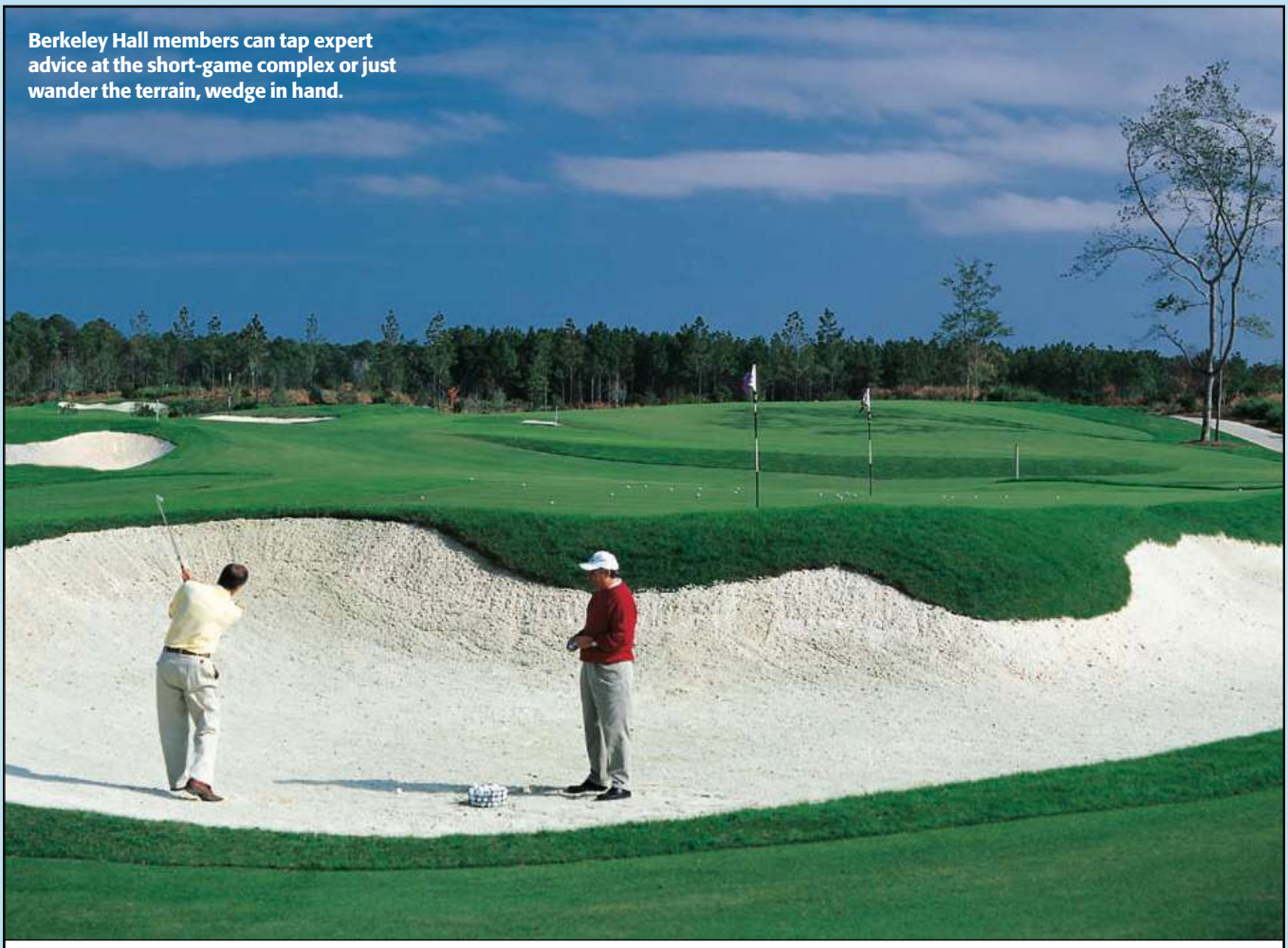

Berkeley Hall members can tap expert advice at the short-game complex or just wander the terrain, wedge in hand.

When Reed Development was planning Berkeley Hall around the turn of the century, there was already a plethora of golf communities in the Hilton Head Island/Bluffton area of South Carolina. How to make it stand out, especially considering that the site didn't boast spectacular waterfront?

Thirty-six holes of Tom Fazio golf are certainly an attraction and so is a 45,000-square-foot Jeffersonian-style clubhouse. But the amenity that gives Berkeley Hall its calling card is a practice and learning facility that is second to none. "I've never seen anything like it and I've practiced all over the world," declares Champions Tour player Loren Roberts.

