



GRAAA

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

Inside this issue, you will find the following features:

- Range Renovations: The revamp of the Encinitas Ranch practice center focused on the improvements that matter most to customers
- GRAA Top 25 Teaching & Training Aids: Featuring The Randy Myers Golf Stretching Pole – See how Bill McInerney Jr. and PGA Professional Will Reilly use the aid to help stretch their student's game
- Academy Business: PGA Professionals David Graf and Jim McGurk left their jobs at a world-class facility to open a new golf landmark in Toldeo, Ohio
- Instructor Profile: Chris Hale, PGA, took a risk and purchased a satellite range that is 12 miles away from his daily-fee course
- Video File: PGA Professional Nicole Weller explains how adding props to her lesson tee helped attract juniors

Keep it fun and thanks for supporting the GRAA.

Best Regards,

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

Golf Range



M A G A Z I N E

Volume 22 No. 8

August 2014

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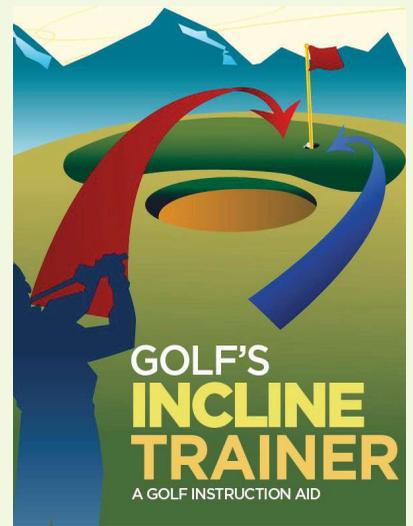
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MAGAZINE

Volume 22, Number 8

August 2014



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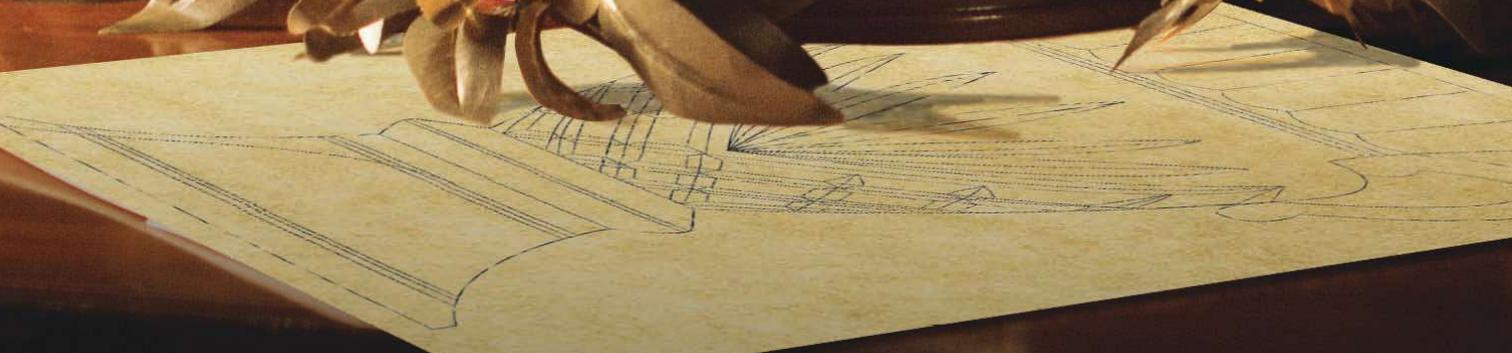
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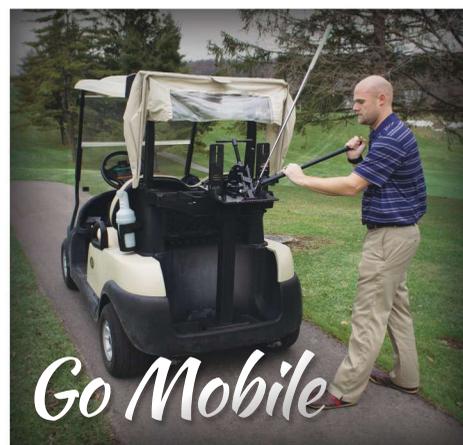
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Room for Optimism on the Range

No doubt you've seen some of the recent news portraying a sense of doom and gloom about the golf business. I won't say that golf doesn't face challenges in the present and the future; almost every business faces stiff competition and an ever-changing landscape. But I'm glad that this month's issue of *Golf Range Magazine* shows some prime examples of why I'm optimistic for the future of golf – and the importance of ranges to growing the game and the business.

Specifically, I'm talking about three range-related businesses in Ohio and California that are thinking outside the box to attract customers and build a strong following. Starting on page 42, you can read about The Golf PIT – a year-round range facility outside Toledo that combines practice areas with a six-hole executive course, private club-style golf shop, fitness area and clubfitting systems from multiple equipment companies. The Golf PIT was started by a pair of PGA Professionals from the prestigious Inverness Club in Toledo who saw the importance of practice and game improvement, and decided range facilities were integral to the future of the sport.

South and west of The Golf PIT is another successful Ohio range business that sprang from creative foresight. Our feature on PGA Professional Chris Hale and his decision to purchase a range located 12 miles away from the golf course he owns. As with The Golf PIT, Hale saw the game shifting toward greater range usage, so he invested in the North Dayton Golf Academy. You can read the rest for yourself, but suffice it to say that Hale's gamble is paying off.

And three time zones away, a recent practice area renovation at Encinitas Ranch Golf Course – 30 minutes north of San Diego – is also paying off, as you can see in the story that begins on page 26. The facility's traditional range has been updated with a new hitting surface, while a focus on clubfitting and teaching brings customers in year-round. I invite you to read this trio of stories to see how the future of golf could be built upon successful ranges.



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A Wide Range of News

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



Always looking to add something quirky, rootsy and relevant to its destination golf offering, **Bandon Dunes** recently debuted **The Punchbowl**, a 2.3-acre putting course that is all hills and hollows. In short order the resort guests have fallen into the good habit of holding impromptu putting contests on this "Himalayas"-style course, using handy cup-holders to rest their beverages along the way.



Jim McLean

With the cool weather not far off, **Jim McLean**, founder and president of his namesake golf schools network, has teamed with cruise event specialist Landry & Kling to plan and operate a series of exclusive golf cruise programs – **McLean at Sea** – beginning in 2015. McLean and his team of world-class instructors will sail aboard Celebrity Equinox for the first "McLean at Sea" golf school from Rome to Barcelona, for seven nights in late June and early July, calling on ports in Italy, France, and Spain... **Lake of Isles Golf Club** at the destination **Foxwoods Casino** in southeastern Connecticut is aggressively courting the young-family market this summer. Through Aug. 31 the resort's Family Fun Night is giving added value for a fee of \$49 per adult-child pairing. (Fee for each additional child is \$24.50) A special 9-hole Short



Catalyst Golf Performance, a Chicago-based learning and training center for junior and adult golfers, is now covering the very low end of the age demographic with its Fun Zone and Early Athletes programs. Ages 3 and 4 are served by Early Athletes, which focuses on motor pattern development and basic locomotion skills in a fun, interactive environment that involves both child and parent. Fun Zone is for 5 to 8-years-old and uses an array of training methods and tools (you might say "toys" as well as "tools") to create a fun and exciting atmosphere. According to **Michael Napoleon**, director of Catalyst Golf, it is during this period of development that humans have their absolute best chance to learn speed, agility and many key locomotion and motor skills. Napoleon employs a training protocol derived from elite musical performance. In that field, it has long been important to align the training for specific skills with the most appropriate age and/or physical-development stage, for optimal result.

