



GRAA

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

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

- Serious Teaching, Plus an Eye for What's Trending: Catch up with Northern California teaching professional Kris Moe and you'll likely catch wind of what's happening next in the business of golf instruction.
- Video File: Randy Towner, PGA, at Firekeeper Golf Course in Mayetta, Kan. shares how giving your visitors a window on your whole operation can increase both sales and customer satisfaction.
- Public Range Profile: Lyman Orchards - Close to a dense population but still with a country feel, this 36-hole golf complex with its orchard and farm store is a true Connecticut destination - one that just doubled down on golf.
- GRAA 2012 Award Entries Now Being Accepted. Apply today in any of the following categories:
 - Top 50 Golf Range/*Stand Alone Facilities*
 - Top 50 Golf Range/*Public Facilities*
 - Top 50 Golf Range/*Private Facilities*
 - Top 50 *Growth of the Game Teaching Professionals*

Keep it fun and thanks for supporting the GRAA.

Best Regards,

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Golf Ranges: Where the Fun Starts

Golf Range



M A G A Z I N E

Volume 20, No. 8
August 2012

PRACTICE • TEACHING • FITTING • MARKETING

Time to Add an Academy Building?

Survey Data Helps Clubs and Teachers Make the Call



Also in this issue:

- Growing Golf the TGA Way
- California Innovator: Kris Moe
- New Look at Lyman Orchards





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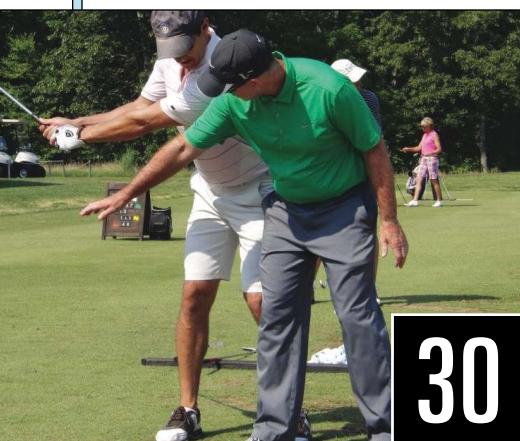




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Golf Range

M A G A Z I N E



Volume 20, Number 8

August 2012

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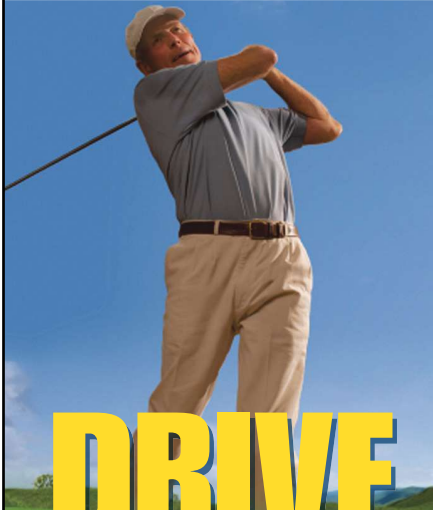
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Making Room for Instruction

I've noticed something interesting over my many years in the golf business: Most golf instructors are too humble about their considerable skills. Maybe this stems from a reluctance to show off their ease with a game that is so difficult for the vast majority of the population, or perhaps it's simply an old-school approach to marketing in a gentleman's game.

Whatever the reason for this humility, golf instruction can sometimes get lost in the shuffle at range facilities. That's why I'm encouraged by a trend toward golf facilities building standalone structures to house their teaching and clubfitting operations. This month's *Golf Range Magazine* includes an interesting story titled "Little House of Lessons: The Academy Building on Your Range" (page 22) that looks at the economics and impact of adding just such a building to an existing facility.

In my experience, these teaching studios make two statements to your customers. First, they show that your facility is serious about instruction – any time of year, no matter what the weather. By creating an instruction oasis that operates in the hottest southwestern sun, the stormiest southeastern thunderstorm or the coldest northern winter, your range is able to provide instruction regardless of Mother Nature's plans. I'll never forget a photo of a student arriving for a January lesson taken by the staff at the Winter Golf Center at Grand Traverse Resort and Spa outside Traverse City, Mich.; the student and his golf clubs were on a snowmobile, ready to work on his game despite several inches of snow on the ground.

Second, having a standalone instruction building is a visual reminder that your facility offers golf instruction. Savvy instructors know the benefits of having their teaching areas visible, and employ many strategies to catch the eye of other golfers using the range: Having an instructor roam the range to give tips; roping off a few hitting bays for golf instruction only; displaying an instructor's staff bag and teaching aids in a prominent hitting area; or making sure the facility's launch monitor and clubfitting carts can be seen from high-traffic areas. Having a dedicated golf instruction building takes this visual marketing strategy even farther.

Whether your range has its own golf instruction building or not, I encourage you to read our cover story and the rest of this month's issue in search of ideas that will help your range business grow – and don't be afraid to toot your own horn about the expertise your instructors can provide to your customers.

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Golf Ranges: Where the Fun Starts



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Exclusive New GRAA Survey Data— Getting Granular

This spring your association went into the field with a detailed consumer survey, which has just come back tabulated. This first excerpt gives a glimpse of the range user's hot buttons **BY TONY STARKS**

The mission statement of the Golf Range Association of America is to harness the combined power of all golf range owners, operators and staff at all types of facilities to grow their revenues, enhance their careers and help grow the game of golf. One way we've set out to accomplish that is by attempting to comprehensively know and understand your customer: The range user.

The GRAA recently conducted a thorough survey of golf consumers to reveal their range-use habits and the characteristics they seek in a practice environment. More than 90 percent of the respondents were male, but ages varied from under 19 to 70-plus (at 27 percent, the plurality of respondents fell in the 50–59 age bracket). As you may have guessed, the golfer who takes the time to complete a survey about their range habits is most likely

a serious player. A whopping 86 percent of respondents reported playing more than 16 rounds of golf in the last year and fall into the category of avid golfer.

Past research conducted by the National Golf Foundation indicates that avid golfers account for 51 percent of range visits and are the strongest contributors to the range economy. With that said, understanding the benefits and traits this segment

of golfers finds important can be critical to the success of your operation.

The GRAA survey asked consumers to rate various elements of customer service at the range they visit most frequently. Keeping in mind that the majority of these responses come from avid golfers, here are the highest rated attributes they told us about:

- 1) **Waiting time** for an open bay or spot
63 percent of respondents gave their range an "Excellent" mark in this category
- 2) **Availability of golf balls** when needed
63 percent of respondents gave their range an "Excellent" mark in this category
- 3) **Friendliness**
46 percent of respondents gave their range an "Excellent" mark in this category
- 4) **Cleanliness** of facility
47 percent of respondents gave their range an "Excellent" mark in this category
- 5) **Family-friendly**
41 percent of respondents gave their range an "Excellent" mark in this category

Cost of golf balls and availability of expertise/advice were rated "Good" and "Fair," respectively, in comparison. Avid players love golf. They love to play and to practice, so when they go to their range of choice what they're most looking for is the space and availability to work on their game when and how they see fit. Keep that in mind the next time you assess your range operation. ■

Customer Service Ratings

Please rate the customer service of the range you visit most frequently. Please rate from 5 (Excellent) to 1 (Very Poor). (Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.)

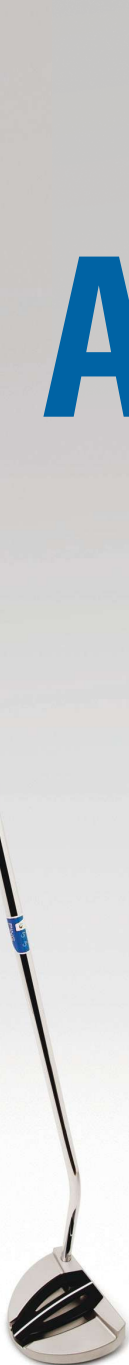
	Excellent 5	4	Fair 3	2	Very Poor 1
Friendliness	540 46%	416 36%	191 16%	16 1%	4 0%
Expertise and availability in answering questions	279 24%	355 31%	364 32%	111 10%	46 4%
Waiting time for an open bay or spot	729 63%	297 26%	103 9%	19 2%	15 1%
Family-friendly	469 41%	374 33%	225 20%	50 4%	32 3%
Cleanliness of facility	540 47%	423 37%	162 14%	24 2%	9 1%
Cost of balls	387 33%	401 35%	285 25%	65 6%	18 2%
Availability of golf balls when needed	731 63%	344 30%	76 7%	10 1%	2 0%
Safety	575 50%	431 37%	119 10%	20 2%	8 1%
Overall appearance of facility	439 38%	493 42%	178 15%	48 4%	5 0%