It starts with a 31-acre practice area, including a double-ended range, a red-brick Learning Center and a short-game complex where you can practice every kind of shot you would ever encounter during play. But perhaps what's most impressive is the technology available to the member who wants to work on his or her game.

The facility includes four climate-controlled bays, including three where golfers can videotape their own swings. But the mother lode is in the "super bay" for those getting lessons from instructors Andrew Rice or Krista Dunton. It comes equipped with four cameras for videotaping swings, flat-screen TVs for immediate viewing, a SwingCatalyst pressure plate and 3D motion technology, and TrackMan radar technology.

You could spend a whole day in Berkeley Hall's short-game area and not exhaust the possibilities.

SwingCatalyst precisely measures how the player's weight and pressure shifts during the swing, giving a readout that accompanies the swing video. TrackMan measures 26 variables, including clubhead speed, clubface angle, club path, spin rate, carry distance, and much more. Golf instruction technology has come a long way in the decade since Berkeley Hall started, and the club has made sure to keep pace.

"When I started giving lessons, I would hand my students a VHS tape of their swing," says director of instruction Rice, who has been with Berkeley Hall since it opened in 2001. "Then it was a DVD, then email. Now people get a notification that their

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The SwingCatalyst and TrackMan information helps Rice determine what a player needs to work on in his swing—and convey it to the player in concrete terms. "It enables us to see where the power leaks or slowdowns are," says Rice, a South African who grew up competing against Ernie Els and Retief Goosen and was a second-team All-American at Central Florida.

Director of fitness Derek Lamire, the personal trainer for PGA Tour pro Kyle Stanley (a Berkeley Hall member), gets involved, too. "We know from Tour players what the ideal parameters are," Rice says. "But what a player can do depends on his age and physical capabilities. Derek will come here and say this person has weak hips but flexible shoulders, and we can come up with a plan that will work for that player."

In addition to helping players with their swings, Rice encourages them to work on their short games, too. "My job is to lower players' scores, and that's where a lot of it is going to happen," he says. "I spend a huge amount of my day with the short game."

In fact, you could spend a whole day in Berkeley Hall's short-game area and not exhaust the possibilities. Players can practice greenside bunker shots from shallow bunkers or deep bunkers and pitch shots that are uphill, downhill, or over water. There are tightly mown chipping areas and also rough areas for short shots. In another area, players can practice full fairway bunker shots.

The short-game facility's three practice greens are maintained in the same fashion as the greens on the golf course, and one of them is limited to chips and short shots to keep it free of ballmarks. There are four practice putting greens and also an indoor putting area. The facility features a wedge tee where players hit toward nine sand target greens at various distances. The sand extends seven feet around the flagsticks, so if the ball ends up in the sand the player knows he has hit it close (this is one time a player wants to find the sand).

Even with all of this available to them, golfers, being what they are, still prefer to bang full shots on the range. "That's why golfers started playing in the first place—because it's fun to smash that ball," Rice says. "Short-game practice can be fun, but you've got to approach it the right way."

Indeed, the Berkeley Hall learning center isn't all about hard work. For

one thing, practice can be fun. For another, the facility includes the Fazio Room, designed as a place where members can socialize. Here they gather, spontaneously or at a prearranged time, for watching the golf tournament or the big game on television, enjoying complimentary refreshments, playing cards, or stepping outside for a challenge on the putting green.

The Learning Center really starts hopping when there's a rain delay on the course. That's where golfers congregate to wait for the storm to pass, and often line up to take turns hitting balls from one of the bays or from under the Cover Shots mobile canopy (the canopy is also nice for giving shade on hot, sunny days).

Rice is constantly thinking of ways to get members involved with the Learning Center. This spring it was a program called The Biggest Loser, with prizes awarded to those who lost the most strokes on their handicap after a series of lessons. He also offers a driver fitting day once a month—clubfitting being another way that the club's teaching technology comes in handy.

There's a hardy band of users who don't need to be enticed to the Learning Center. While some golfers simply aren't inclined to practice, others can be found in Berkeley Hall's practice area every day they are in town. Ask around the Carolinas and you'll hear a consensus: There's no better club for those who derive pleasure from working on their game. ■

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PGA Learning & Performance

Interns Rev Up Service As They Learn

The country's 19 PGM programs fill personnel gaps effectively and affordably. Could your instruction and practice complex use a pro-in-training to enhance golfer service? BY DAVID GOULD

Alongside a practice putting green at Innisbrook Resort, eight or ten golfers gathered to hear a first-year Professional Golf Management intern explain the basics of the chip shot. As the presentation was beginning, another half-dozen clinic attendees showed up in curiosity and fanned out around the green, wedges in hand. Moments later a second-year PGM intern hurried over and cut the class size back to its original quota.