Course (1,500 yards) is set up for the children, who can play as many holes as they wish. After golf there is dinner at the resort's Matches Tavern. Throw-ins include comp rental sets, two sleeves of Callaway golf balls and personalized bag tags... With performance tracking of all types becoming more popular and relevant, it's important to note that last month the **USGA** said **Game Golf**, the wearable device that tracks and displays a golfer's round, was "Allowable under The Rules of Golf," which means it can now be used in competition. The USGA's statement stressed that Game Golf does not provide real-time club distances and data and it cannot be viewed on a player's mobile device during their round... The increasingly popular **Swing Catalyst** system for golf swing analysis was recently installed by the **Scott Hamilton Golf Academy** in Cartersville, Ga. Hamilton is the PGA Director of Golf and Instruction at Cartersville Country Club, in the foothills of northwest Georgia. He currently serves as swing coach for touring professionals Boo Weekley, Tim Herron, Will Claxton, Steven Bowditch and Scott Brown. ■



A ribbon-cutting ceremony was recently held to open the all-new **Sea Island Golf Performance Center**. Doubled in size from its predecessor facility, the new center is equipped with state-of-the-art technology. Sea Island Touring Professional Davis Love III and resort director of instruction Todd Anderson were part of a scissors-wielding crew that formally introduced the new amenity. Its components include five covered hitting bays, an indoor putting lab, expanded golf fitness area with new 3D technology, and expanded equipment and soft goods display area.



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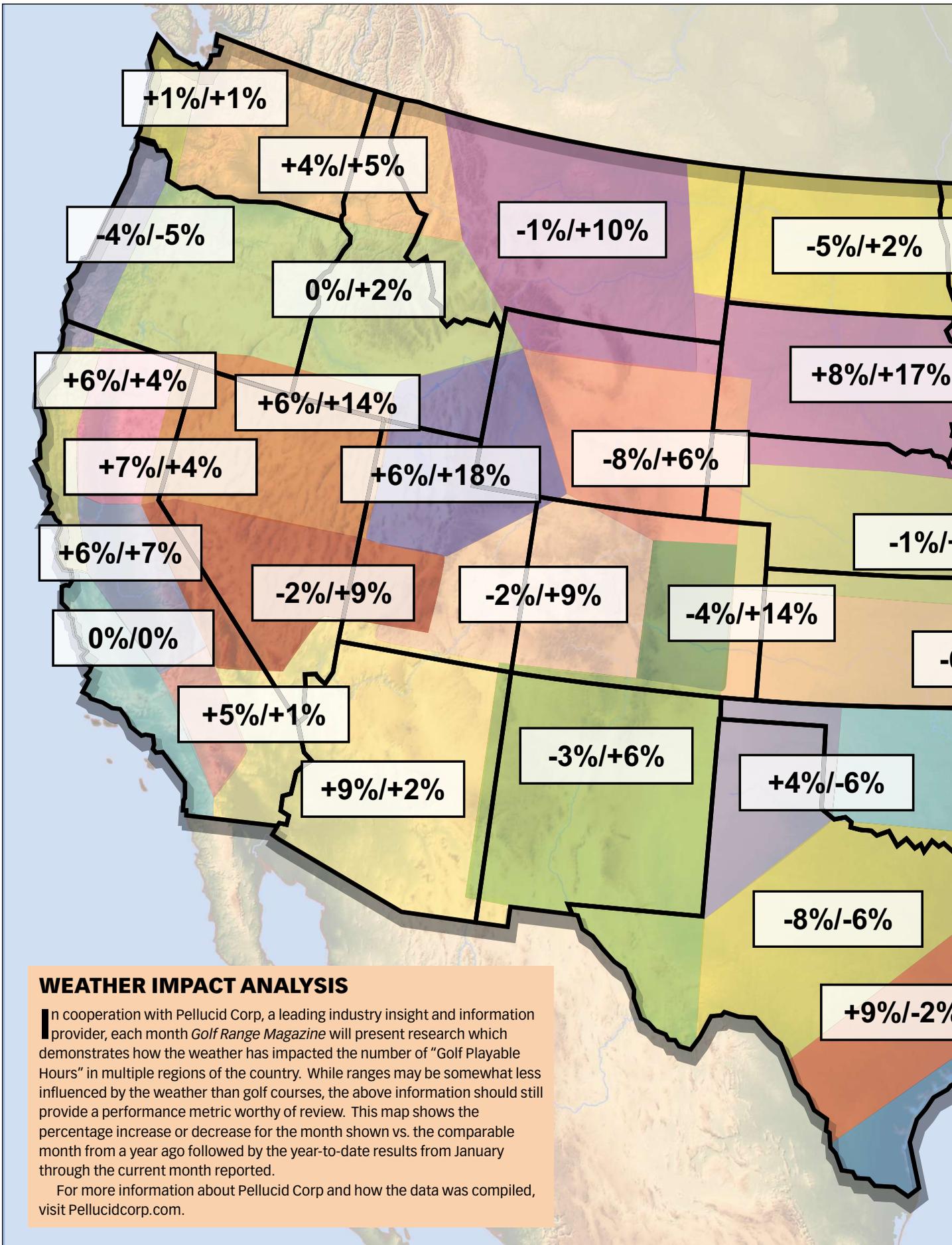
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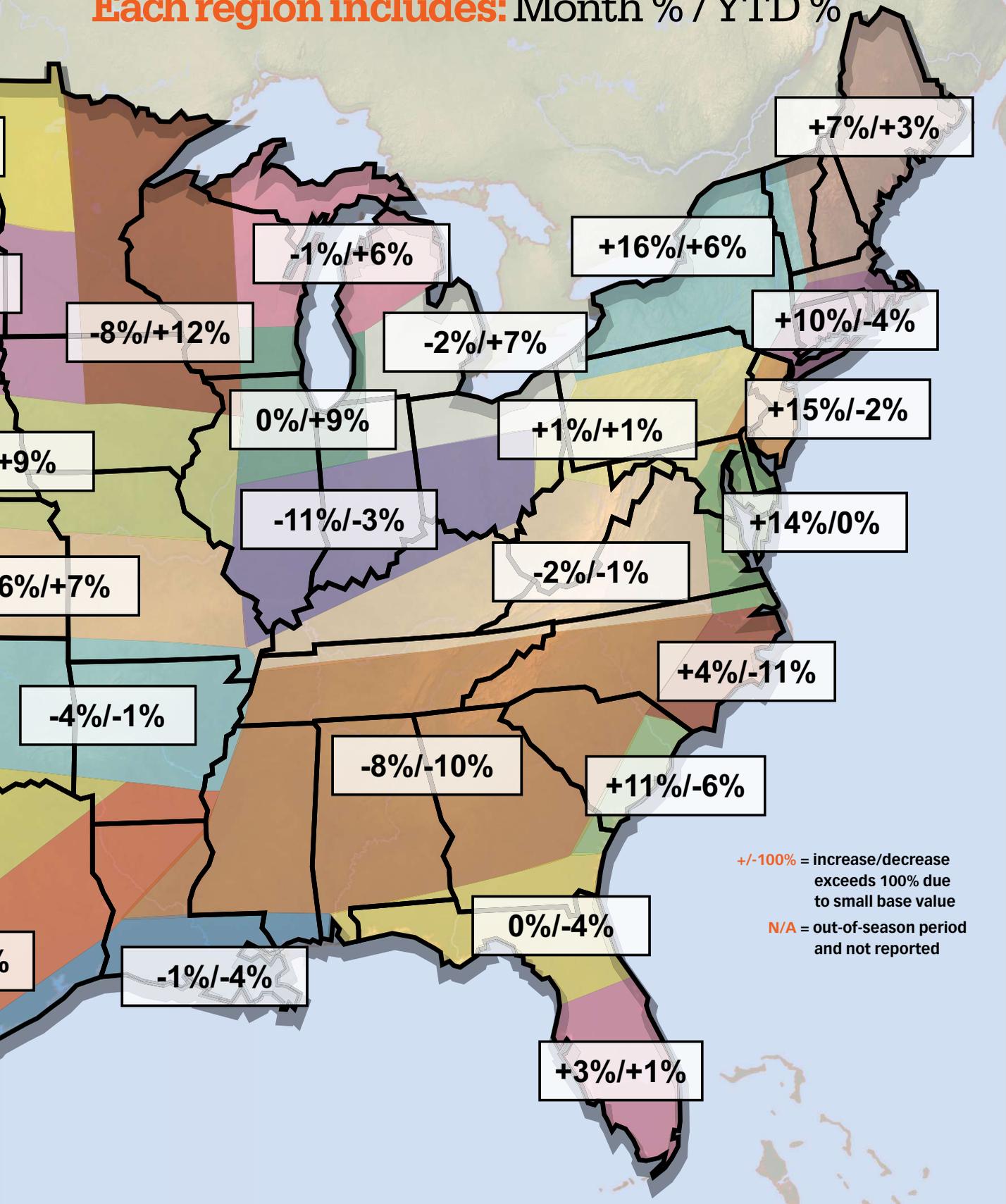
WEATHER IMPACT ANALYSIS

In cooperation with Pellucid Corp, a leading industry insight and information provider, each month *Golf Range Magazine* will present research which demonstrates how the weather has impacted the number of "Golf Playable Hours" in multiple regions of the country. While ranges may be somewhat less influenced by the weather than golf courses, the above information should still provide a performance metric worthy of review. This map shows the percentage increase or decrease for the month shown vs. the comparable month from a year ago followed by the year-to-date results from January through the current month reported.