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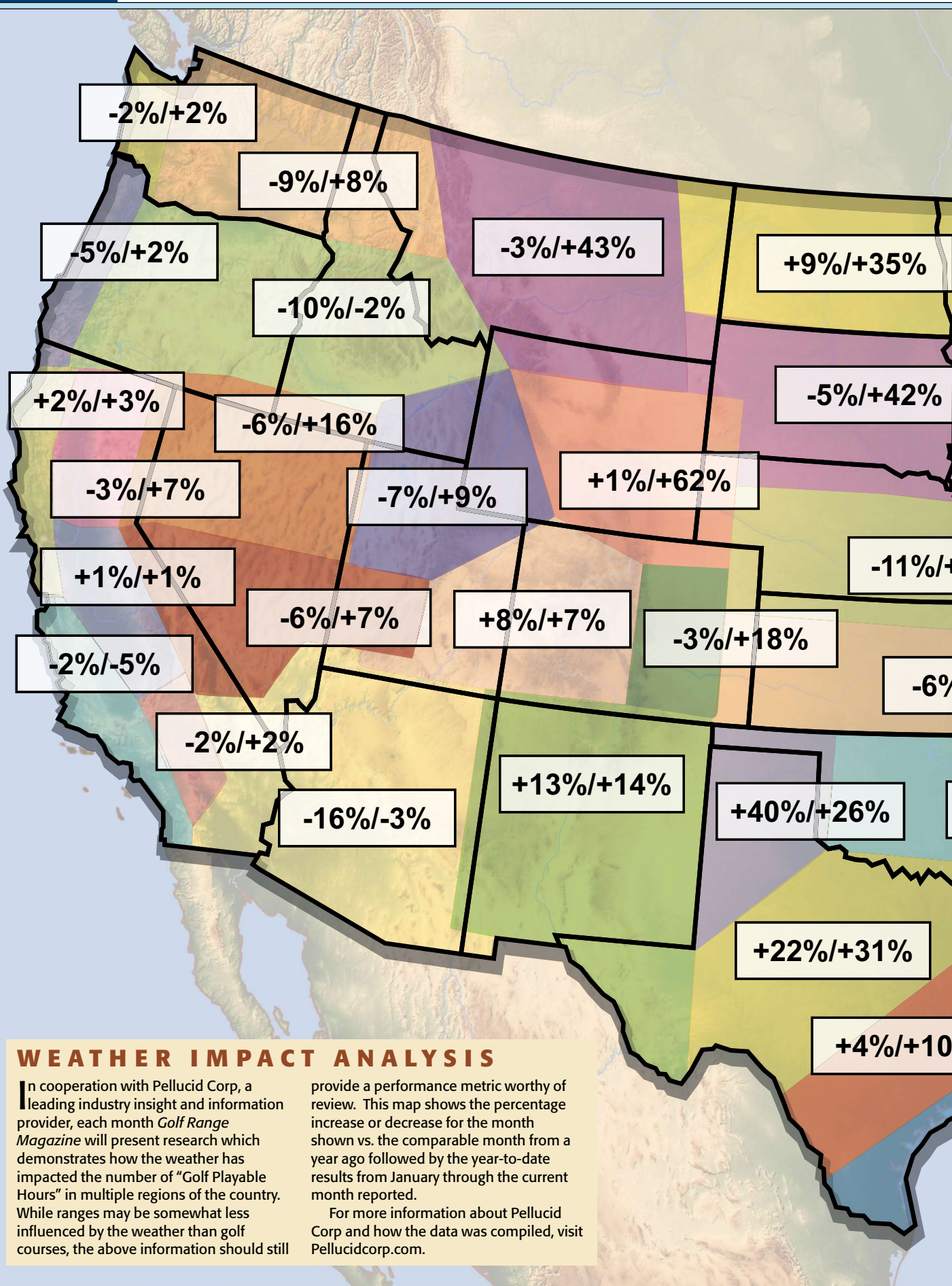
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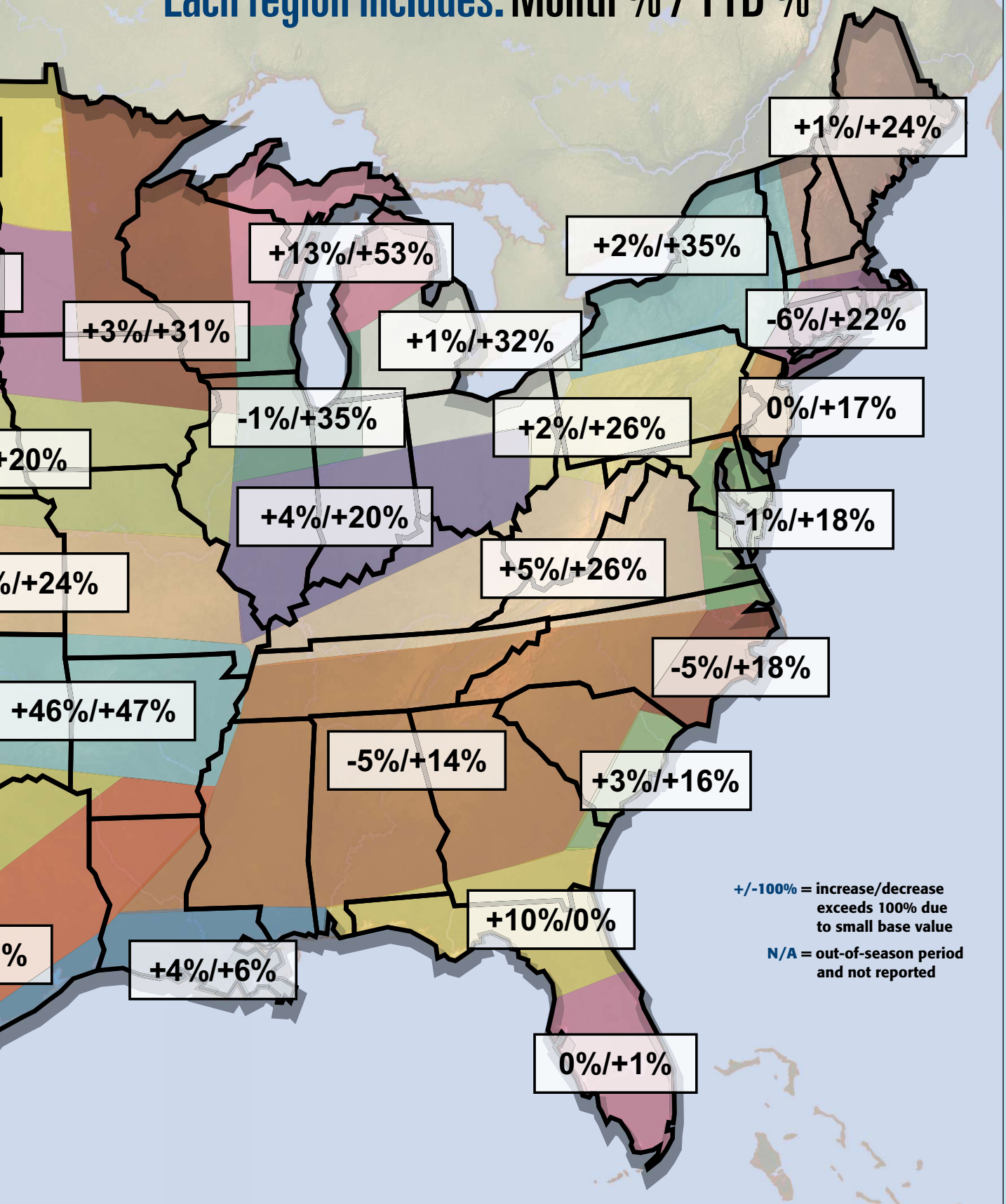
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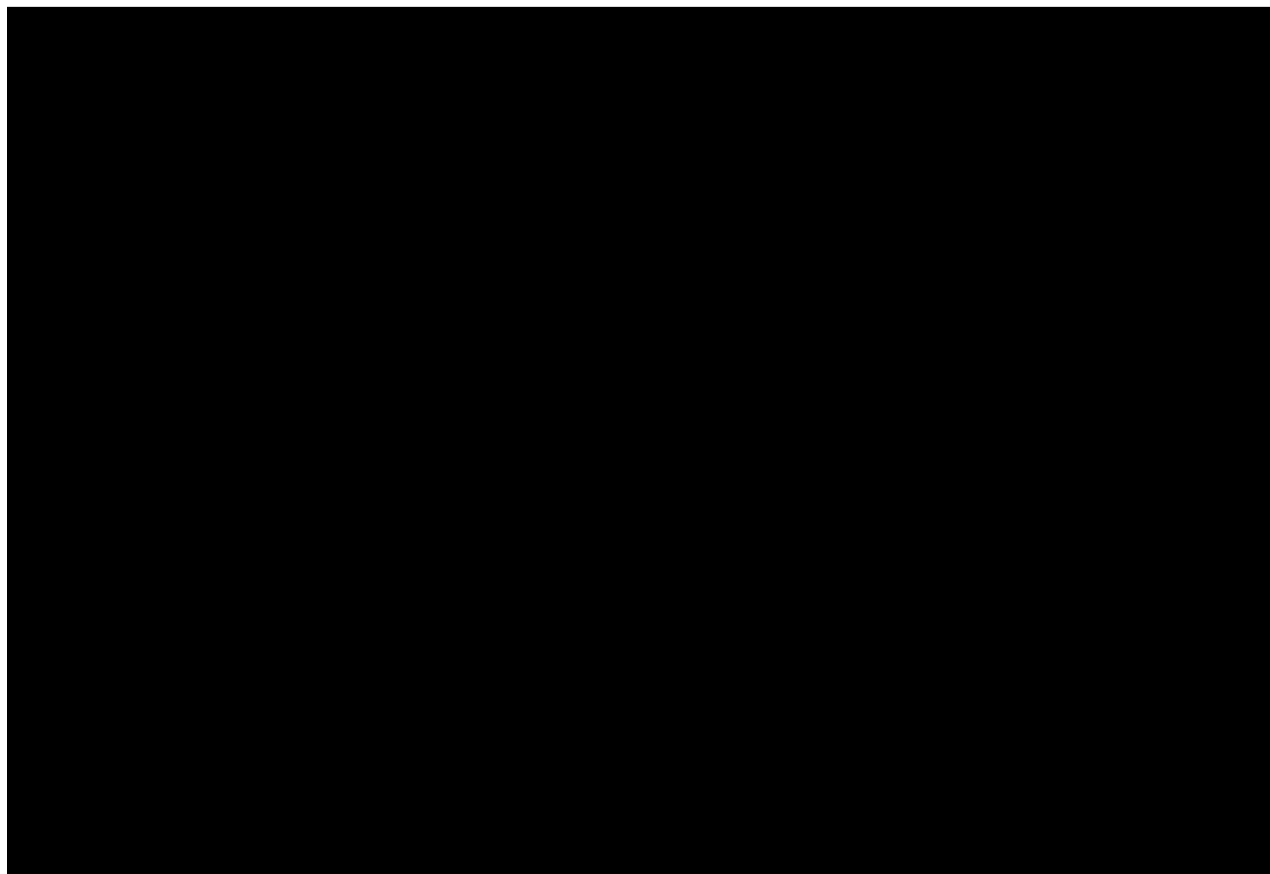
Each region includes: Month % / YTD %



Use the Range as a Window on the Whole Operation

Most ranges have bag-stands, club-scrubbers, practice balls and nothing else. Randy Towner, PGA Golf Professional at Firekeeper Golf Course in Kansas, takes a whole different approach.