"This is a small green," Ron Beck, the more experienced staffer, pointed out to his junior colleague, "and you had people lined up opposite each other. "If somebody skulls one we could have a real problem."

Beck is now a veteran PGA director of golf and club manager who recalls the energy and customer-touch value that PGM interns brought to the golf program at Innisbrook, which was an early adopter of the hiring practice. The head of the resort's golf operation at the time, Jay Overton, used his corps of PGA interns as a means of spicing up the program with lots of free clinics and personal-touch service for players on the various practice ranges.

For some senior golf managers, the outplacement availability of 1,000-plus PGM degree candidates can be the difference between providing consistent staff coverage and quality or falling a bit short. At Candia Woods Golf Links in Candia, New Hampshire, head professional Craig McLaughlin makes a practice of tapping his alma mater, the PGM program at North Carolina's Methodist University, for summer reinforcements. "As PGM education has evolved–and I can speak especially for the Methodist program—courses that take on interns have gotten exceptional value and a professional-level contribution to the operation," says McLaughlin, who pays his interns at the $10/hour level and perhaps lower if he can arrange housing for them. "Yes, we're mentoring," he says, "but this is a staff member who I can expect will do anything in the operation, at a high level of competence."

It's a common form of intern-recruiting to have a senior golf-staff member who is a PGM graduate keep up contact with his former teachers and continually field recommendations. Scott Catledge, the PGA head professional at Hedingham Golf Club in Raleigh, North Carolina, turns to North Carolina State as a source of high-energy, low-cost golf staff members. One of Catledge's senior assis-

A PGM Student instructs a participant during a recent Play Golf America Day at Angel Park Golf Club in Las Vegas.

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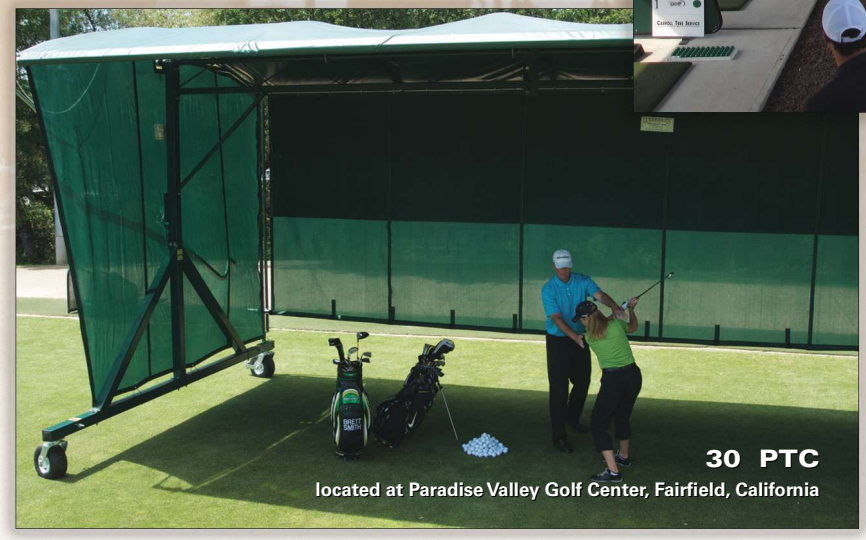

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tants, Tad Wood, says orientation and assignment of duties becomes very simple under this scenario. "It's just a lot easier to have someone join our staff for a 3-month or 6-month period who has been through the same program that the senior person was trained under," says Wood.

> "We're mentoring our interns, but they are able to come in and do just about any job function skillfully."
>
> —Craig McLaughlin

At the PGA Merchandise Show each winter, a section of the show floor becomes a warren of small booths with university names posted above each one. Course owners and golf managers flow through to speak with program directors and even students. Over time, the various programs have developed distinct characters—Methodist University, for example, trains its students in agronomy as well as golf operations.

To one seasoned golf operator, PGM programs must be viewed in the context of the overall apprentice-professional tradition, which may not last forever. "Whenever people talk about entry-level assistant golf professionals, they refer to 'the young guy making $25,000 a year,'" says Greg Keating, vice-president of club operations at the Daniel Island Club in Charleston, South Carolina. "I only wish that was the going rate—we pay close to $40,000." Keating looks at other industries and opportunities for attractive, talented young people and worries that "the PGA Apprentice tradition of low wages and long hours is going to run out at some time."