For more information about Pellucid Corp and how the data was compiled, visit Pellucidcorp.com.

Golf Playable Hours: June

Each region includes: Month % / YTD %



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

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First-Graders Learn Soccer and Basketball— Not Golf?

Nicole Weller adds props to her lesson tee on Skidaway Island and shows why golf doesn't have to sit by while other sports entice the 5- to 7-year-old market.

The catch-phrase "While We're Young" has lately been deployed to emphasize a speedier pace of play. But the PGA director of instruction at The Landings Golf Club in Savannah, Ga., Nicole Weller, brings a different interpretation to it. For Weller, who was the 2013 PGA Youth Player Development Award winner, there is a whole lot of golf basics you can effectively teach to a kindergartner—even if the session you spend with these small fry doesn't resemble Butch Harmon's work with Phil Mickelson. Weller has twice earned the "Top 50" GRAA honor as a Growth of the Game Teaching Professional because she designs her interactions with students around how they learn, what they're ready for and what will keep them engaged as they develop motor skills. Without doubt there is a very big attitude factor influencing how golf instructors should interact with the game's youngest and newest participants. Take a look at this clip and see how an expert handles the challenge. ■



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Doing eMail Right

Compared to the latest social media platforms, email is an old-school form of digital marketing. But it's still highly valuable if you leverage it wisely.

BY NICK ONDRAKO, PGA, AND ERICK ARBE, PGA

The screenshot shows an email marketing software interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with "Email Is Not Dead", "Help", "Preview and Test", "Save as Template", and "Save and Exit". Below this, a preview area shows the email content: "August 2014", "Email Is Not Dead", "PGA Digital Business", and a photo of a golfer. A text editor on the right shows the HTML content of the email, including the text: "Email marketing can be a valuable and cost effective marketing tool, if it's done right. For golf pros and teaching facilities it's a great way to stay engaged with clients by offering them information that's tailored to their collective interest – golf. However, how it's delivered and the specific content it contains, can make or break a campaign." The interface also includes a "Save & Close" button and a timestamp "autosaved 2:30PM CDT 7/17/14".

Email marketing can be a valuable and cost effective marketing tool, if it's done right. For golf pros and teaching facilities it's a great way to stay engaged with clients by offering them information that's tailored to their collective interest – golf. However, how it's delivered and the specific content it contains, can make or break a campaign.

The Opt-in Process: Useless, irrelevant and downright annoying emails fill our inbox everyday. Think of how many times you've marked an email as spam or deleted it all together, and then thought, "Why am I getting this?" Most likely, you never even subscribed or opted in to receive these emails.

The first step in a successful email marketing campaign is the recipient trusting how they got your email in the first place, and that begins with the opt-in.

Provide your customers with a clear opt-in method by giving them the opportunity to sign up for emails on your website. This way, customers are opting in at their own free will.

In the opt-in process, explain exactly what types of content you'll be sending: Let your customers know they might receive emails on general updates, lesson deals, clubhouse coupons, swing tips or holiday specials.

If possible, give your subscribers the chance to choose, by offering them the ability to sign up for certain updates versus others. A new golfer might only want swing tips and lesson deals while someone else might just want to get an email when it pertains to merchandise or teaching facility specials.

Be sure that when you do send out your emails, the content is relevant to what that user signed up

to receive. This may require smaller, more segmented and frequent emails, but research shows that sending smaller content, to smaller groups, leads to higher engagement.

Subject Line: If possible, use incentives to increase the open rate. Using an incentive in your subject line can increase open rates as much as 50 percent. “Free Golf Lesson When You Buy A Package of 5” or “1/2 Off in The Pro Shop When You Sign Up for a Summer Clinic” are good examples.

If incentives aren’t available to be used, then be sure to write concise, compelling subject lines. Subject lines should be no more than 30 – 50 characters and should give readers some indication of what to expect from the email. For example, “All Day Clinic and Putter Fitting this Monday” will be better received than “Don’s July Update”

Relevant Content

About 25 percent of recipients unsubscribe from emails – emails that they opted in to receive - because of irrelevant content.

Keep it short, sweet and to the point. Don’t cram lesson rates, tournament updates, schedule changes, announcements, lesson deals, holiday specials and a random article into one email. Keep your content concise and, once again, relevant. Packing what can most likely already be found on your site into one email is distracting and ineffective marketing. What you *can* and *should do* for secondary and tertiary subjects is include some key highlights on a subject, which links back to your site for more details.

“About 25 percent of recipients unsubscribe from emails that they signed up to receive **because they don't find the content relevant.**”

Hierarchy: Have a main point or call to action and make it front and center. Secondary and tertiary content can be there, just make it less bold using variations in color, language or button size. For example, if you’re offering a lesson discount for Father’s Day, make that announcement the first part, biggest and boldest. Let it take up the top two-thirds of the page, with three smaller boxes of info at the bottom of the email for secondary information you’d like to share.

Typefaces: Don’t get crazy with typefaces – stick to fewer than 3. Keep it clean and junk free for a higher conversion rate and a better experience for the reader.

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Revamp

Decision-makers at JC Golf saw revenue upside for the Encinitas Ranch practice center and put capital to good use on improvements that matter most to customers

BY SCOTT KRAMER



Golfers are greeted by the sight of a new, laser-level tee line at Encinitas Ranch, with its arc of synthetic and natural turf promising fine surfaces in all seasons.

Along the Pacific





San Diego has a coastal golf scene that attracts avid players from far and wide, in particular to U.S. Open site Torrey Pines. But travel north from Torrey about 10 miles and you'll find another municipal gem, Encinitas Ranch Golf Course. This 16-year-old course, pride of the beach community of Encinitas, was designed with bold strokes by Cary Bickler. It lies about a mile inland but its vistas bring your gaze right back to the blue Pacific.

The entire facility recently underwent a \$1 million-plus renovation, which included a substantial upgrade to the practice center. "Since opening in 1998, our range has always been a popular practice spot," says Erik Johnson, general manager of the course, which is operated by JC Golf. "The ocean view and temperate climate make it an ideal place to hone your golf game—we just needed to bring out its best."

In order to do just that and enhance the practice experience, JC Golf got busy on the natural-grass and synthetic-turf hitting surfaces, meanwhile creating target greens that visually pop and give a stronger impression to players on the tee. "Since the work was completed in October 2013, we've seen a steady increase in range revenues," says Johnson. "We're anticipating 20 percent growth in sales over the coming year."

After 15 years as managers of the property, JC Golf saw its chance to elevate ERGC's busy practice facility from good to great. By removing old range mats and replacing them with 300 feet of synthetic and durable Tee-Line Turf, they soon discovered that golfers no longer resisted coming out to hit buckets when the grass tee is closed.

That's likely because the sole of a golfer's irons and utility clubs will ride through Tee-Line Turf in a manner that remarkably simulates the feel of natural turfgrass.

Through the long season, sections of that "real" grass and the Tee-Line Turf tee are open at alternate intervals, so as to distribute wear. Also added were seven hitting bays to the tee area, all-new bag stands, plus new signage and amenities. "These additions collectively make the entire facility very attractive, in line with the prestigious reputation of the course," says Johnson.