At a time when few golf courses were being built from scratch, the Firekeeper Golf Course was emerging from the Kansas prairie town of Mayetta as an exciting golf-and-gaming project for the Prairie Band of the Potawatomi Nation. Randy Towner was on-property as PGA Golf Professional from even before the facility's grand opening in spring of 2011. Towner came to the course, designed by Jeff Brauer and four-time PGA TOUR winner Notah Begay III, the only full-blooded Native American on the pro circuit, knowing the clientele would need creative service concepts to go along with the polished new golf layout. From the start, Towner crafted an ambitious instruction program to teach the game to individuals and in group clinics. He made efforts to work with area schools and the community at large, as well. Tactically, Towner came up with a slick idea for making his range a destination, a "hangout" of sorts and a place where everything Firekeeper had to offer, and to sell, was represented. Watch his video to see just how that's done. ■



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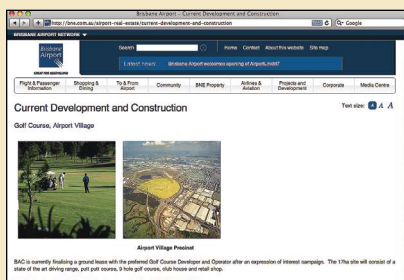
Keeping you up to speed on trends in the golf practice-and-learning sector



The Villages is well known as one of Florida's largest retirement communities, but this summer a 4-year-old golfer took the area by storm. **Aiden Brown** of Michigan, who spent the summer with his grandparents, attracted groups of onlookers every time he took to the driving range, hitting shot after shot down the middle. You can't help but think of 2-year-old Tiger Woods hitting golf shots on "The Mike Douglas Show"... Child prodigies are few and far between, but there are plenty of avenues for getting children interested in the game. One good example is **GlowGolf**, an operator of indoor glow-in-the-dark miniature golf courses, which has been rated as

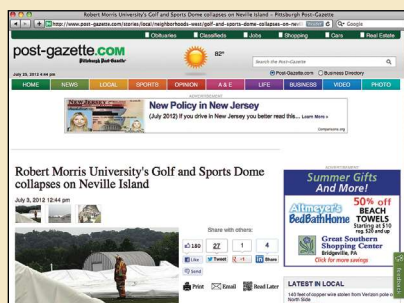


extremely popular among kids. There are now 28 locations nationwide... **Brisbane Airport**, located in the third most populous city in Australia, has announced plans to build a golf driving range and leisure center on airport property. Brisbane Airport is one of



Jack Nicklaus opened his latest golf academy at **Grupo Vidanta Resort** in Nuevo Vallarta, Mexico last month. It is the 15th such facility worldwide (the third in Mexico) spread across eight countries.

Australia's fastest growing airports with about 50,000 passengers expected daily by 2029. Officials are targeting tourists, passengers with extended layovers, residents and airport workers as the customer base for the proposed range. The golf complex and leisure center is expected to open in 2013... **The Golf Dome at Robert Morris University** in Moon Township, Pa., collapsed in June



when a storm ripped a hole in the side of the polyvinyl structure. Golfers and employees were inside at the time, but fortunately no one was injured. By the end of the July, the tear was fixed and the structure was re-inflated. The 240-foot-wide, 350-foot-long and 70-foot-high dome houses a driving range and miniature golf course, as well as office space... **Y.E. Yang**, the 2009 PGA Champion, is being sued after the sale of his indoor practice facility in Dallas, Texas.

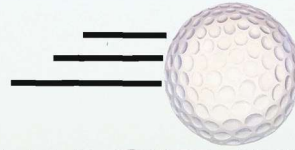
The buyer, businessman Max Biong Kwom Im, claims that Yang sold the property without proper permits or parking spaces. Im says that after he tried to change the ownership on the certificate of occupancy, the city found that the proper permit had not been issued. When he tried to apply for the correct certificate as an indoor commercial amusement, the city denied the application due to insufficient parking... Sunriver (Ore.) Resort hosted the second annual **Rhythm on the Range Charity Concert Weekend**, which raised more than \$5,000 for the local non-profit organization Wonderland Express during the two-day festivities held on July 6 and 7. Local bands performed while families enjoyed diverse activities. Wonderland Express provides Deschutes County families in need with a memorable holiday experience. ■





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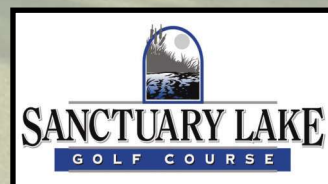
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Media Card

New Player Development Ideas— American and British Alike

The group lesson involving newcomers can develop wherever you meet people, an award-winner advises. And from the U.K. comes short-game fun, built for speed.

BY TONY STARKS

The range is the perfect place to introduce new players to the game of golf, but there's no need to wait for them to arrive. Of course, once there's traffic on your range and learning center, a new and novel form of practice that raises the fun factor is always welcome. Here's the lowdown on both approaches.

A Range of Player Development Practices

PGA Professional Bob Collins earned the 2008 President's Plaque, given annually to the PGA Professional who shows admirable success in player-development efforts. Since receiving this recognition, Collins has continued and expanded his grow-the-game

skills and become PGA director of instruction and player development at Seven Oaks Country Club in Beaver, Pa.

Collins has consistently emphasized the important role that practice ranges play in building participation and boosting operational revenue. "In the conversations I have with course and

range operators, I always tell them that if we can get a new player to first experience the game at their range there's going to be a 75 percent chance that player will return to their facility," says Collins, who partners with nearly a dozen facilities in Pennsylvania and Ohio as an instructor. "It's like when I learned how to ski. I didn't learn until I was almost 30, but now every time I ski I go back to the same resort where I first learned."

To stick with the skiing metaphor, the driving range is like the bunny slopes. The place you go to hone your skills before you take on the Matterhorn, or in this case 6,500 long yards of golf. Once you get them to the range, you've got a chance to develop them as golfers – but Collins will acknowledge that leading them to water isn't necessarily easy.

"It's hard to reel them in," he admits. "We're in the golf industry, so we're always meeting people and talking to them about the game. Many of those people will express an interest in playing, but it's tough to get them to take the next step and come out to the course," says Collins. "But you miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take, so you always have to promote the game where ever you go. The marketing machine has to be working on all cylinders: you have to be in the community creating face-to-face encounters, online through your website and social media, as well as having your students do their part with word of mouth."

Collins views every encounter he has with a person as a chance to promote golf. Recently he attended his daughter's dance recital where he met a group of moms who expressed an

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interest in the game. Collins gave them his card, offered encouragement and the next thing he knew he was running a group clinic for those women.

By organizing people into groups before they actually arrive on-property, he makes the safety-in-numbers factor a tool for recruitment in the first place. On the revenue side, group lessons deliver a higher hourly rate for his services. From a player-development standpoint, Collins is welcoming more people to the game per hour, thus adding efficiency.

The issue of who is teaching where and how that gets arranged is something Collins thinks about often. Stand-alone ranges in particular are well served to seek more independent teaching professionals as partners in this cause. "I've seen facilities that do all the promotions, marketing and scheduling of lessons for independent teachers. In cases like that, the facility usually earns 25 percent of the lesson fees," describes Collins. "But me, I do all the leg work myself in terms of

Bob Collins: Building his practice and building participation.



finding the students and bringing them to the facilities. I pay for my own range balls, although sometimes the facility gives me a discount. I do give the operator a smaller percentage of my lesson fees."

Collins hosts Get Golf Ready sessions at various facilities, charging each participant \$99 for the series of group lessons. He pays the facility \$9 per student.

Collins adds: "I want to go out and find new players for their facility, and that helps their business, helps me and helps the game of golf."

A Kwik Range Session: Speedy and Stimulating

Kwik Golf is a relatively new format developed by a company of the same name based in Manchester, England. The game features near-golf equipment, oversized plastic clubs and Nerf-like golf balls, plus a large plastic target to be placed at any distance. The objective is for a team of two players hitting alternate shots to get the ball to the target as quickly as possible and in the fewest number of strokes. Scores are compiled on strokes and time.

Golf Range Association of America

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- Top 50 Golf Range/Stand Alone Facilities
- Top 50 Golf Range/Public Facilities
- Top 50 Golf Range/Private Facilities
- Top 50 Growth of the Game Teaching Professionals

If you have any questions about the awards process, please contact Patrick Cherry at 215-914-2071 or pcherry@golfrange.org.





A game of Kwik Golf can be set up on the range landing area.

"Kwik Golf is a fun and fast-paced way to experience golf in an alternative format," says Clive Metclaff, Kwik Golf CEO. "The only thing you need is an open space to set up the targets, that's what makes the range an ideal place to play Kwik Golf. In fact, setting up play anywhere there's open space on the range is a great way to attract participants of all ages. People are curious about what's going on. So they come over and ask, have a go at it and see how much fun it is."

Kwik Golf has been gaining momentum at facilities on this side of the

pond. PGA National Resort & Spa in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., has hosted several Kwik Golf events in the last year. "Kwik Golf is crazy fun – and it's contagious," says Jane Broderick, PGA director of golf at PGA National Resort, an early adopter of the format. "It is fast, inexpensive, portable and it gets your heart rate up."

Judy Alvarez, PGA director of player development at The Legends Golf Club in Franklin, Ind., also expressed excitement over the format. "It can be taken on the road to the consumer," says Alvarez. "That makes

it a great tool for growing the game."

In addition to the traditional version of Kwik Golf, the company is planning to release a Driving Range Kit that is now being field-tested in the U.K. The range version (*pictured*) features various targets marked with yardages from 20–50 in five-yard increments. Players can either race to see who can hit each target the fastest in a progressive manner, or simply practice those short in-between shots that often arise on the golf course.