If that's the case, the much newer tradition of PGM education at universities, and formal internships that will speed the new recruit along his or her career path, may have come along just in time. ■

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School	Program Director	Email
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Clemson University	Rick Lucas, PGA, Director	rlucas@clemson.edu
Coastal Carolina University	Charles Thrash, Director	Cthrash@coastal.edu
Eastern Kentucky University	Kim Kincer, Director	kim.kincer@eku.edu
Ferris State University	Aaron Waltz, PGA, Coordinator	AaronWaltz@ferris.edu
Florida Gulf Coast University	Tara McKenna, PGA, Director	tmckenna@fgcu.edu
Florida State University	Donald Farr, PGA, Director	dfarr@cob.fsu.edu
Methodist University	Jerry Hogge, PGA, Director	Jhogge@methodist.edu
Mississippi State University	Jeff Adkerson, PGA, Director	jadkerson@cobilan.msstate.edu
New Mexico State University	Pat Gavin, PGA, Director	Pgavin@nmsu.edu
North Carolina State University	Dr. Robb Wade, PGA, Director	robb_wade@ncsu.edu
Penn State University	Dr. Burch Wilkes, Professor-in-Charge	gbw104@psu.edu
Sam Houston State University	Richard Ballinger, PGA, Director	rmb002@shsu.edu
University of Central Oklahoma	Bob Phelps, PGA, Director	rphelps@uco.edu
University of Colorado, Colorado Spgs.	Ed Kelbel, PGA, Director	ekelbel@uccs.edu
University of Idaho	Cole Mize, PGA, Director	colem@uidaho.edu
University of Maryland Eastern Shore	Billy Dillon, PGA, Director	wcdillon@umes.edu
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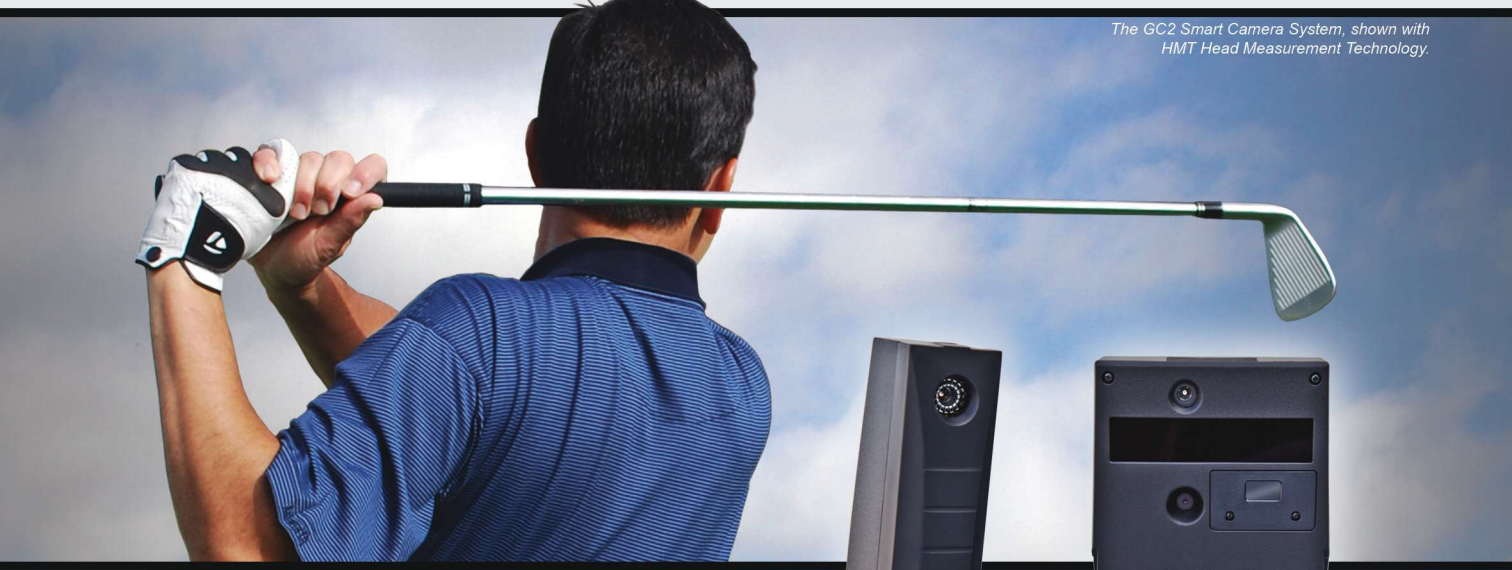

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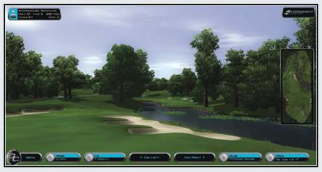

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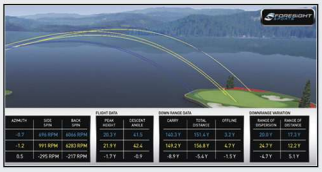

