Trip-and-fall case goes against Wis. course despite 13 drinks

WAUSAU, Wis. — A golf course has been found at fault in a legal case involving a golfer who had 13 drinks before tripping on his golf spikes, falling face first onto a brick path outside the clubhouse, breaking his jaw and shattering his teeth.

The golfer, Dale L. Larson, needed nine root canals, 23 crowns and had his jaw wired shut for months. He was awarded $41,540 in damages even though his own lawyer had said it was rare for a drunk person to win a negligence case.

The appeals court upheld a trial judge's ruling that Indianhead Golf and Recreation, Inc. of Mosinee was 51 percent negligent because of its terra-lock brick ramp that led from the clubhouse bar. The judge said the gaps in the bricks could have caused even a sober person to fall. The appeals court agreed the gaps were an initiating factor, especially since the ramp was built in 1976 to save $1,440 over a recommended 4-inch thick concrete slab.

Larson, wearing golf spikes, fell on the ramp as he left the bar the night of May 16, 1990. He argued the gaps were unsafe because a spike caught in one, causing him to lose his balance. An asphalt surface was installed a year later.

A doctor testified Larson was in a stupor, with a blood-alcohol level of .28 percent 90 minutes after the accident. But Larson said he was not significantly impaired by the 13 drinks he had over a period of six hours before the accident.

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