

# REBUILDING AND CONSTRUCTING NEW TEES

**Adrian Stiff, Head Greenkeeper at Tracy Park Golf Club, near Bristol, details the work that has taken place at his course over the past five years to improve the quality of the teeing areas.**

Tracy Park Golf and Country Club, a 27 hole golf complex at Wick, between Bath and Bristol, was opened in 1976, less than a year after the initial layout was completed.

Like many new golf courses working to tight budgets, pressure on initial finance led to cost cutting which unfortunately reflected in a lower than desirable standard of construction.

A further nine holes are soon to be added, which could contribute to the club's ultimate ambition to stage one of the first major tournaments in the West of England.

Back in the '70s few tees were constructed, with nothing for the lady members apart from a mown strip on the fairway, though over the past five years the club has undertaken a major tee building programme, totalling eighty to date.

Such is the rapid expansion of the game of golf, coupled with the number of rounds demanded by visitors and members alike, the first batch are already proving inadequate in size and shape for our daily needs.

Tracy Park is not alone in this situation of inadequate teeing areas, an aspect of golf course construction that has been grossly underestimated on many of the courses in the United Kingdom. Tees for a progressive course catering for an increasing number of rounds should be of similar proportion to the size of the greens.

Certainly, in my experience, the par 3's should have a teeing area of 500 square metres and even at this size can still become very worn, unless they are regularly divotted, oversown and intensively maintained.

Long thin tees often satisfy the criteria in terms of area, but restrict the markers to only back-

ward and forward movements, with the added disadvantage of considerable variation of the yardage to the green and in turn, the degree of difficulty of the hole.

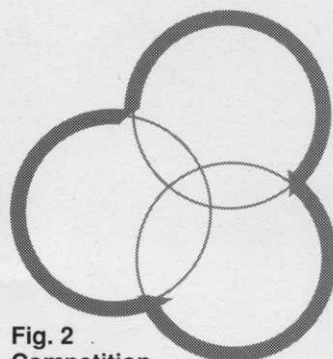
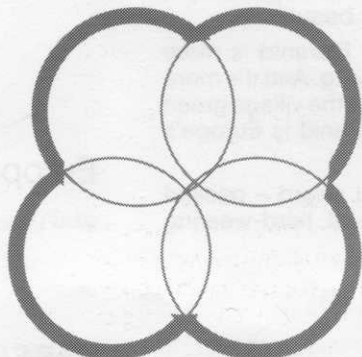
Wider tees offer the flexibility of multiple lateral movement of markers, increasing the overall playing area, particularly the area adjacent to the left marker, which in general, receives the least amount of turf abrasion.

**Golfers spend as much time on the tees as they do on the greens**

The initial planning stage for tee construction is critical. Consideration must be given to the siting, not only in relation to the hole to be played, but to the previous hole. Obstructions and bunkers in line from the last green to the next tee can create stressful conditions to the surrounding turf, concentrating traffic within narrow areas.

New tee building, should whenever possible allow ease of exit from the previous green, taking into consideration safety and flexibility of movement in the way golfers disperse from the

**Fig. 1**  
Overlapping circles give shaped tees with rounded corners.



**Fig. 2**  
Competition and forward positions can be accommodated using a three circle design. Overlapping circles give shaped tees with rounded corners.

last putting surface.

Where sufficient land is available it is well worth considering an extra tee as an alternative, which could be used during the winter period, perhaps with the inclusion of a synthetic surface.

The shape of the tee is another factor to take into consideration. It is not necessary, nor even desirable, to keep to the square or rectangular tee design.

Although design is a matter of preference and opinion, kidney shaped, oval, overlapping circles or more intricate patterns can add appeal and interest to the golf course.

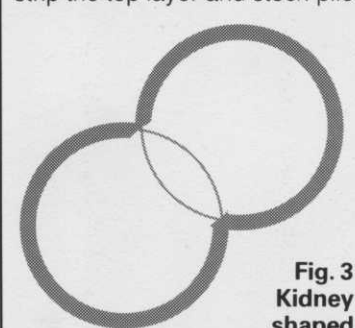
Future maintenance must always be a primary factor and if it is decided to cut the tees with a greens triplex, rounding off the corners will make the mowing that much easier.

More important is the alignment. If you prefer your tees to conform to the traditional shape, they must be straight. The easiest method is to take the central axis of your fairway as the central axis of the tee and mark out the width equally on either side.

Drainage and movement of air within the tee area are essential factors which must be considered, particularly if the site is prone to holding water or restricted by shadow from woodland, shutting out essential sunlight.

At Tracy Park we have found internal tee drainage is not necessary as long as all four sides of the tee are elevated.

Construction of new tees will no doubt vary in different locations of the course, but if the underlying soil is of good quality, strip the top layer and stock-pile



**Fig. 3**  
Kidney shaped tees offer more marker positions.

it to be used later.