"The Kwik Golf driving range kit is a fantastic addition to our facility. The targets give players something to aim at from 20 yards through to 100 yards, instead of the usual golf flag at 50 or 100 yards," says James Whitaker, head golf professional at Moor Allerton Golf Club in Leeds, England. "Since we added the kit, we have seen a marked increase in basket sales. Each day this short-shot area is littered with hundreds of golf balls, which was not the case in the past." ■

Launches 2012 Awards Application

GRAA

GRAA Top 50 Golf Range / Public Facilities Award Application

GRAA Top 50 Golf Range / Private Facilities Award Application

GRAA Top 50 Growth of the Game Teaching Professionals Award Application

INSTRUCTIONS

Please fill out the following application. When completing this application, please bear in mind that we are seeking information that will help us distinguish your golf range from other facilities. This might include its general appearance, the role your range plays in making your range more successful, how it helps to grow new customers and the number of visits from existing customers, how it drives revenue through the range, or how it helps golfers improve their games so they have more fun on the golf course.

At the end of the application, we are asking all applicants to submit a video via YouTube, showcasing why your range should be considered as a GRAA Top 50 Golf Range / Public Facilities category (NOTE: this is for facilities that have ranges and time holes or more of regulation golf so that it is in order for your application to be considered. Video should be no more than three minutes in length. Applications will not be considered without a video. All questions must be answered in order for your application to be considered.

Submission Due Date: September 15, 2012.

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Last Name *

Facility/Teaching Academy Name *

E-mail *

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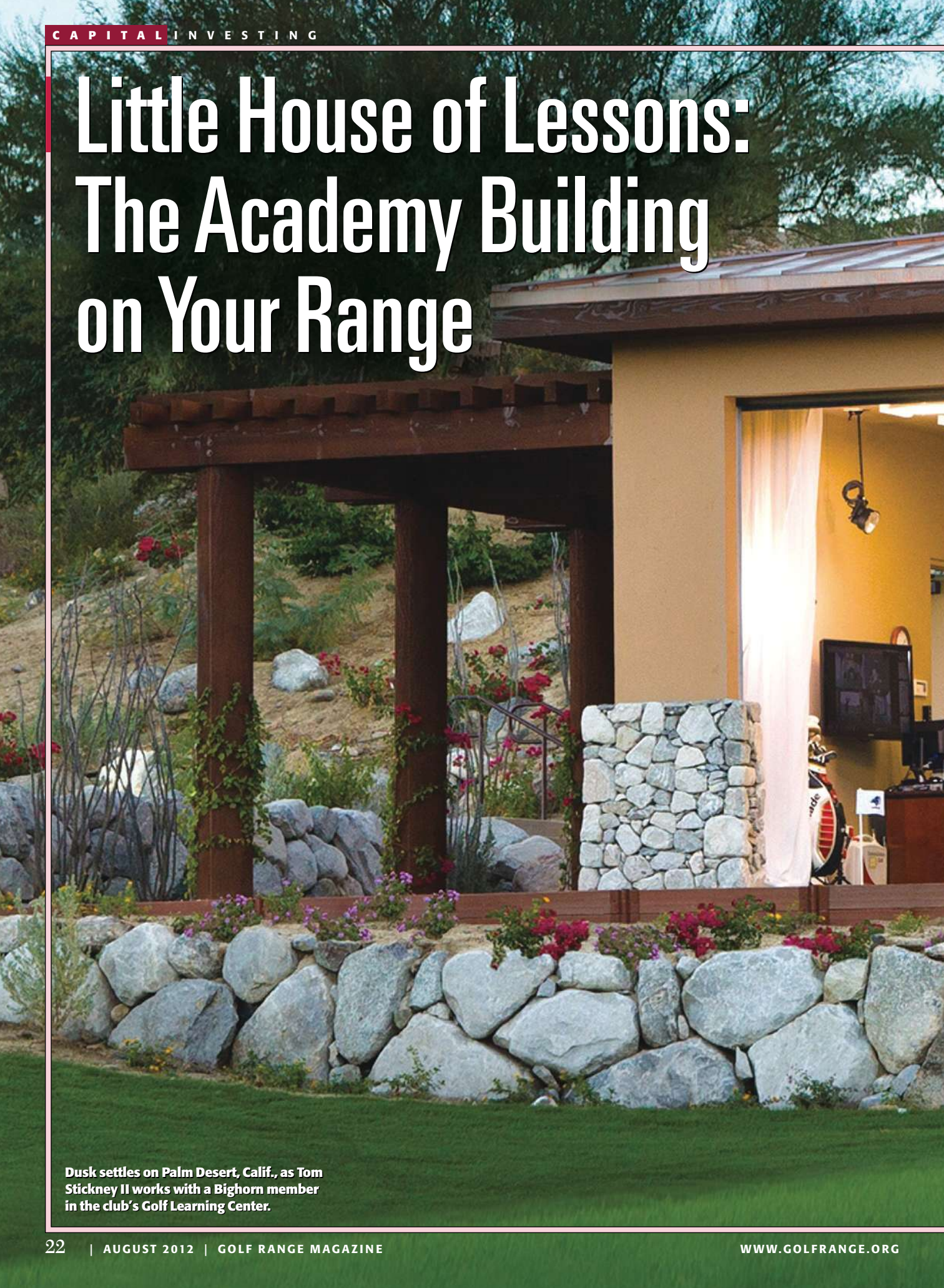
1. Please indicate facility type: *

☐ Stand Alone Range

☐ Private Facility

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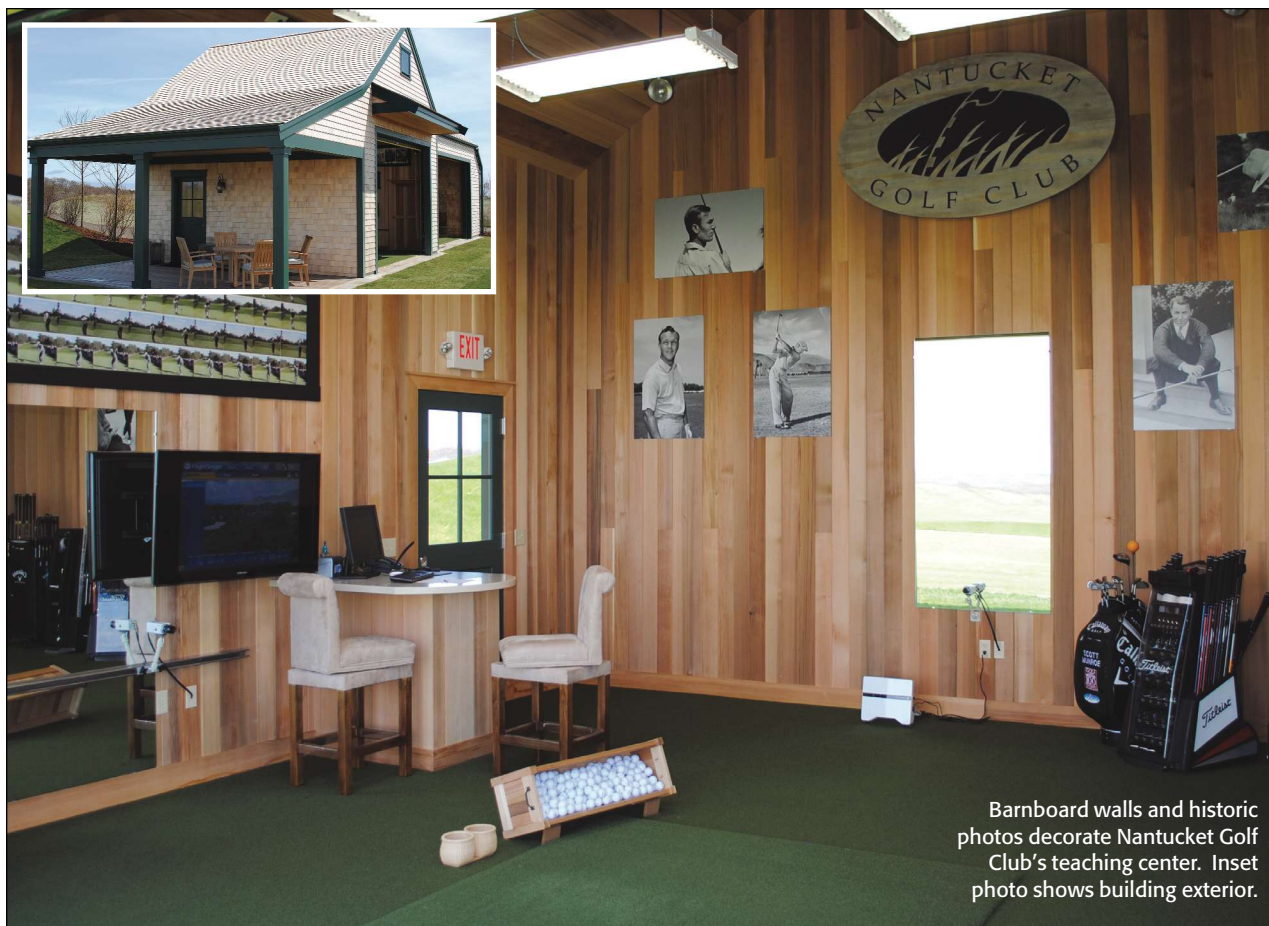
Little House of Lessons: The Academy Building on Your Range



Dusk settles on Palm Desert, Calif., as Tom Stickney II works with a Bighorn member in the club's Golf Learning Center.



As your golf instruction program grows and develops, the question of whether to construct a teaching building looms. Here's help in planning, preparing—and deciding whether to green-light the project. BY DAVID GOULD



Barnboard walls and historic photos decorate Nantucket Golf Club's teaching center. Inset photo shows building exterior.