Even after the upgrade, the 350-yard, double-ended range appears to be washed out brown, for the most part, although highlighted by bright green targets. There are several reasons for the tawny appearance of the turf, including irrigation restrictions and sporadic drought. Johnson and his staff try to put a positive spin on the situation, touting to golfers that the new "native" look makes target greens stand out.

"We wanted to make the interior of the range more sustainable by removing all of the grass turf in the field of the range and only leaving turf on the nine new target greens," he says. "This reduced water usage by over 80 percent while giving the player more definable targets to play to. A favorable side effect is that now the range is easier to maintain and easier to pick."

The back end of the Encinitas range is reserved for the JC Golf School, so it won't have an impact on the public-use tee area along the opposite (South) end. The course's nine PGA and LPGA instructors teach more than 1,500 lessons annually

One theme of this renovation is that not all amenities have to be luxuries, for example this simple yet effective shade cover near the teaching area.

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“Since the renovation, our revenues are up. We project **20 percent sales growth.**”

—Erik Johnson

at the North end, which features a large putting green, a pitching green with two bunkers and a canopied hitting bay that’s equipped with swing training aids. There’s also a spacious grass tee box, augmented by a 30-foot Tee-Line Turf hitting area. Guests are shuttled by cart to and from the North end, where they can find four active instructors giving lessons at any given time.

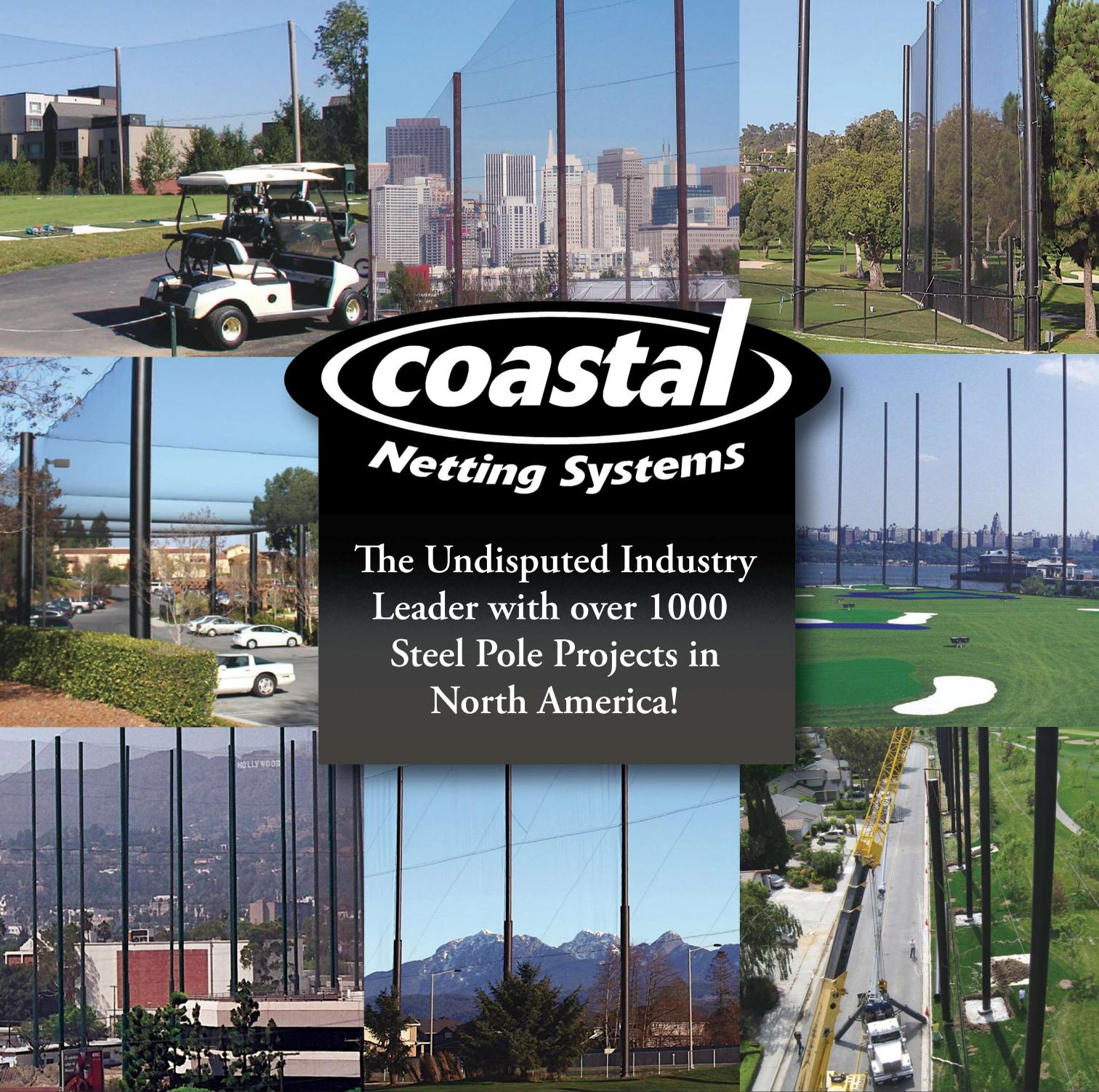
That end of the range is also home to the course’s Junior Golf Academy, which emerged as one of the best in town back in the late 1990s, and continues in high regard. PGA director of instruction John Mason has coached and mentored junior golfers there tirelessly. Many of his current and former students have excelled at the high school and college levels. Encinitas Ranch plays host to the LPGA and USGA Girls Golf Program, as well as three high school and two middle school teams.

The facility also just hired a certified professional clubfitter, Ken Behrs, who has been recognized as a PING Clubfitter of the Year for Southern California. “After our renovations to the range, we felt we had a great opportunity to increase the volume of club sales through custom-fitting while adding a valuable service to our guests,” says Johnson. “Many of our players may have met Ken previously at the very popular Carlsbad Golf Center or more recently at The Crosby Club in Rancho Santa Fe.”

Behrs is responsible for developing and building the new custom-club program, and he’s got the tools to do so. “We have recently acquired a FlightScope launch monitor that will work with our on-range fitting centers from Titleist, Taylor Made, Ping and Cobra,” says Johnson. The FlightScope will be linked to a portable media center set up at all times on the range. “Ken and several of our instructors who are also certified clubfitters will use it,” Johnson explains. “Up until now, most of our custom club sales have come from our independent instructors. While they’ve done a great job, we felt that now was the time to expand our presence and offerings.”

Encinitas Ranch also has plans to erect a 2,500-square-foot GolfTEC building between the clubhouse and putting green, to be open for business sometime this autumn. Because GolfTEC’s marketing programs are national and involve their clients being able to travel to many locations to receive instruction, Johnson feels his instructors won’t be impacted by having GolfTEC on site. “Bringing GolfTEC to a greengrass location can only be mutually beneficial, as it draws their client base to Encinitas Ranch and gives them an opportunity to hone their skills on a great practice facility,” says Johnson. In other words, promote game-improvement from all logical angles and build your overall business by helping average golfers hit better shots and shoot lower scores. ■

The Encinitas short-game area (above) is lush and fairway-like, while the main field of the range is only maintained at the target areas.



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25 TOP  **GRAA**
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2014

August's Featured **Top 25** Teaching & Training Aid:

The Randy Myers Golf Stretching Pole

It's not a stretch to see why this month's top-ranked training aid has become so popular with teaching professionals, tour professionals and golfers of all skill levels

Just because the Golf Stretching Pole is a relatively simple device in the realm of teaching and training aids, doesn't make it any less valuable to teaching professionals or tour professionals. Just ask Randy Myers, the golf fitness instructor whose name is attached to the product, or his top-ranked clients like Davis Love III or Zach Johnson, who use the Golf Stretching Pole regularly both on and off the golf course.

That's right, on the golf course, too. The Golf Stretching Pole is one of those few teaching and training aids that can actually be used during a round of golf, according to the USGA, which is one of the reasons why it has become so popular among teaching and touring professionals, along with average golfers.