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Marketing Success in 10 Minutes a Day

The advice of a consultant and author who has won awards for range operations is to push distractions away and schedule time for promoting, publicizing and marketing your business BY SHERYL BINDLEGLASS

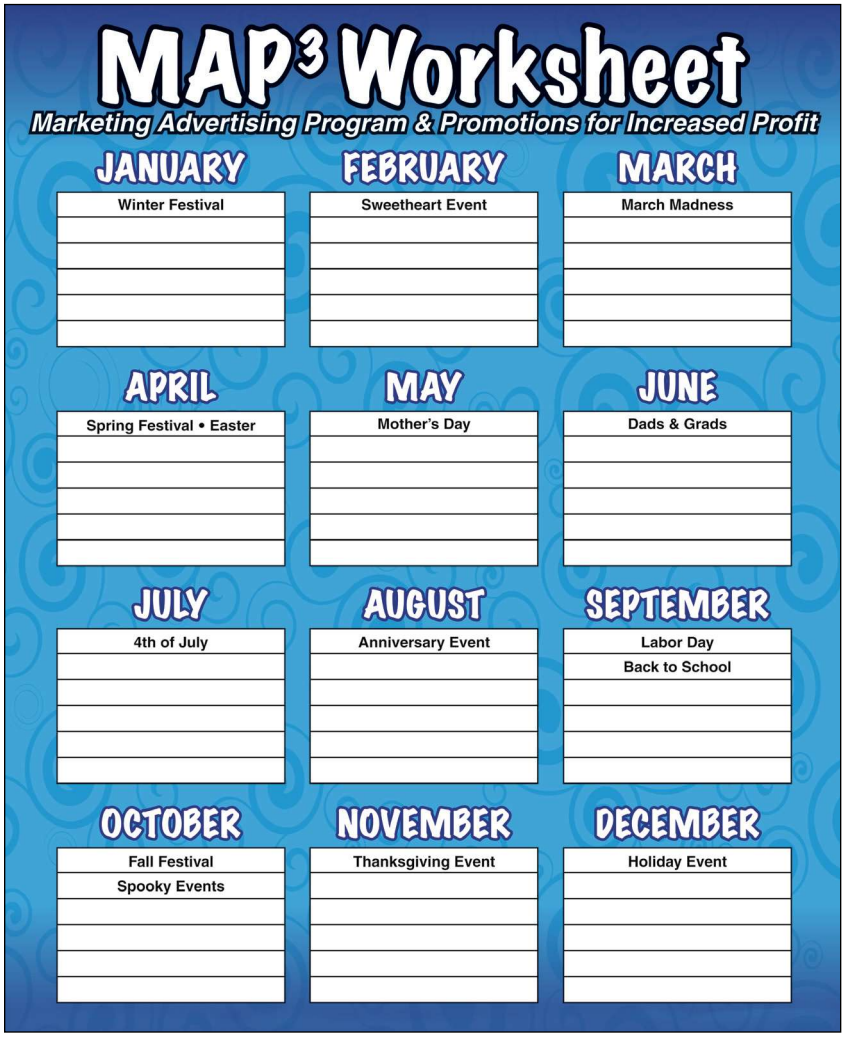
If you think you don't have time to market your business, you need to think again. One of the biggest mistakes range owners make is spending all of their time working *in* the business instead of *on* the business. That approach may keep the doors open, but it won't do much to grow your numbers or boost profits. Finding time for marketing, even just 10 minutes in a busy day, is critical to success in today's tough business climate.

To effectively market, you'll need a plan. The plan can be as informal as a wall calendar with the year's events written into their appropriate months. Some owners get staff involved in the planning process—the front-line people always know things that the boss doesn't. Take 10 minutes of a staff meeting to brainstorm and list events and activities on the calendar for the coming year. This approach has the added benefit of your staff feeling a sense of ownership, and gives them more commitment to the success of the events and activities.

With our clients, we use a MAP3 (Marketing, Advertising, Promotion, Programs, Publicity) system. It lays out the whole year ahead, establishing activities and events and their corresponding staffing needs, along with sales goals and budget estimates. Using the MAP3, we can zero in on the marketing activities for each event. Whatever method you choose to use, having a plan is a time saver. Think of it as a small investment that will quickly pay off a big return.

Range owners often tell me that disengaging from ongoing management duties to think about future activities and business-building is a luxury they don't have. My response is to help them find repetitive, mundane or even annoying tasks that are using up time and making slight use of their talents. Let's explore the most common time traps and examine ways to tame them.