Scottish immigrant golf professionals at America's first clubs set up shop in small outbuildings. It went against social norms to have them use the actual clubhouse. Flash forward 100 years and we find that an outbuilding of his own is the dream of many a teaching professional. "Academy buildings" or "instruction buildings," whatever your preferred term, are the mark of a lessons-practice-clubfitting program to be reckoned with. They provide protected hitting space, a studio for all the latest tech tools and a comfortable "hangout" atmosphere for students. Mostly they make a powerful statement about game-improvement being a top priority at that particular club or course.

Sleepy Hollow Country Club in Scarborough, N.Y. made range improvements in the early 1990s that left Jim McLean, then the director of golf at the club, ensconced in an academy building that did much to help McLean develop as an instructor. At the time he and fellow PGA Professional Carl Welty were amassing one of the country's most complete video libraries of tour-player golf swings. The tapes were used by McLean as

research for books and articles as well as for everyday teaching. His small but sturdy building at the far end of the Sleepy Hollow range meanwhile became a shrine of sorts to outstanding golf swings—portrayed in large image sequences on its walls. A visitor knew he was someplace where skills were being honed and handicaps lowered.

In the past 15 years, many golf facilities have either added academy build-

ings to their existing practice grounds or included them in master plans as prime amenities to draw members and students. Write-in comments from a recent survey by The Proponent Group, a web-based association of instructors, included the assertion that "a teaching facility is the best tool for legitimizing any instruction program." Members of the organization (formerly the Instructor Division of Golf Business Network) are all serious, full-time teaching professionals known for investing in their craft and skills and commanding top-of-market fees. In other words, they know what can put a program over the top.

Not every Proponent Group member is located at a high-end club or resort, however—a few are on their own, creating and perhaps funding their own infrastructure. This diversity helps explain the range of dollar amounts given in response to the question of how much it costs to add one of these swing-doctor's-offices to a range that lacks one. The average amount



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A wood-burning stove sets the tone for Lou Guzzi's academy building at Talamore Country Club.

spent was \$263,088, about the price of a three-bedroom ranch home in a nice neighborhood. The median cost was significantly lower at \$180,000—and one of these dedicated teachers actually got a roof over his or her head at the end of the range for just \$3,500. It's assumed that some on-staff labor was used in that case. The highest amount invested to create an academy building by a member of that group was a cool \$1 million.

To furnish these fancy practice huts required \$28,789 as an average spend, just \$8,000 as the median amount. One Proponent Group member tricked out his building with furnishings and décor costing an estimated \$200,000. At the Talamore Country Club in Ambler, Pa., PGA Director of Instruction Lou Guzzi got very serious about décor, setting the mood with a four-wall mural so visually dramatic it seems like a ball might fly out of it. Guzzi also displays his vast library of instruction books inside his 1,200-square-foot building. "I really want our studio to feel academic," he has said, asserting that credibility comes in the details of a facility like this, not just the broad strokes.

For what was spent by the Proponent Group professionals, or their clubs, the practice space created is still fairly modest in size. Some 81 percent of those surveyed produced a building with either one, two or three indoor hitting bays, most of them fronted with

Surveyed teaching professionals put the median cost of an academy building at **\$180,000, plus tech gear and furnishings.**

roll-up garage doors that open to the range. Average dimension of a hitting bay is listed in the survey report at 22 feet deep by 17 feet wide. Along with the building comes a need for all the techno-toys a modern teaching professional might need, from motion vests

to shot analyzers and big screens where all the captured data can be presented. According to the survey, "teaching technology and computers" were installed at an average cost of \$26,071—though again the median amount spent was down at \$15,000.

If your marketing skills are way above average, there's at least a possibility that some or all of this outlay could be offset by a naming-rights arrangement of sorts, such as major-league stadiums enjoy. Almost one in 10 of these academy buildings was underwritten by corporate sponsorships. Meanwhile, there is one vendor in the marketplace offering turnkey design and construction of exactly this type of facility. On the website for Power Golf Group (www.powergolf-group.com), you can view some interesting and impressive off-the-shelf designs for academy buildings that would be simple enough to get price estimates on. Power Golf Group, allied now with the respected Midwestern specialty company, Morton Buildings, promotes the fact that it has 54 years of golf-industry service and PGA Professionals on the design team for its academy structures.

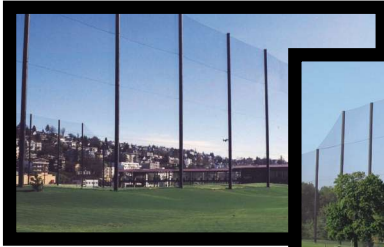
Not surprisingly, positive results for these professionals' instruction business were revealed, once the buildings were completed and members or customers began flowing in. Asked to provide the percentage increase in their lesson volume, one in five respondents said it had jumped by at least 50 percent. There was a lesson-volume pickup of between 31 and 50 percent for 15 percent of respondents. The rest of the sampling reported volume upticks of lesser amounts, except for a small minority whose business stayed the same.

There is a host of questions to be asked by any course owner or club membership planning to construct one of these slice-cure casitas at the back of the range. First off, does it have to be there? Many are, but it's not a necessity and perhaps not even the most convenient or functional place for an academy building. Factored into that consideration are any possible ancillary uses that might be planned for the facility you build. At

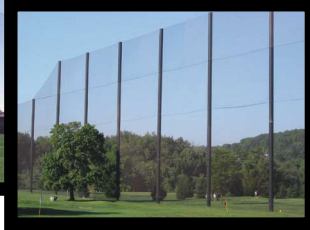
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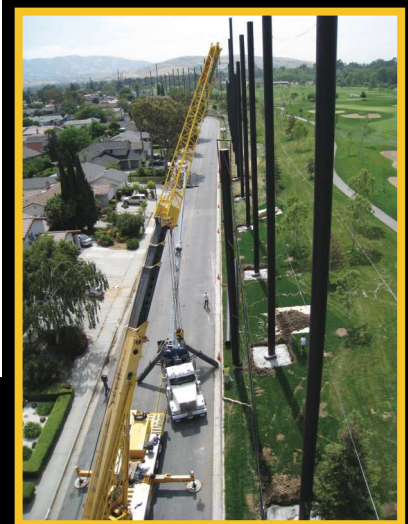
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Annandale Golf Club, a PGA Tour stop, the new teaching/learning building doubles as a halfway house, generating ancillary revenue through food-beverage sales.

A unique golf complex in Gahanna, Ohio with the colorful name, The Golf Depot, just created a heated teaching/learning center with a 55-seat pavilion adjoining it, intended for relaxing with refreshments after one's round, lesson or clinic. The 2,700-square-foot structure features rolling track doors and thermoplastic polymer windbreaks to make it a year-round usable building. The Golf Depot has run a "pre-construction special" on passes for single users, couples, juniors and families. That's a natural promotion to take advantage of the anticipation that does tend to develop around these academy buildings—they are still new and uncommon enough that a true buzz (and a revenue boost while-they-wait) can be built around them.

The PGA Professionals who provided quantitative data for that Propo-
nent Group survey also volunteered



Golfers at Eagle Springs in Colorado enjoy a compact, comfortable building called The Swing Studio.

notes and suggestions aimed at anyone in the planning stages of a project like this. Based on their experience with the finished product, many of them emphasized the need for width, height

and depth of the hitting space beyond what might seem reasonable on first blush. "The larger the hitting area the better, so that students feel they can swing freely," one respondent specified. The write-in comments also suggested that planners "include a sitting area with plenty of space adjacent to hitting bays" and "design a good-sized storage area to keep training equipment out of sight."

Skylights, a restroom and a bay devoted to putting practice were other items from the if-we-had-it-to-over-again department. One professional said in hindsight: "We would build a multiple-level facility--upstairs for office space and downstairs for teaching." Another advised careful study of sun angles, especially early and late in the day, before finalizing the site for your academy building.

While addition of these structures is increasingly common, it's not yet a full-blown fad, which is surely a good thing. To construct, furnish and equip a special building for instruction and club fitting is just part of the project—after that your operation has to be able to staff, maintain and secure it. Adding an amenity like this does show that you're ultra-serious about instruction and fitting, so be sure you really are before making the big commitment. ■

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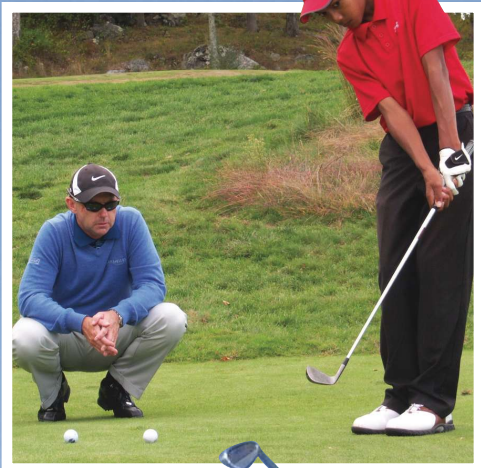
Case Study in Brief: Mini-School at Lake of Isles