The Golf Stretching Pole has many different uses, drills and exercises, some of which we learn from stretching pole enthusiasts such as MyGolfingGoals Academy founder Bill McInerney and two-time national PGA of America award winner Will Reilly on the following pages.

From Bill McInerney...

For years, golf and fitness went together like a square peg into a round hole. Even after Gary Player pioneered physical conditioning on the Tour level, it was still widely ignored until the last two decades or so. Today, golfers get it. They understand flexibility's value in particular—how it helps the golf swing—and are learning in droves how to stretch before they hit balls and play the course. This thinking helped to develop the Randy Myers Golf Stretching Pole, which tied for 20th position on the inaugural GRAA Top 25 Teaching

& Training Aids Survey.

Billing itself as the “only golf-specific stretching device on the market,” the Golf Stretching Pole allows a player to loosen up before a round or a workout session in just a few minutes. Bill McInerney Jr. says the tool intrigued him right away. “I first saw it at the PGA Show in Orlando. I was looking for a new fitness system for my academy and thought we needed something that would get players to stretch,” says McInerney. “In particular, we needed a tool that made them want to stretch.”

McInerney believes the serious player is now glad to invest more time into fitness. Therefore, it is important to offer programs that are specific to golfers. “Fitness is a major part of our program,” says McInerney. “Three times a week we conduct a ‘Power Hour’ that involves fitness. We work on flexibility, stability and mobility. We’re focusing on developing better athletes—it certainly makes teaching golf easier.”

Literature for the Golf Stretching Pole boasts that using it for just a few minutes will increase clubhead speed because of the increased ability to turn. It thus makes sense that McInerney has his students use it briefly before each Power Hour. Some McGolf students do seem hesitant when instructed to use the training aid.

“While students embrace whatever helps their games, the Golf Stretching Pole is not as exciting as something that corrects a swing with immediate feedback,” says McInerney. “If a student uses it one day, they won't suddenly feel more flexible. It has to be a continued exercise. It's a tougher sell since it doesn't provide that instant feedback.”

The training aid promotes five easy stretches for players to try, holding each for 30 seconds. McInerney mostly employs the device for its recommended uses, citing its benefits for working



Bill McInerney, Jr., a 2012 and 2013 GRAA Top 50 Growth of the Game Teaching Professional, founded MyGolfingGoals Academy at McGolf in Dedham, Mass.

Davis Love III (pictured) is one of the many tour professionals who use the Randy Myers Golf Stretching Pole during their workout and practice sessions.



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out the lats, but also has used it as a visual aid for a student's target line. "I pretty much stick to the stretching pole program," says McInerney. "I show my students the stretches in the product pamphlet and have them mimic those."

The training aid comes in both men's and women's, standard and tour models. The standard model is simply the pole while the tour model offers a flex handle, which helps to set the proper wrist angle at the top of a swing and reduce hand pressure during stretches. The men's and women's models are identical except for the diameter of the pole and the color.

McInerney believes that the Golf Stretching Pole can be used by anyone. "I haven't found it works best for a certain group of people," he says. "I have some people, when they come in, it's the first thing to grab. Other students don't need it since they are naturally more mobile. Ultimately, the people that are really focused on flexibility are the ones that are going to use it more."

Perhaps most importantly, the Golf Stretching Pole complies with USGA Rule 14-3 and can be stored in a player's bag during a competitive round. This allows a student to stretch before each shot if they choose to, which makes the train-

ing aid a valuable resource to use while playing. As fitness becomes more a part of golf, expect to see the Randy Myers Golf Stretching Pole in more bags. McInerney is doing his part to help fitness to the forefront of the sport.

"We offer the Golf Stretching Pole to all of our students," McInerney states. "We have a personal trainer who runs classes for our students focused on explosive movements. We do pushups, burpees, walking lunges—it's basically a Crossfit hybrid. When our juniors go through growth spurts, that's when they can develop power." McInerney and his staff use those growth spurts as a window to carve out more power for their students. But before his students can pushup, burpee and lunge their way to more power...they reach for the Randy Meyers Golf Stretching Pole.

From Will Reilly...

Will Reilly is a widely known golf professional for a host of important reasons. He was awarded the PGA of America's Player Development Award (then named the President's Plaque) in 2007 and its Youth Player Development Award (formally called the Junior Golf Leader award) in 2005. Reilly has also

Golf Stretching Pole Namesake Randy Myers's Drills and Exercises

- 1** Posture stretch: Have students place the pole out in front of them and grip it from the top and bend forward with arc between their hips and their hands.
- 2** Backswing position: Keep your students centered over the ball by placing the pole out front and out from their rear foot and turn around their spines; the same drill can be used on the opposite side for symmetry.
- 3** Shoulder dynamics: Have students put the pole behind their backs and lifting their arms over their heads by bending from the hips.



Training Aids to Look for: Ernest Sports ES12



The ES12 is a portable launch monitor that can be paired with a smart device such as an iPhone or iPad via Bluetooth. The ES12 can track ball speed and distance of shots hit and can be used both indoors and outdoors.

been honored with numerous awards by the Philadelphia PGA Section, including two Youth Player Development Awards, two Player Development Awards and the 2007 distinction as Section Golf Professional of the Year.

And Reilly is part of an entrepreneurial family, as well. Will's father, Hugh Reilly, invented the Randy Myers Golf Stretching Pole. As Will remembers it, his father, the owner of Upper Dublin Golf Club in Dresher, Pennsylvania, came up with the idea for the Golf Stretching Pole out of necessity. "Making a full turn of the shoulders was difficult for my dad," Reilly says. "At 6'2", 230 pounds and with a muscular frame, flexibility is something he had to earn. He focused on the last 25 percent of the backswing, which is the tough part, flex-wise."

Reilly explains that stress in the core muscles alone will stop the turn. When this happens, the left arm breaks down and as the club is lifted out of plane, a general disconnect begins. Hugh Reilly is a true fan of Jack Nicklaus's golf swing, specifically based on Jack's ability to make a full turn and keep the golf club on plane. "Big guys have to let the left heel come off the ground to complete the turn and take

Will Reilly, a winner of multiple awards including recognition as a 2013 GRAA Top 50 Growth of the Game Teaching Professional, is owner and PGA director of instruction at Royal Palm Beach (Fla.) Golf Academy.



(continued on page 38)

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www.golftrainingaids.com
- T20. **Eyeline Golf: Balance Rod**
www.eyelinegolf.com
- T20. **Randy Myers Stretching Pole**
www.golfstretchingpole.com
22. **Medicus Dual-Hinge**
www.medicus.com
23. **SKLZ Smash Bag**
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24. **Eyeline Golf: Putting Impact System**
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- Explanar Golf Training System
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- MorodZ Alignment Rods
- PING iPING Putter App
- Right Angle 2 Golf Training Aid
- SAM PuttLab

Notes from the Manufacturer: The Randy Myers Golf Stretching Pole

The Golf Stretching Pole is designed to increase a golfer's ability to make a fuller turn of the upper body which in turn will allow them to generate more clubhead speed. The Golf Stretching Pole conforms to Rule 14-3 and may be used during a stipulated round of golf. In addition to the standard model, a tour model is also offered. The tour model is the same as the standard model with the exception of the removable handle with a stainless steel spring. Golf professionals like the tour model because it allows golfers to set the proper wrist angle at the top of the back swing.



pressure off their lower backs," says Hugh Reilly. "That move alone will extend their golfing years."

As Will recalls, his father would try various techniques to maintain a straight left arm while still making a full shoulder turn and keeping only light tension in the arms and hands. Hugh eventually discovered that power needs to come from the ground, which ultimately led to the invention of the Golf Stretching Pole.