Email: Let's face it, most of us could spend two or three hours a day just cleaning out our email inbox. If we fall into the trap of doing that, day after day, countless hours are wasted. There are several ways to make email more manageable. Have a business account that is accessible to designated staff members. Give them the task of



MAP³ Worksheet

Marketing Advertising Program & Promotions for Increased Profit

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
Winter Festival	Sweetheart Event	March Madness

APRIL	MAY	JUNE
Spring Festival • Easter	Mother's Day	Dads & Grads

JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
4th of July	Anniversary Event	Labor Day
		Back to School

OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Fall Festival	Thanksgiving Event	Holiday Event
Spooky Events		

As the worksheets show, you can follow Sheryl's advice for revenue-building by leveraging holidays, seasons and other activity-generators. Focus on what's popular in the culture – be it martinis or Twitter – and exploit that energy.

keeping up with the general run of messages. Use folders to organize your personal account. Try to limit your email time to 10-minute stints a couple of times a day.

Phone calls: Being accessible on the phone is generally a good thing. At times, however, the nuisance calls pile up and take your attention away from more important tasks. One easy remedy is to have staff members take complete messages. You shouldn't be dealing with slips of paper that simply say, "Mr. Brown called."

Doing everything yourself: No business can succeed for long if there is one person with all the answers. Involve your staff. Set your expectations and communicate them clearly. Listen to your staff's ideas, respect their knowledge and reward good performance. Give them the tools they need to do their jobs.

Keep that "startup" energy by making marketing a habit.

You have a plan, you've tamed the time traps, now you are ready to actively and effectively market your business, every day of the week. The chart to the right offers a lighthearted look at marketing activities that take only a few minutes a day.

Getting in the marketing habit works best if you set aside a specific time each day to set some goals, formulate ideas and take action steps to build business. Try taking 10 minutes each day, before 10 a.m., to work on one or more of these marketing activities:

1 Create a new sign to promote a special of the day

2 Send out a call-to-action email to a specific target group

3 Read the local newspaper, find a company with something to celebrate (a new product, new location, new vice president). Call or email them with your congratulations

4 Go on a "manager's walk-about." Start at the entrance of your facility and see which focus points need signage or a fresh look

5 Have a morning huddle with your staff. Highlight a product or special of the day that you want your staff to promote to all guests

6 Update your voicemail greeting, on-hold message and digital signs

7 Check your website to make sure all current information is posted

8 Create a sales contest for your team

When you decided to go into business, you no doubt had a vision of what that business would be. You spent thousands of dollars and countless hours bringing your vision to life. Spending just 10 minutes a day on marketing will keep your business alive. More than that, it will make your business grow. Effective marketing is your only defense against economic downturns, bad weather, high gasoline prices or any other challenges your facility will encounter along the way. Plus, if you get in the habit and achieve some success, you'll soon realize there is a true pleasure in using your creativity to lift sales. ■

You can contact **Sheryl Bindelglass**, president of SherylGolf, at 732.302.4439, or by emailing Sheryl@sherylgolf.com. Company website is www.sherylgolf.com