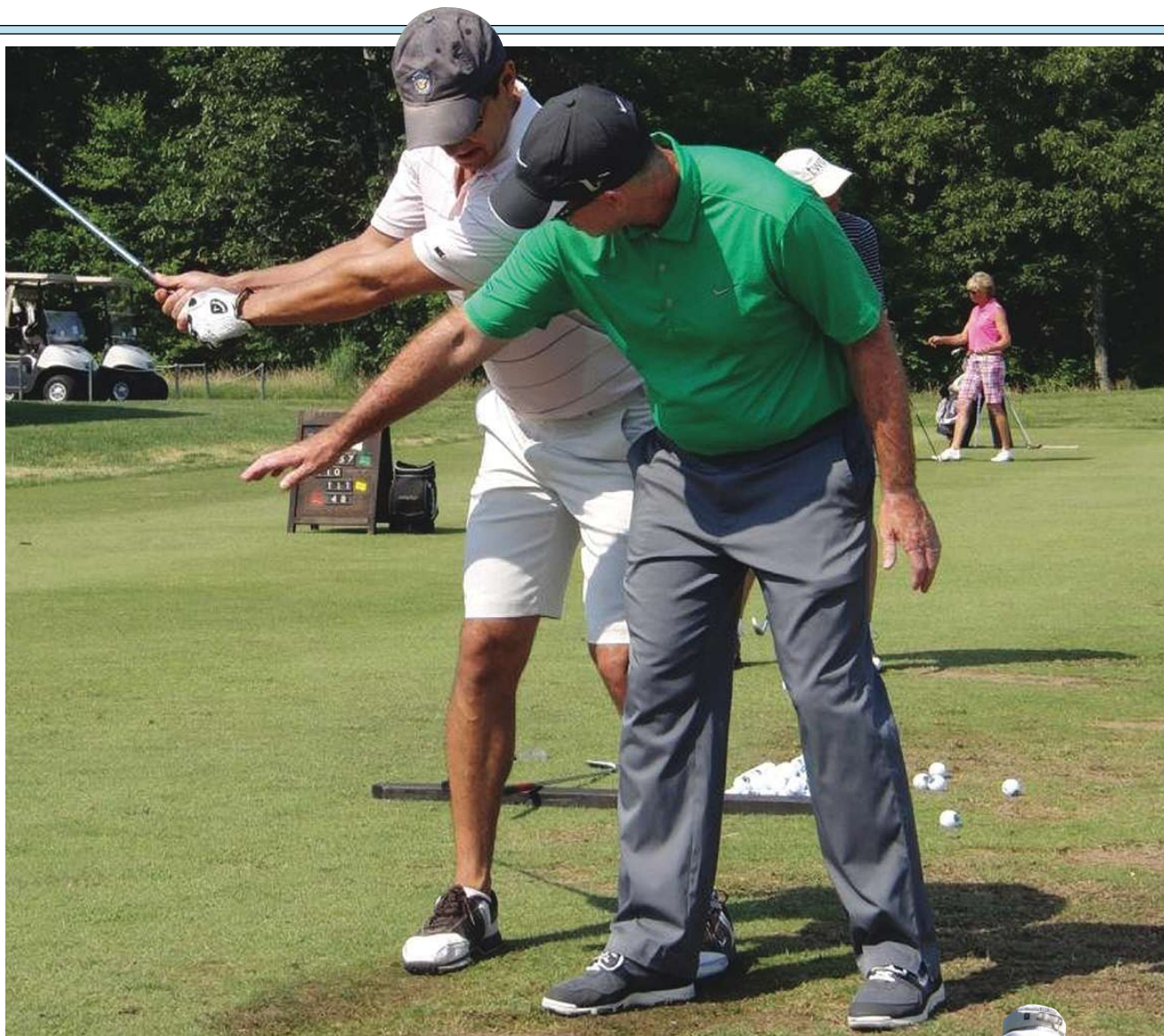
Top-quality Rees Jones golf that visitors want to play, plus a big block of pre-round practice and learning time, add up to a potent combination in Connecticut

BY JOHN TORSIELLO



At the golf complex attached to Foxwoods Casino in Ledyard, Conn., an instruction session is paired with 18 holes of golf for \$275.





Playing 18 holes takes up a large chunk of the day—especially on challenging layouts that the player is likely unfamiliar with. Management at Lake of Isles Golf Club in North Stonington, Conn., knows this—so they double down with a dose of instruction and drills packaged as a Mini-School. Now what the customer has is a day truly devoted to golf and loaded up with the stroke-saving expertise Troon Golf Academy at Lake of Isles Golf Club is known for. When the mini-school is over, a rippling Rees Jones course awaits, cut through rugged woodlands.

The result is enjoyment, a chance to treat friends or business associates to something special, plus a good shot at playing some of your sharpest golf that very day. Meanwhile you just may carry your improvement forward to subsequent outings. “The program has been offered these past two years and it’s grown to become one of the

Academy’s most popular initiatives,” says Derek Hooper, the center’s popular and hard-working director of instruction.

What Hooper and his colleagues realized is that golf’s “time problem” doesn’t always mean the experience has to be shrunk down so that it’s over quicker. You can go the other direction



Derek Hooper, director of instruction at the Troon Golf Academy at Lake of Isles Golf Club, helps players get ready for their round.

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The value of a pre-round skills session for Lake of Isles golfers can be extended to include a four-golfer playing lesson with a staff professional from the academy.

siasm for the highly ranked course and appreciation of the quality and balanced approach that marks the instruction segment. The mini-school does a good job setting the hook for return visits, even among those who don't return expressly to play the slots in America's biggest casino.

This Troon Golf Academy plays things generously on the teacher-student ratio, ranging from 1-to-4 down to 1-to-2. Attendees are told that the morning program will specifically meet their own stated goals, with time allotted accordingly. Says Hooper, "In the time we have available we are not looking to make major swing changes, rather we work with what each player currently does well and help them build upon that to achieve their goals."

When the last putt drops on No. 18, golfers know they've had a rich golf experience at a price that represents value. It's the type of marketing and packaging that quiets the part of a person's brain where dollars and hours spent on golf get tallied up. And that's always to the good. ■

(hey, the leftover time from a golf day seldom gets put to great use, right?) and lengthen the experience, provided you add lots of great value. A Mini Schools at this academy provides a robust tune-up of the short game and long game, without taking the golfer hip-deep into diagnostic technology or suggesting that the swing be overhauled in a morning's time. Participants get three hours of instruction with a member of the Troon Golf Academy team, lunch, then 18 holes with a cart on the award-winning North Course at Lake of Isles.

It prices out at \$140 per person for instruction and lunch, bumping up to \$275 per player when a round of golf is

tacked on. For an additional \$500 per foursome, an instructor will join the group for golf, guiding players around the course, helping with course management, shot selection, trouble shots, green reading and generally explaining how to take what they learned on the range in the morning and put it immediately into play.

"We designed it so players would have the opportunity to work with an instructor for a few hours, have a relaxing meal, and then take the improvements they made out onto the golf course for a relatively inexpensive price," says Hooper. He said feedback from students was "extremely positive," divided equally between enthu-





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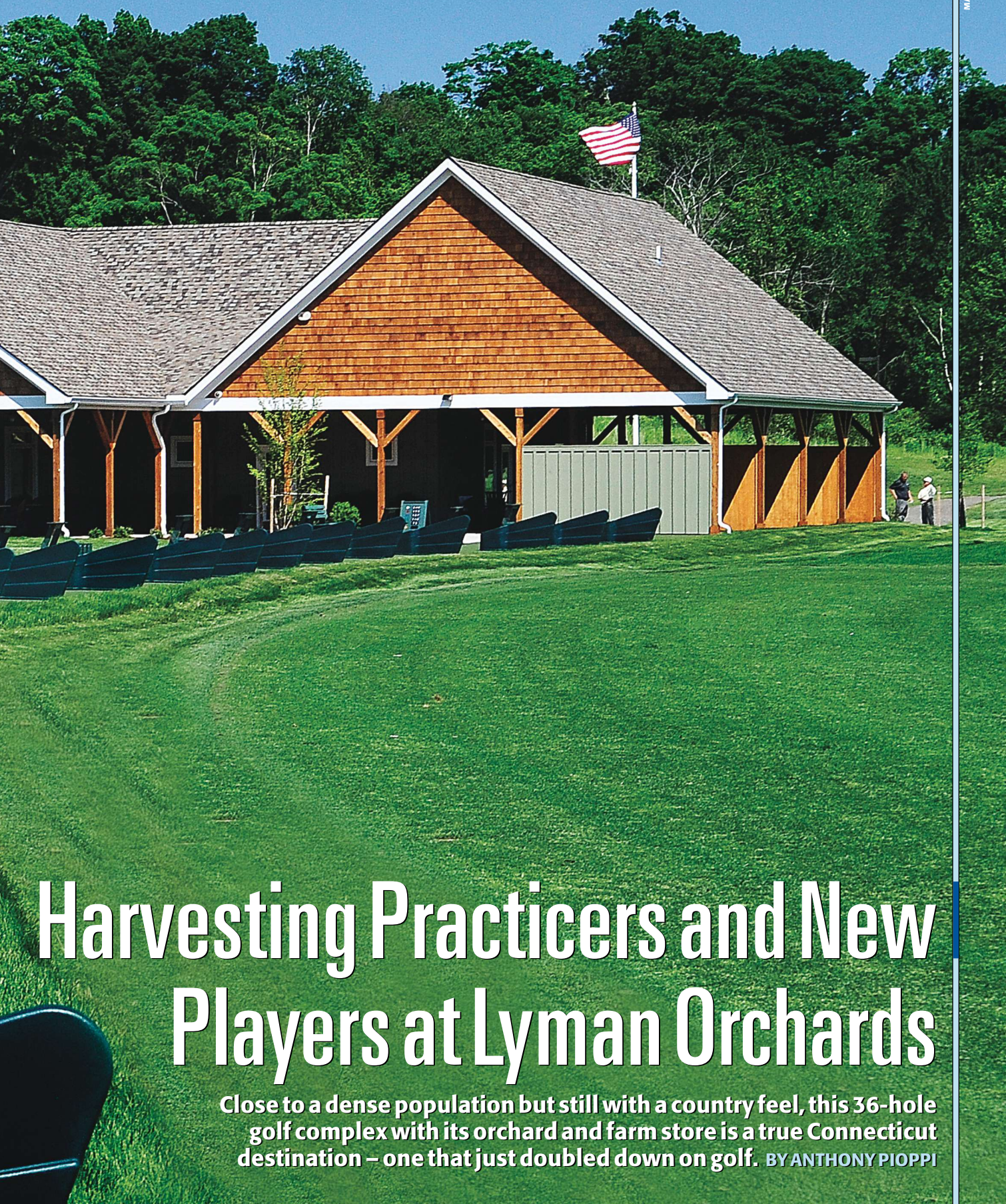
Winner of the 2012 Golf Digest Junior Development Award

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The range at the new Lyman Golf Center features an extended synthetic-turf surface instead of individual range mats.