Hugh has seven children, and all three of his sons are PGA Professionals. They spent their winters at their home in Palm

Beach Gardens, Florida, which was near PGA National Resort & Spa's Champion range. The family happened to meet Randy Myers, who was the facility's director of fitness at the time. Myers became enamored with the Golf Stretching Pole immediately after trying it. From there, Myers introduced the aid to many of this tour-pro students, including Davis Love III, Dustin Johnson, Zach Johnson and Lucas Glover, among others. As a result, the device's popularity spread quickly across the national tours. Currently, over 200 tour players own, use and carry the Golf Stretching Pole in their

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Over time, the aid has evolved to better accommodate the golf swing's true positions. Will claims that in order to reduce hand pressure, the angle and position of the hands on the device had to resemble the position of the hands at the top of the backswing. That discovery led to the creation of the Tour Model, an important design improvement Hugh credits to his young cohort, Will.

"I had the great opportunity to play a round of golf with former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer," Will Reilly explains. "He saw me using the Golf Stretching Pole, showed interest in it and asked me a few questions. So I sent him one. He kept it in his corner office at Microsoft to use during the day. Ballmer swears by it. He says that because he is able to turn more easily, he is hitting the ball farther than ever?"

Will claims that one of the reasons this hybrid training aid has become so popular is that it can be used in competition. "According to the USGA and R&A Rules of Golf, most teaching and training aids are not allowed to be used during the course of a round of golf," says Reilly. "The Randy Myers Golf Stretching Pole is unique in that it can be used during a round and stored in a golfer's bag. It conforms to Rule 14-3."

Rule 14-3 states that a player must not use any artificial device or unusual equipment, or use any equipment in an unusual manner, in a stipulated round. However, Decision 14-3/10.5 in the USGA's "Decisions on the Rules of Golf" states that items designed specifically for golf but not used in a golf swing and items designed for general stretching are

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legal to use during a stipulated round. "Although I don't play as much golf as I'd like, I do use the Golf Stretching Pole while playing in Section tournaments," Reilly says with a hint of pride.

More will surely follow, but the Randy Myers Golf Stretching Pole is regarded as one of the first fitness aids designed specifically for golf. Reilly says that a lot of golfers tend to stretch their muscles prior to a range session or a round of golf by using a golf car as a fulcrum or sitting on the ground and touching their toes. However, these are non-golf specific stretches and do not

really let you gain residual muscle memory. The Golf Stretching Pole helps golfers with repetition.

For some the product is a window to a new sensation. According to Reilly, many students do not have the ability to make a full turn in their golf swings, likewise many others lack the power in their cores. By using the Randy Myers Golf Stretching Pole, golfers are able to allow their hands to become more sensory in the way they should act during the golf swing, because of the low pressure in their hands. The Golf Stretching Pole can also be used to help students with their



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balance. By holding the top of the back-swing stretch, golfers can check the balance in their feet by shifting from heel to toe, letting their weight center more toward their heels.

It's been said that the best way to get the full benefit from the Golf Stretching Pole is to make a full-swing position stretch for five seconds on the backswing and five seconds on the follow-through before every tee shot—nothing comes closer to guaranteeing a full turn. Golfers are only at the top of their backswings for a fraction of a second in real time, and only for two to three seconds for an entire round. This is not enough time to send a message to the brain that such-and-such position is where you want to be at the top of your swing. But with this five-second drill, claims Reilly, the drill work is equivalent to playing two and a half rounds of golf.

"What chance does a golfer have to make a full, complete backswing with a straight left arm, full shoulder turn and correct balance if he hasn't played in a few weeks," asks Reilly, "No chance."

The Golf Stretching Pole allows students to rehearse that ideal position before each swing. The aid allows students to focus on turning their core, and their core will swing the club, otherwise known as a "big muscle swing" with core and legs. The Golf Stretching Pole permits students to get to these critical positions instantly via the five-second drill before each shot. It's Will Reilly's belief that viewers of tour events on TV will soon see competitors stretching in this manner before every full shot. Reportedly, each member of the 2012 U.S. Ryder Cup team received a special Ryder Cup Golf Stretching Pole from team Captain Davis Love III.

Reilly also asserts that the Randy Myers Golf Stretching Pole imposes a lot of constants when used correctly. The pole helps his students create power and also to learn how their body functions and moves. Photos of all the stretches are printed on the pole itself. Reilly approves of that, as he considers himself a minimalist of sorts, especially when it comes to teaching the golf swing. "I want to try to keep the golf swing as simple as possible," says Reilly. "That is the great thing about the Golf Stretching Pole—you don't really

have to speak to anyone. They can just feel it.” And that’s the holy grail of game-improvement.

“Students often ask to buy their own version of the Golf Stretching Pole,” Reilly says. “I give each of my multi-day golf school students a pole they can take home and use. They can’t believe how much of a difference stretching can make in their

swings and distance.” Reilly uses the Randy Myers Golf Stretching Pole on average three times per lesson, which may sound like a lot, but he insists that results have gotten him to that point. “It’s not just a training aid, it’s a stretching aid, and my students’ successes speak for themselves.” No need to stretch your imagination to believe that. ■

GRAA Top 25 Teaching & Training Aids Expanded Coverage on GolfRange.org

In addition to the monthly GRAA Top 25 Teaching & Training Aids coverage in *Golf Range Magazine*, the Golf Range Association of America has created a Teaching & Training Aids Resource Center on GolfRange.org. This resource center will not only archive all of the content from the magazine, but also will house extra content including videos, images, and editorial on how top teachers are using the various products from the Top 25.

In addition, the center includes a full listing of the Top 25 Teaching & Training Aids where readers can learn more about the products and contact the respective companies.



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Leaving a Classic Club to Start Something...

Cutting

The Inverness Club, site of U.S. Opens and PGA Championships, is where golf professionals David Graf and Jim McGurk sketched out their plan for a new Toledo, Ohio golf landmark **BY CHRIS LEWIS**

The location Graf and McGurk found for the Golf PIT was an existing standard golf range that formed part of a multi-sport complex.



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Perfectly graded terrain makes this range easy to pick and to maintain. Inset photo shows club-style visual merchandising techniques.



They shared a passion for golf, a fondness for the city of Toledo and strong loyalty to their alma mater, the University of Toledo. And yet for two decades David Graf and Jim McGurk were mere colleagues and acquaintances in the golf profession. In 2011, Graf hired McGurk as his director of instruction at The Inverness Club, one of America's most prestigious golf landmarks. Graf was PGA Head Golf Professional at the famed club, whose major-championship glory dates all the way back to 1920. For sheer cachet, there was no way for either professional to improve on where they were—but apparently there are times when pioneering trumps prestige.

The industry was changing—this was clear to McGurk and Graf—in ways that seemed to encourage entrepreneurship and non-traditional golf experiences. The net effect was a combined vision for a full-scale teaching and performance center in Toledo. Eventually it seemed clear that partnering up in such an endeavor was probably the best shot at success for either or both of them.

Still sketching out the design and business model of their proposed center, Graf and McGurk

began scouting around for property. No particular site seemed promising, then one day a friend of Graf's referred them to the owner of the Maumee Sports Mall Driving Range, located within an athletic complex that is home to indoor soccer, volleyball, and basketball facilities, among other recreational amenities.

In August of 2012, after five months of negotiation, the Graf-McGurk partnership entered a lease agreement for the range. They renamed it The PIT, both in tribute to a swimming hole Graf remembered fondly from boyhood, but also because those three letters stood for Performance Institute of Toledo—a suitably loft subtitle. They hired a team to renovate the facility, speeding through that process in time to stage a December grand opening. Despite extensive updates that cost upwards of \$500,000, the facility remained open as contractors labored on to the finish line.

The entire facility, including 25 heated bays, a 5,000-square-foot pro shop and a maintenance building, was repainted. Broken windows, bad siding and rotting gutters were replaced, while equipment like tractors, mowers, and range pickers were overhauled. The pro shop was re-carpeted, the bathroom was updated and professionally decorated, and various technological applications were installed, from computers to a new phone system. Graf and McGurk's team even developed a locker room, showers, a fitness area, and a



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—David Graf



David Graf

therapy and waiting room for their recently hired sports psychologist.

“We basically gutted the entire facility and renovated everything, from A to Z,” says Graf. “In doing so, we are now able to help golfers reach their full potential, by offering brand name clubs and equipment, clubfitting, a year-round practice facility, reputable instruction, a fitness center and sports psychology.”