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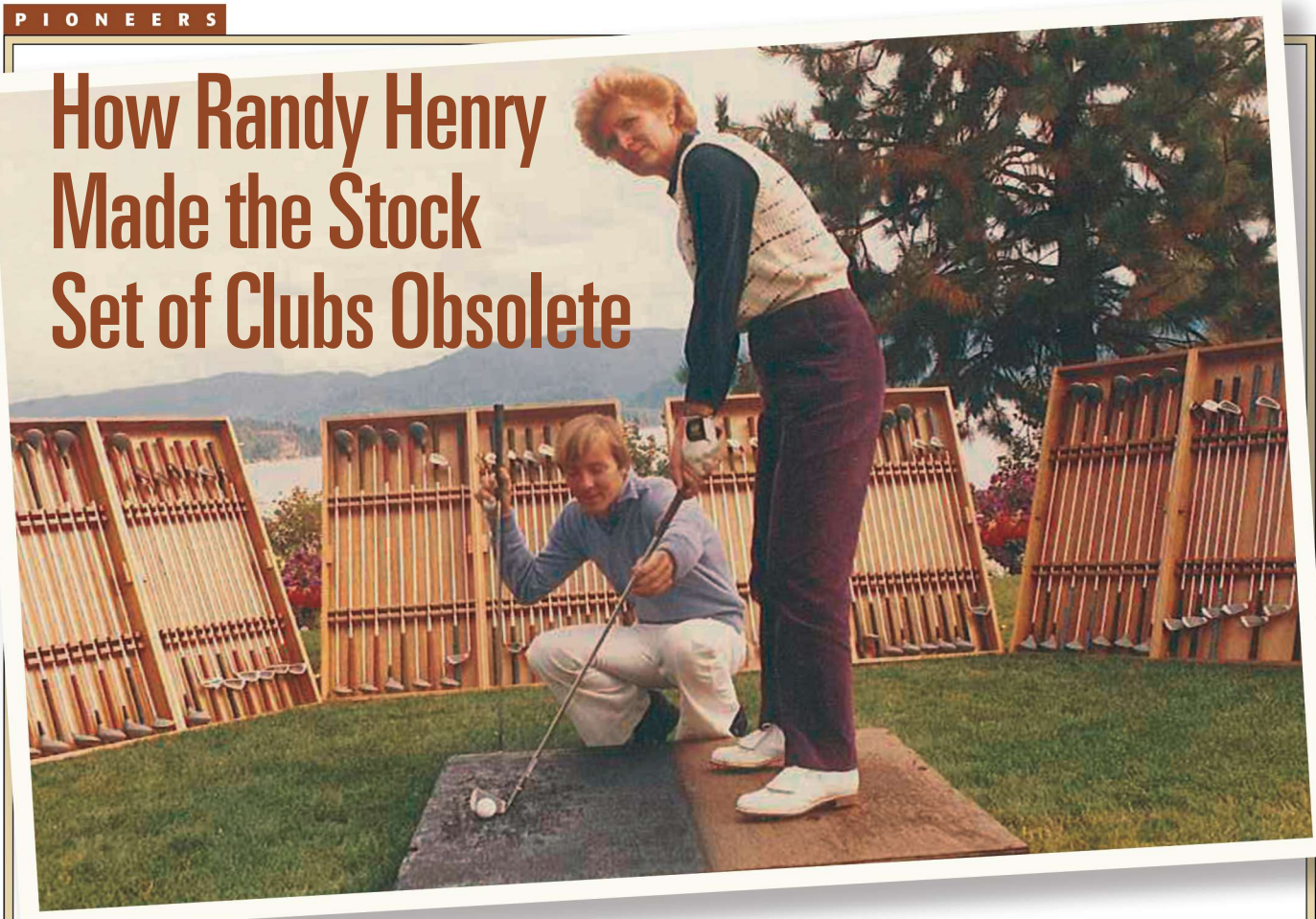
How Randy Henry Made the Stock Set of Clubs Obsolete



Recovering slowly from a catastrophic auto accident, an Idaho golf professional found time back in the 1980s to change how premium clubs are designed, sold and built BY DAVID GOULD

The range has always been known as a great place for practice and teaching. Gradually, however, it has also emerged as the site of all serious analysis, fitting and selling of golf clubs. Randy Henry, a thoughtful, soft-spoken PGA golf professional from north Idaho, did more than anyone else to make that so. The company he co-founded, Henry-Griffitts, is heading into its fourth decade as a full-service organization dedicated to professional education, precision fitting and custom club production.

Every other company had to play catch-up to the H-G business model, with fitting carts, detachable-head test clubs, in-depth training and observed ball flight. All of them did that, which makes Henry-Griffitts less a story of commercial mega-success and more a tale of original thinking—one that easily earns the "pioneer" designation.

In the 1980s and much of the 1990s, the idea prevailed that premium clubs have to be built to pre-set specs in a factory, then boxed up, shipped out, put on display and purchased "off the rack." Meanwhile, Henry-Griffitts seminars on cause-effect in the gear-swing relationship were taking place all over the U.S. and overseas. Employing concepts he came upon during his long, slow recovery from an auto accident, Henry developed the mantra that "Golf club fitting has to take place outdoors where the full flight of the ball can be observed." It was a point of view that changed the role of the golf range. Along with video, motion sensors and ball-flight trackers, it created the absolute need for a well-equipped teaching-and-fitting station somewhere along the tee line

> "Clubfitting has to take place outdoors where the full flight of the ball can be observed."
> — Randy Henry

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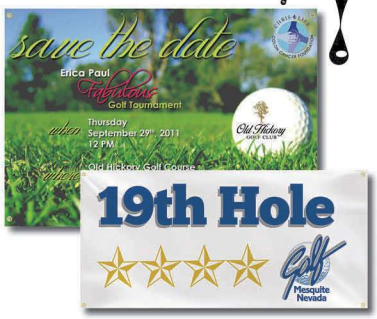