Harvesting Practicers and New Players at Lyman Orchards

Close to a dense population but still with a country feel, this 36-hole golf complex with its orchard and farm store is a true Connecticut destination – one that just doubled down on golf. **BY ANTHONY PLOPPI**



Tucked into the rural town of Middlefield near the geographical center of Connecticut, Lyman Orchards has maintained a unique niche for nearly 50 years. The hillside property has always been one part pick-your-own orchard, one part farm store with raved-over apple pies and one part golf in the form of two 18-hole courses plus driving range and short game practice area. Three seasons a year, there has always been a reason for a weekend ride to Lyman Orchards, whether you're a golfer or a non-golfer. Homesick freshmen at nearby Wesleyan University have been revived by their autumn trips here to pick apples and wander the grassy slopes.

This year, the Lyman family made a bold move amid a stagnant golf market and opened up the Lyman Golf Center. Consisting of the Mark Mungeam-designed Apple Course, a par-29 layout, an expansive driving range and two practice areas, the golf center is located closer to the Apple Barrel market (a 90 second walk) than to the Lyman Orchards Golf Club (a quarter mile away up a hill) with its Robert Trent Jones and Gary Player designs. This was no accident.

According to Lyman CEO Steve Ciskowski, the vision for the golf center is to closely complement the family

entertainment provided by the Apple Barrel with its artisan foods, shopping, pick-your-own fruits, corn maze and duck pond as it is about the golf. "What we're promoting is a day at Lyman Orchards which now includes an accessible, fun golf component," Ciskowski points out.

Lyman originally received permits on the site in 2001. Those were coming up on expiration, leaving the company a choice to either build, abandon the project or put it on hold and permit again. Ciskowski said the commitment to move forward was borne of a feeling the facility would appeal to people

Visitors' options include short-course golf (left) and orchard exploration.

looking to get into or back into golf, especially those who feel intimidated by a regulation course, and also to those who don't have the time to play 18 or even nine holes on a regular layout. Construction began in 2011.

Built on approximately 38 acres, the Golf Center features an all-grass driving range that extends to 340 booming yards, with room for 40 hitting bays. There are also 40 artificial turf stations situated behind the grass tee with an additional four that are covered, near the clubhouse. Also on site are a 20,000-foot practice green and an 18,000-square-foot short game area.

The Golf Center's small clubhouse includes a snack area and a select inventory of quality golf apparel. There are fitting systems from such brands as Ping, Callaway and Nike along with equipment from U.S. Kids and others. Kevin Cloud is the director of instruction at the welcoming new center, joined on the teaching staff by former "Big Break" contestant Sherri McDonald and another female instructor, Kelly Rose Kronen. The Lyman Golf Club staff teaches there at times, as well. Billy Casper Golf manages all the golf properties.

The centerpiece of the Golf Center is undoubtedly the Mungeam course, which plays 1,211 yards from the front tees, 1,380 from the middle and 1,556 from the back. It has seven par-3s and a pair of par-4s. This is not your standard (i.e., unimaginative) short course, laid out simply to appease players-in-training who would struggle on a regulation track. Where you might expect tees that look like airport runways and formulaic greens that tilt mildly in one direction, Mungeam provides far more.

"I attempted to keep the design simple, but not so flat and straight that the holes became predictable to play and visually dull," Mungeam says. "I mixed uphill and downhill holes, laid out fairways on diagonals and varied the size and layout of green complexes to differentiate the holes and make each one different and exciting." It is the greens that tell



golfers that the Apple Course is something special. Besides all being open in front so shots can be run onto them, they are full of adventure when it's time to pitch and chip.

"The green complexes have movement because this is where I felt it was best for the course to challenge the better player and make them want to return and play again," Mungeam explains. "I wanted the green complexes to create options for lots of different shots – from bump and runs off the chipping areas to flop shots from the grass bunkers. The putting surfaces have undulations to fit with the surrounds."

That is in line with the concept that the Apple "is a short course and not a pitch-and-putt," as Ciskowski describes it. To make sure that the bending putts don't frustrate new players, the green speed is maintained at a relatively slow pace. Cloud raves about Mungeam's work, noting that putting on rolling surfaces is part of the game. "You can't learn to read greens when they are all flat," he observes. Average playing time on the Apple,

according to Cloud, is 90 minutes with a cost of between \$12 and \$16 depending on the day of the week.

The cost of a 9-hole round at the Jones and Player course is \$30 and \$37, including cart rental. The Apple is

"What we're promoting is a day at Lyman Orchards that now includes the golf component."
— Steve Ciskowski

exclusively walking for now but once the fairways have grown in more carts will be allowed. The company's idea is that the driving range at the Lyman Golf Club, which only allows hitting off artificial grass, and the one at the Golf Center, will each serve a purpose.

"The goal is that the golf club range will be a place to simply warm up," Cloud says. His point is logical given that the upland 36 holes at Lyman Orchards host between 65,000 and 70,000 rounds a year. "The people who will want to settle in and practice their skills will end up down here." As important as the existing golfers are to the golf center's success, just as vital are the new and the lapsed players, many of whom stayed away from the sport or left it for the sole reason that full-size courses seemed overwhelming and intimidating.

Cloud says he and his staff are already giving lessons at the Golf Center to everyone from young children and grandparents to accomplished players. There is an emphasis on attracting the young. The junior program begins with a class for children ages 3 to 6. For the one-hour sessions, parents accompany their kids so they can understand how to best assist them in picking up the game. "It's important to include parents in the learning but also to make sure they do it correctly," Cloud says.

There is also what is essentially a week-long golf camp for children ages 7 to 14 with the four-day classes running three or six hours. On the fifth day, a junior tournament is held. Lunch is provided every day. A one-hour group lesson for advanced juniors is held on Sundays, followed by a tournament. Cloud said the goal is for those comfortable playing the Apple Course to one day feel the same way about the Jones and Player layouts. "They can progress from down here to up there," Cloud explains.

According to Ciskowski, the golf center is already attracting players from the New Haven and Hartford areas, a drive of more than 30 minutes in either direction. Come the harvest season when returning customers flock from all parts of Connecticut as well as Massachusetts, Ciskowski figures they'll see the golf center for the first time and maybe on the next trip bring the clubs. According to Cloud, the golf center's broad appeal has been surprising. "We're just starting to realize what we have here," he says with enthusiasm. ■



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Serious Teaching, Plus an Eye for What's Trending

Catch up with Northern California teaching professional Kris Moe and you'll likely catch wind of what's happening next in the business of golf instruction.

BY SCOTT KRAMER

When a golfer walks down a tee line toward the teaching professional, there's a trace of mystery about their motivation for seeking help. At times the instructor may feel like Sam Spade, Humphrey Bogart's private-eye character in "The Maltese Falcon," when the mysterious Miss Wonderly enters Spade's office in the opening scene.

Kris Moe, a one-time PGA Tour player (and current Champions Tour aspirant) has always set up his Napa Valley teaching practice to provide what people want—even if they aren't exactly sure what that is. That's why the native Californian packages instruction in so many different formats, why he's preparing to train as a Titleist TPI Junior Performance coach and why he went into the winemaking business a decade ago, producing high-quality reds and whites that have sold in trendy wine shops across the U.S.

This season his loyal clientele—tournament golfers, or couples who take frequent Wine Country trips, and even beginning players—has enjoyed diverse opportunities for improvement and enjoyment. Among them are the Practice-and-Play format that devotes a morning to swing work on the grass-tee range at Chardonnay Golf Club (one of two teaching sites he uses—the other being the San Francisco Golf Performance Center, a downtown studio), then lunch, a small-group playing lesson and an "action plan video" that the student walks away with—all for \$275.

In the weeks before the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am, Moe devised

a combination short-game clinic and Tour-event field trip for just \$75. It allowed students to sharpen their wedge play then watch the best in the world play touchy shots around Pebble Beach's quick greens. After-

The trending factor in his downtown San Francisco studio is Chinese financiers and investors who want to become golfers.

ward, all were invited to Moe's 19th Hole wine party at Jack London's restaurant in Carmel, where the first glass was on Kris.

Last year Moe created a unique event as a fundraiser for the life-coaching programs of "Golf in the Kingdom" author Michael Murphy, featuring Champions Tour players Bobby Clampett and Steve Pate—

it was all very California, for an audience that's geared toward these Zen-like approaches.

Drawing his eye these days is the specialized junior training program that the Titleist TPI group is currently presenting to PGA professionals in the western U.S. Finally, as Moe views it, golf is making a serious run at the youth athlete market by taking its recent great advancements in conditioning and kinesiology and broadening their applications beyond the golf swing.

"This TPI Junior Performance approach, which was incubated out here in California, is really unique training and education that is going to make any young athlete better in any sport they play—both the individual sports and the team sports," says Moe. "Golf has never been able to come out and offer that. I've got two sons age 12 and 16 who I know would want to do this and be excited about it."

In his downtown San Francisco practice, the trending factor is Chinese investors and financiers who are in the U.S. to enhance their business success and wanting to do a few other things—such as learn golf. "These are 30-something and 40-something business people from Hong Kong and mainland China," says Moe. "They want to take a cruise to Alaska and they want to attend a six-day golf school where they can make significant progress in a tight timeframe. For teaching professionals on the West Coast, and elsewhere, this seems to be a building



Just as the golf swing requires many adjustments, a teaching business like Kris Moe's has had to adjust to slacker demand for group golf instruction.

success in life, many of those students do not have the common misperceptions about their golf games. "I have to say that golfers over the years are coming in with modest goals," says Moe. "They seem to already get how difficult the game is. If anything, I actually raise their expectations. I can usually see the better golfer in most people – many can't see that in themselves."

To Kris Moe, physical conditioning is even more crucial to game improvement. "What makes our approach to instruction so unique is probably showing students the value of being fit for golf," says Moe. "I'll evaluate their body condition through Titleist Performance Institute screens and show them ways to either strengthen or lengthen up, so that their bodies can do what we'd like them to do."