Currently the only stand-alone club repair shop in greater Toledo, The Golf PIT carries over 1,000 shafts, as well as grips from brands such as Winn, Golf Pride and Lamkin. The facility’s clubmaker, John Hudak, handles the expected re-grip and reshaft work, but he also grinds wedges and spines shafts. He is the only area professional rated Class A by the Professional Clubmakers Society.

Arrive at The Golf PIT in search of custom fitting and you’ll have the option of two launch monitor applications, courtesy of Foresight Sports and TrackMan. “What we offer in state-of-the-art technology is unmatched in our market,” claims Graf. “I like to use the analogy that purchasing the Foresight Sports and TrackMan II launch monitor technology is similar to a doctor having an X-Ray or MRI machine. The doctor may be good at diagnosing problems, but, with these tools, we can be 100 percent certain.”

Furthermore, The Golf PIT is an Advanced Fit Center for Titleist, which allows Graf and McGurk’s staff of five PGA-trained instructors to

offer a wide selection of shafts along with special wedge configurations that tweak such features as bounce and loft. The Golf PIT also provides fitting systems from vendors like Nike, PING, and TaylorMade, to name a few. “Since our fitters are PGA-trained golf instructors,” comments Graf, “we feel we have the added advantage of using the fitting process as an opportunity to also educate and help our customers.

“As we prepare for the future, we would like to add to our fitting offerings and hire a full-time dedicated clubfitter. We also plan to add another TrackMan II launch monitor as demand increases,” says Graf.

In addition to retailing the latest clubs, apparel, shoes and accessories, to complement the club repair and fitting center, The Golf PIT has a 20-acre driving range, complete with 52 hitting stations and 23 heated stalls. Since remodeling the facility, Graf and McGurk have also installed new heaters and synthetic grass mats. Golfers have taken notice, according to Graf. “The response has been amazing,” he says. What’s drawing them in? For starters, the facility currently has the region’s only heated golf practice facility that is open on a daily basis. The Golf PIT is a destination if you want to sharpen your putting, chipping, and bunker skills at a short game facility, a large putting green, and a six-hole executive golf course, which is groomed with care. Golfers can come in iffy weather for individual, couple or group instruction, in the form of lessons, clinics, or schools, at two indoor teaching bays.

In particular, 90-minute clinics are available for ladies and beginners, discussing the fundamentals of golf, and are completely overseen by a PGA instructor, with a four-to-one teacher/student ratio, at minimum. From May to October, The Golf PIT also hosts programs for children age six through 12 (known as a PUPS Tour), as well as clinics held by The First Tee, an international youth development organization. Additionally, in the fall, The Golf PIT hosts a Junior High Golf Tour program for children in fifth through eighth grades.

During the summer, The Golf PIT also invites students to attend a four or eight-hour-long “VIP Golf School,” in which they receive one-on-one instruction with a PGA instructor. As they are overseen by an instructor, students play nine holes in the morning, receive lessons, focusing on whichever facets of the game they need the most assistance with, eat lunch, and then play another nine holes in the afternoon.

To further help customers improve their games, The Golf PIT has also installed an e6 software golf simulator developed by Ace Indoor Golf. The sim-



Jim McGurk

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ulator includes a library of 85 popular courses from around the world, along with a swing analysis program that measures customers' club face and launch angles. "We are planning to add another simulator for the next winter season," Graf says. "With an additional simulator, we'll be able to market eight-person golf leagues during the winter, which we'll be promoting this summer and fall."

Back in 2012, Graf and McGurk also hired Lane Bidlack, a certified strength and condition specialist and Titleist Institute Golf Fitness Instructor, as The Golf PIT's director of fitness. Bidlack and his staff of instructors offer "golf specific" fitness training to customers, focusing primarily on fitness capabilities like balance, coordination, and flexibility, to help them cultivate their swings.

"Jim and I believe that 'form' follows 'function' and that, by having a professional trained in how the body works, The Golf PIT has an advantage over other golf instructors. Most importantly, Lane offers a holistic approach to fitness, which helps

our clients gradually improve their health and, in turn, their golf games," says Graf.

To help golfers realize their full potential, Graf and McGurk also emphasize mental health, and have hired sports psychologist Ruth Ann Tetz, Ph.D., a licensed clinical psychologist in the State of Ohio, to oversee The Golf PIT's mental coaching offerings. Working with groups and individuals, Dr. Tetz helps golfers of all ages and skill levels increase their self-confidence, improve their problem-solving skills, and maintain a more positive frame of mind.

By offering first-rate club repair, club fitting, practice facilities, instruction, fitness programs, and mental coaching, Graf believes The Golf PIT accomplishes its principal goal of bringing a country-club experience to average golfers.

"The Golf PIT provides everything a country club member would expect from their golf shop and professional staff: service, selection, product knowledge, enthusiasm, and expertise," says Graf. "The fact that the majority of my staff members either worked for me at Inverness, or were trained in the private club industry, gives customers confidence that my staff and I are credible." Keep an eye on this tandem if you want to see the academy of the future continue evolving and raising its standards. Prestige of a high-tech nature seems likely to follow. ■

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Daily Fee Owner Succeeds with Satellite Range

Funds were set aside for capital improvements to his daily-fee course in southwest Ohio, but Chris Hale used them to buy a golf range 12 miles away, earning strong returns from the get-go.

BY JOHN TORSIELLO

Several years ago, like most privately owned daily-fee courses, Penn Terra Golf Club found itself with a list of pending capital projects from cart paths to clubhouse décor. Chris Hale, PGA Professional and owner of the 6,100-yard Lewisburg, Ohio course since 1985, studied his business prospects and crafted a plan. But Hale didn't summon contractors to Penn Terra. Instead he went out and bought a driving range down the road.

Realizing that practice and teaching were the golf activities with true growth potential, Hale recognized that his 18-hole course lacked the acreage and configuration to handle them. Today he is balancing his time between Penn Terra and the North Dayton Golf Academy, 12 miles away in the town of Clayton. "It took about \$60,000 in cash to purchase the business assets of what was a failing range and then renovate the facilities," recalls Hale, who has a long-term lease on the acreage the range occupies. "That was money well spent."

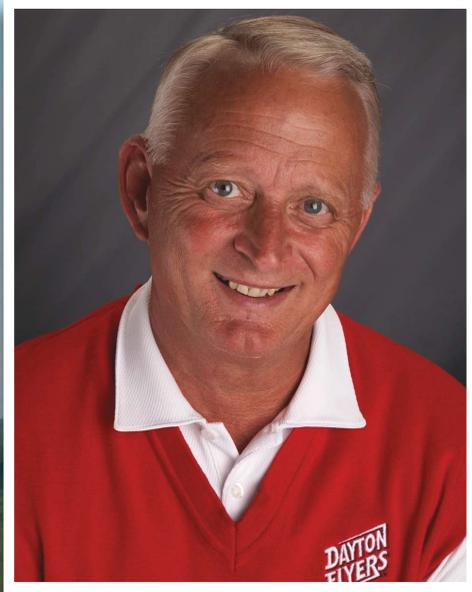
His motivation was to find a practice facility to complement the golf course and tap into the time-compressed golf activities that a learning center is all about. The NDGA had its grand opening in June of 2010 and established early momentum. First-year revenue growth (over previous ownership) was a reassuring 22 percent—and it kicked off an extended upswing. "We seemed to reach an untapped segment of golfers that wanted every-



thing when it comes to practice and instruction," says Hale. Sales in year two continued higher, rising 24 percent. In year three the revenue growth topped 28 percent. "Naturally things will level out, given that fewer people will be discovering us for the first time," Hale says. "But in general the word is out that NDGA is the place to go and we feel very fortunate for that."

His teaching partner at both facilities is Gip Hoagland, who serves as PGA Head Professional at Penn Terra as well as men's golf coach and director of golf for the University of Dayton. The market NDGA serves tends to feed in from a 20-mile radius. That orbit has stretched a bit owing to the startup of two- and three-day golf schools.