We apply Glyphosate to the teeing area and the surrounding banks prior to the initial construction and after two or three weeks rotovate to a suitable depth of six inches. The soil now becomes friable and easily pushed around or collected using a blade or bucket.

Pegging and staking is the next stage, followed by the placing of the infill material into the base to the required depth. We use a three man team for this part of the operation, two hauling and one to judge and spread the positioning of each load.

Five years ago we were able to buy at auction our own digger for

a mere £195 and fingers crossed, it has cost us very little to keep it running.

The height of the new tees will depend very much on the topographic conditions, but even on a flat site, raising the level by just twelve inches is sufficient to add definition as well as creating the impression that the golfer is playing from the tee, not just a piece of mown fairway.

Higher elevations can of course add to appearance, opening up the view to the green and bringing bunkers, ponds, streams and other features into a much more desirable perspective.

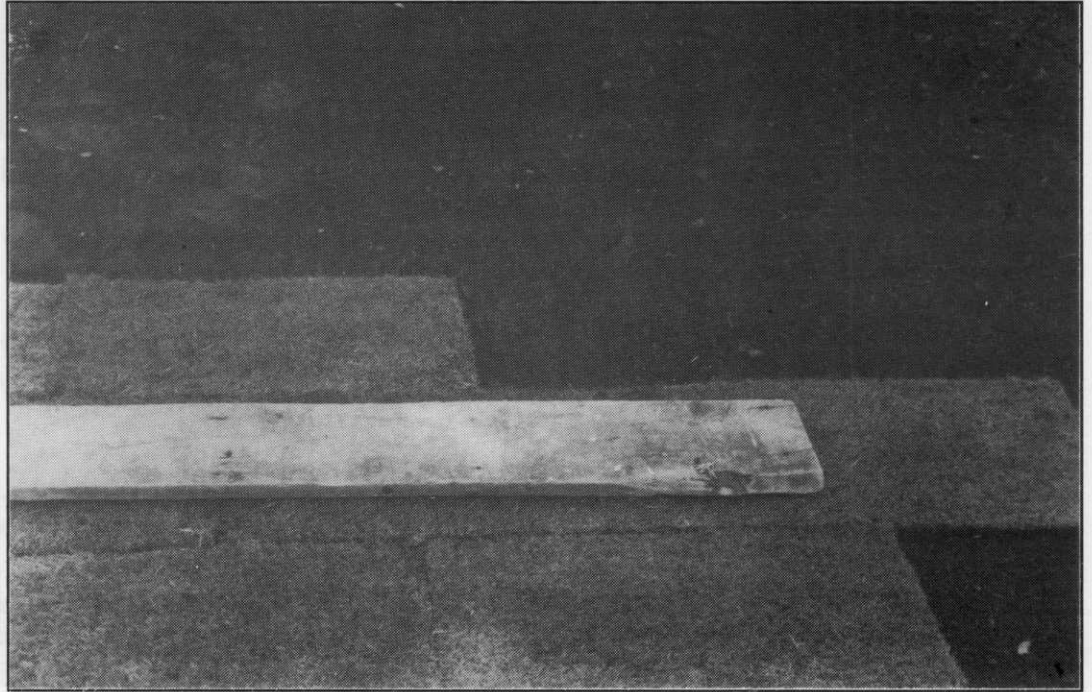
Consolidation of the base layer is very important in the initial stage of construction. Access to the right type of mechanical equipment can reduce the waiting period otherwise it is a matter of time to allow natural settlement.

Certainly on the larger tee constructions, the root zone top

soil mixture should not be applied until the subgrade material has fully settled and this can take a full season.

When we apply our top mix we ameliorate one part sand with two parts of top soil; this not only improves the quality and depth (now 9 inches), but also helps

***When laying turf on a new tee, work forwards to avoid disturbing the prepared bed. Use a plank laid on the turf for each new piece***



**Fig. 4**  
Elongated tees only allow forward and backward movements of markers, often affecting standard scratch distances.

the final grading, which we achieve by raking and heeling several times until a satisfactory level surface is ready to receive seed or turf. Again the decision to use seed or turf will depend on need, time and location.

Shrub planting, timberwork or wall building can all add to the presentation of both the tee and the aesthetic aspect of the course. There is also the additional benefit of financial saving in maintenance cost where containment can prevent golfers dragging trolleys on to the tees, breaking down banks and taking short cuts across tee corners.

Smart neat tee markers, rather than painted flower pots, concrete filled drink cans and wood blocks, add to the general appearance of neatness. Functional ballwashers, unobtrusive rubbish containers, seats and directional plans of the hole, all help to improve the environment of the tee.

Golfers spend almost as much time on the tee as they do on the green. We all devote many hours caring for our greens, but do we spend sufficient time looking after our tees?



**Fig. 5**  
Square tees create centre wear, with considerable wasted space.