Although he won't provide specific numbers, Moe says he's steadily increased his school's revenues by offering more comprehensive coaching programs that he calls "Premium Coaching Packages" – for \$2,500, students learn everything Moe can offer about golf, including swing technique, physical conditioning, inner game coaching, private all-day lesson, four studio lessons, three golf school days, private mental coaching, four rounds of golf with Moe, an invitation to a pro-am, and much more.

As a side business, Moe started making wine in Calistoga 17 years ago. "I love the process and enjoy tasting the results," he says. "It was a lark to start selling wine with my 19th Hole label. I have the dream of our cabernets and chardonnays being in many golf clubs and on the shelves in golf towns across the country. It's not an easy business, but I'm plugging away. Many of my students take home a bottle and then buy more after they've tried it." To the students who know him best, any mystery surrounding Kris Moe comes down to what new direction he'll set off in next. ■

block of the future."

After stints on the PGA Tour and the European PGA Tour (including a top-25 finish in the 1985 British Open), Moe teamed up with fellow Northern California PGA section Golf Instructor of the Year nominee Mark Favell to offer personalized golf instruction. Ever since, the Kris Moe Golf Schools have helped thousands of students improve their swings and learn the nuances that raise their games to another level. His school's motto: "This is a life sport that is certainly a challenge but with good coaching you can play the golf you always dreamed about."

Meanwhile, the journey needs some entertainment value. Moe is known to camp up a Nine and Wine event by dressing head to toe in Loud Mouth golf apparel, encouraging his paying customers to wear nutty outfits as well. "The location in Napa creates a point of difference between our school and others," says Moe, noting the "getaway" feel of that location. The remoteness is offset by technology, which he embraces and puts to use as quickly as he can learn it. "We're always looking to build an action plan for our students and make

it easy for them by staying in contact through our follow-up program, also by having them send us videos through the V1 downloadable smart-phone app. Wherever they live they can still have their swings checked by us."

As a side business, Moe started making wine in Calistoga 17 years ago.

Moe and company are known for being very enthusiastic about teaching. And that shines through partly because of the caliber of clientele the school receives. "The quality of people that come through here makes it a privilege to coach them," says Moe. "They're usually very successful at what they do and bring that task-achieving motivation to the school. Many of them inspire me." And perhaps because of their



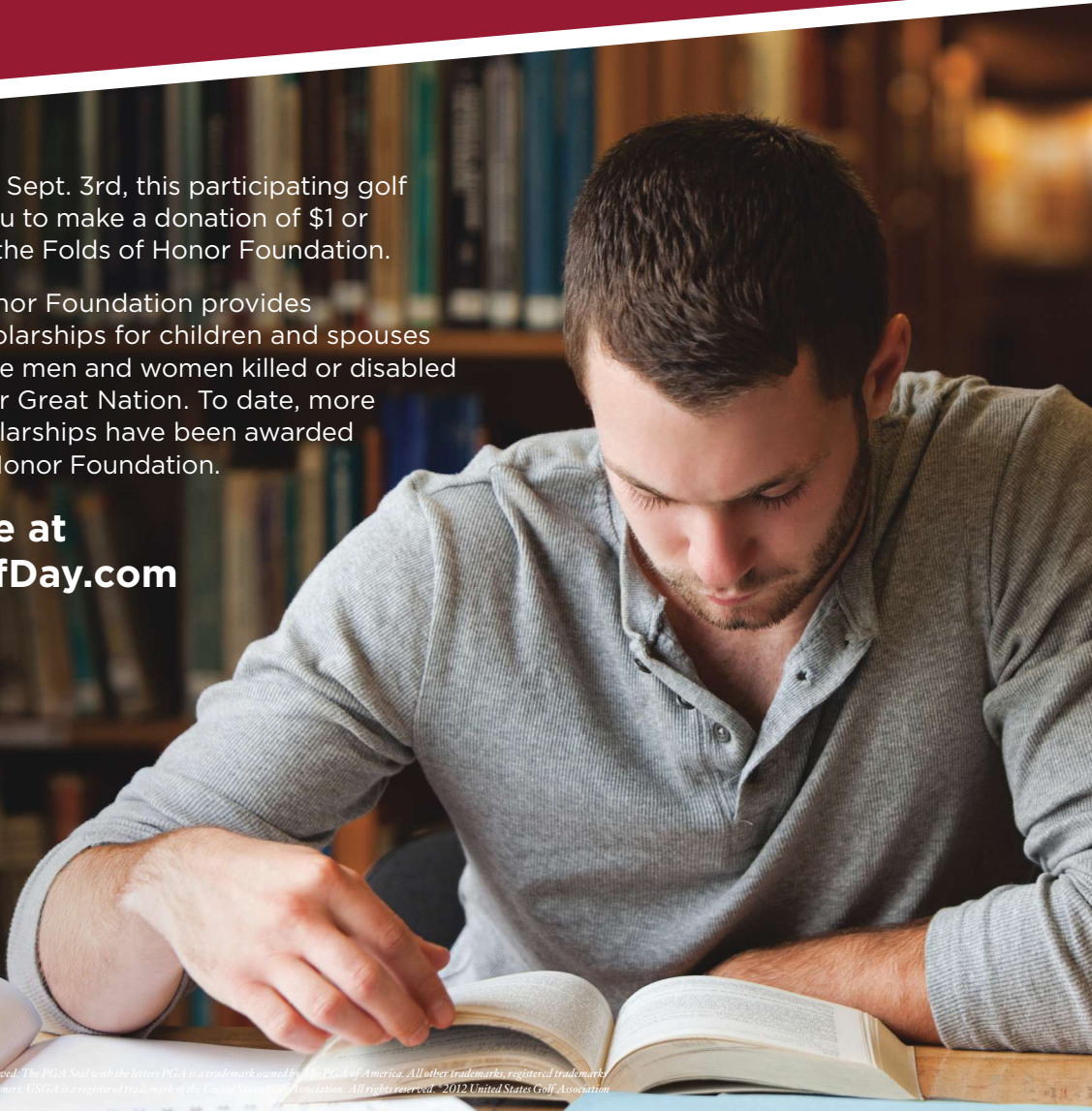
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The basics of putting are imparted to new recruits by Dave Robinson, owner of the TGA Premier Junior Golf franchise in Detroit. TGA summer camps like this one offer new revenue opportunities for range owners.



Bringing Kids to the Range the TGA Way

While golf has relied mainly on nonprofit organizations for large-scale junior promotion, a rising golf franchise program has attained success using ranges as a building block for teaching the game to kids.

BY EVAN ROTHMAN

In the fall of 2003, TGA Premier Junior Golf, the brainchild of former college golfer Joshua Jacobs, debuted its first Golf Enrichment Programs at six Los Angeles-area schools. Then as now, Jacobs' goal was to introduce kids from a variety of backgrounds to all the positive things his chosen sport has to offer—life values, confidence, a sense of fun—via its structured after-school program. At the same time, TGA (www.franchisetga.com; 313-333-0622) also wanted to help the golf industry by producing more serious players, both among the children themselves and their families. Ranges are proving central to that concept.

"Developing driving range partnerships across the country is one of our key strategies," says Jacobs, currently TGA's CEO. "Ranges are the least intimidating facilities for new golfers to visit. Through these partnerships, our programs are driving additional revenue and traffic with the goal of creating avid golfers for the future."

Today, TGA reaches more than 175,000 students annually, with 2,500 schools and facilities in 53 territories across 23 states. Last summer, more than 200 partner golf facilities ran 625 summer camps. The company's research shows that 60 percent of its students and their families have never played golf before, so one of its challenges is to encourage an eventual transition from the after-school program—or daycare, YMCA, JCC, church, parks-and-recreation or golf facility program—to the status of full-fledged golfer.

TGA has taken several approaches. One is its five-level program, which

encourages students to keep striving. It rolls forward from an introduction to the game, to development of motor skills, to preparing for on-course play, to course management and mental focus techniques, all the way to receiving expert instruction and preparation for competitive golf. Thus far, more than half of TGA students who enter the program have stayed through all five levels.

Golf practice ranges, which pay nothing to be a TGA partner and receive free advertising in the community where the program is hosted, are another pillar. To date, more than 30 percent of youth who go through the TGA school programs have transitioned to local ranges and courses. One in four students has become a new customer, often attended by family members. An example of a range that has formed a valuable TGA partnership is the Riehl Golf Academy in Whippany, N.J., which has joined forces with TGA Premier Junior Golf

of Morris County, N.J. Riehl Golf Academy provides TGA with an onsite office to run its local golf programs. Those programs include nine weeks of camps, 20 clinics, then private and group lessons for students and parents.

“Developing driving range partnerships across the country is one of our key strategies.”

— Josh Jacobs

pays Riehl Golf Academy 37.5 percent of all fees—such deals vary from case to case—and delivers the added benefit of return visits to the range for balls, lessons, food and beverages.

“Parents often ask us what the next



step in learning the game is after our classes at the schools, recreation departments and YMCAs—our part-

ner ranges give us the entrée that allows kids to take that step by hitting real balls,” says TGA of Morris County’s Michael Riccardi. “TGA is also driving additional revenue to the ranges through our programs and helping save the ranges marketing dollars and promotion energy.”

An interested range can also opt to become a TGA franchisee itself (franchisetga.com). *Entrepreneur* named TGA as a Top 10 Franchise Deal. The company is also currently ranked No. 320 in the magazine’s “Franchise 500” rankings as well as sixth among Children’s Fitness Franchises. TGA’s Jacobs is convinced that, whether in a supporting or starring role, golf’s better ranges and TGA create a win-win for the sport and the operator.

“It is critical to provide a pathway for new golfers, which includes transitioning them to local golf facilities and ranges,” he says. “The TGA model helps the range owner to become the leader in their community in growing the game and developing future business with young children and their families.” Not to mention keeping a lot of youngsters from getting into mischief after school. ■

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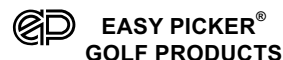
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