Hale (inset photo) combines his skills as a coach and an entrepreneur at the new academy. Below: On video, a student of Hale's exhibits good form at address.



Hale uses Constant Contact, the web-based tool for small-business engagement marketing, to promote the academy. "We have over 1,000 email addresses and use the platform extensively to promote programs and new offerings," he notes. "I find it very affordable and easy to use. Between the emails, our website and signage in and around the facility, customers all know what is coming next."

Dayton is a low-key market where conscientious service builds loyalty. Hale developed a well-earned reputation as a fine instructor over the years, dedicated to helping his clients enjoy golf to a greater degree. "I have always been known as a good teacher but also a professional who would work to put his students and members first," he reflects.

New this year at the academy is TPI golf-specific fitness training. "We are fortunate to connect with a certified TPI fitness



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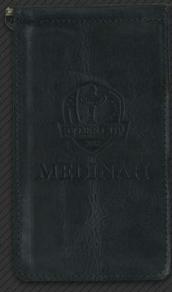
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trainer at the local hospital rehab center," Hale explains. "Sports medicine and fitness are all he does." The NDGA struck an arrangement with the hospital to provide out-patients with 20 private sessions at an affordable fee structure. The facility's short-game practice area is another focus for 2014. "We simply need this to be better and will work all year on providing an improved short-game experience," vows Hale. The Academy's indoor putting surface was installed by Jack Nicklaus-endorsed Southwest Greens. The range has 14 hitting bays and 12 acres of target area.

Hale considers North Dayton Golf Academy unique because it "offers quality in every aspect, from practice to instruction to clubfitting and even club repair." He adds, "We do it all here and we do it right or we won't do it." He feels strongly about "making things nice, clean and neat." By that he means fresh paint, new

Being able to work indoors on swing technique and custom clubfitting helps the bottom line.

mats, flowers in pots along the tee line and by the main entrance.

Hale's clients generally put in one-hour sessions at his facility, unless clubfitting is involved. In that case the visits can stretch up to two hours. A one-hour lesson is usually followed by practice. The goal at the Academy is to make sure every need a client might have for golf instruction/practice is met, making the customer want to stay longer than at a traditional driving range.

The indoor clubfitting studio at North Dayton Golf Academy includes a launch monitor. After testing on the monitor, the golfer can take the club he or she is fitted for, go outside, hit the new sticks and get immediate feedback. "That is crucial to the client and to us as fitters," says Hale, who personally gave over 1,400 lessons last year. "I would never feel comfortable only doing an indoor fitting. Because our outside bays are heated, we insist that the client go outside to truly see and feel his or her new fitted equipment." The Academy did over 100 fittings in 2013, which, Hale notes, "helps our bottom line."

There is a high-minded approach to the range and course operations that Hale has observed during his 45 years in the golf business: If you do what is best for the golfer, the financial benefits will always trickle down to the facility's managers and golf professionals. "Almost every time in my career that I entered into a new service or program with my focus on the costs or the profitability, I have failed," he recalls. "If the service is good, if the product is good, the costs and the benefits will take care of themselves." ■





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New App Gets Kids into Golf and Helps Parents Guide Them

Seeing a need in the marketplace, Nick Kumpis leveraged his teaching skills to create a smartphone app that's a hit with junior golfers.

BY SCOTT KRAMER

Golf meets mobile technology? Yes, here and there we have seen some overlap between the ancient game and the modern trend, generating efficiencies and even some profits for golf professionals. Examples include on-course GPS apps, diagnostic swing analyzers and handheld putter-fitting software. In the name of efficient skill sharpening, PGA professionals continue searching for tech tools that haven't been thought of yet.

The idea is to emulate Mitchell Spearman, a GOLF Magazine Top 100 Teacher based in Rye Brook, N.Y., who created his "Golf Shot Fixes" app for the iPhone and continues to sell it for 99 cents. The app's continued popularity reinforces Spearman's reputation, thanks to the depth and quality of the content—some 62 high-definition video lessons with quick fixes are loaded into the product. Pol Montano, director of golf at Boone Valley Golf Club in Augusta, Mo., burned the midnight oil to create his own smartphone app, titled "Swing At

'Em Golf' It includes video swing analysis tools in a wide variety of problem-solution vignettes.

Then in January of this year, teaching professional Nick Kumpis, based at Santa Ana (Calif.) Country Club, unveiled iJuniorGolf on Apple's app store. Priced at \$4.99, it's basically a parents' guide to junior golf instruction. As far as Kumpis knows, his is the very first junior golf instruction app for iPhone or iPad. Hearing him discuss the utility of his app it's clear that the 35-year-old professional—three times a U.S. Kids Top 50 Kids Instructor—approaches his craft with dedication and creativity.

"I came up with the concept for iJuniorGolf when I realized that juniors need a fun way to learn golf and parents need a way to properly introduce their kids to the game with the help of a PGA professional," says Kumpis, whose mentors include such coaching notables as Jim Flick and Hank Haney. "The app is for kids of all ages and skill levels."

California-based Nick Kumpis parlayed his knowledge of youth golf into a smartphone app.

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Dedicated to keeping it fun, Kumpis (at right and above) employs some unusual props.



Kumpis says parents and pros alike want to introduce kids to golf early and instill in them a love of the game. "It's a game and it should be fun at every stage," he emphasizes. "Because kids absorb information differently than adults, this app helps them learn visually and improve quickly with fun drills, games and trick shots. We purposely avoid using technical golf-speak, which can be difficult

to understand and leads quickly to boredom with younger kids."

Admittedly not experienced in computer science, Kumpis said the extent of his technical know-how was limited to his smartphone apps, along with video and computer software for golf. "This is what's expected with this generation of golfers," he says. "When was the last time you saw someone take a book to the driving range? My app is easy to view on an iPhone at the range."

Kumpis had been using a lot of apps on his iPhone, and kept reading about how fast the iPad and smartphone market was growing. "One article predicted that by 2017, there would be two billion tablets and smartphones in the world," he recalls. "Also, apps have global reach. I felt like this was the future—a way for people to learn by using video and easy-to-navigate information."

He began looking specifically at the golf teaching apps and found nothing on junior golf instruction. So being he had 13 years of experience giving junior lessons, he decided to create iJuniorGolf. "I thought it would be pretty cool to be the first, and after more than a year of concept-refining, sketching out user flow, and then production, I pulled it off," says Kumpis. For professionals who lean toward authoring their own mobile app, Kumpis estimates that they cost from \$5,000 to \$100,000 and up, depending on the number of screens and



“Kids need a fun way to learn and parents need a way to **get instant help from a professional.**”

— Nick Kumpis

graphics produced and on how the video is hosted.

The well-organized app—categorized by shot type—is laid out with parents in mind, offering them a game plan to help their children by putting more than 100 video lessons in the palm of their hands. Lessons are both short and manageable, so that parents can be consistent and not over-teach. “Each lesson provides a specific focus, so the student can work on one thing at a time,” says Kumpis. “Most important, iJuniorGolf gives parents the confidence and ability to teach golf fundamentals correctly. It means you don’t have to be a golf pro to teach your child.”

The app also includes sections addressing common faults and motor skills,

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and the lessons include tips for adjusting for skill level. To film the videos inside the app, Kumpis enlisted the help of fellow golf professional Tommy D’Eliscu, who has a background in film and photography and even made a surf movie in high school. “Tommy was very helpful because he understood both the golf part of the videos, like making sure the swing stayed in the frame of the video, and also the filming aspects, such as light, shadows and angles,” says Kumpis. “It took four full days of actual filming, and before that a couple months to plan all of the videos and how to shoot them.” Kumpis and D’Eliscu shared the task of video editing,

as well.

In its first three weeks on the app store – and with no public relations campaign in that time period – iJuniorGolf realized more than 100 downloads, along with several five-star reviews. “It was rewarding from the very start to use the sales-tracking tool,” says Kumpis. “Most sales have been by customers in the U.S., but internationally I’ve had downloads from South Africa, Japan, Philippines, United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, Netherlands, Denmark and Canada.” Turns out there are kids the world over looking to at least try their hand at golf, and parents looking for an effective way to help them along. ■

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