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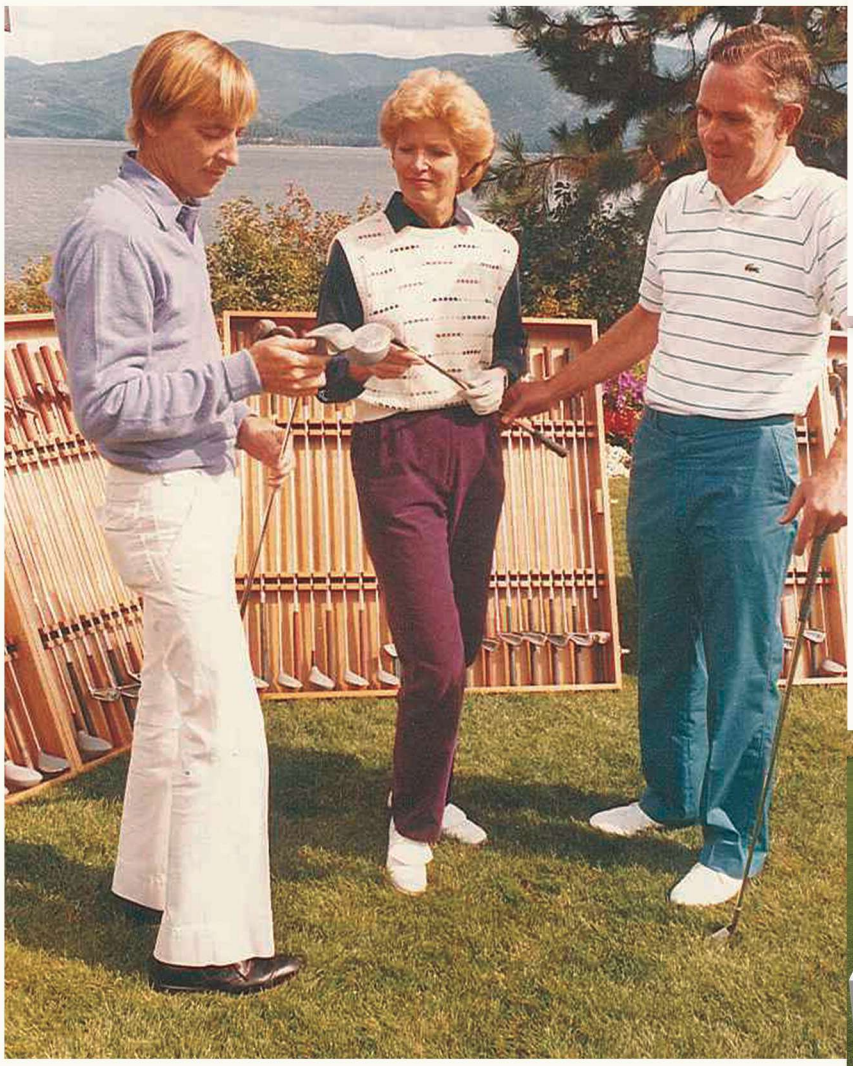
of a club's range. And it helped make what happens on a driving range more exciting for golfers.

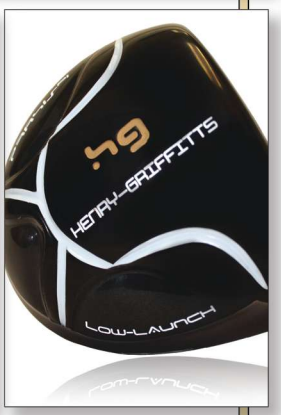
Henry and his team eventually earned a U.S. patent on a lightweight lie board, as they would on interchangeable-head test clubs (with True Temper). But the original lie board the company's clubfitters hauled to the range was a plywood monster that folded open to create space for the golfer's stance as well as an impact zone.

Preceding Randy Henry in this redefinition of clubfitting was the Ohio iconoclast Ralph Maltby, whose books, seminars and magazine articles had convincingly explained the problem of stock golf equipment. If you spent a week at one of Maltby's clubfitting and assembly classes, he would make you insert a power drill with a three-foot-long bit into the grip vent of all your clubs and drill out the lead that the manufacturer had plugged into the hosels to match up swingweights. Inside his textbook was a large diagram showing how to check lie angle on an impact board and what happened to ball flight when lies were too upright or flat. Henry would routinely credit Maltby for understanding his subject so fully and explaining it with clarity.

But even The GolfWorks, Maltby's golf gear company in Newark, Ohio, wasn't set up to do what the Henry-Griffitts business model demanded. For golf professionals, becoming an H-G fitter meant undergoing training, paying for the fitting system, altering their time management pattern and defending a little-known brand name against the major manufacturers—until the majors all set up fitting systems and truly functional custom programs. Randy Henry remains the creative force behind club design and the evolution of the fitting concept as practiced at Henry-Griffitts. And every lie board that lands on a patch of grass along some tee line echoes his original burst of creativity. ■

H-G's early days featured test clubs in wooden cases and road trips to visit teaching pros. Lower photos show current system and product.





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