like clockwork, you can get on and off Hunter's Ridge GC in Howell, Mich., in a timely 4.5 hours. At Hunter's Ridge, there are few delays, even when the 18-hole course is crowded with hackers. Players can count on moving along smoothly, like new cars on an efficient auto assembly line.

“If someone wants to blow off work at noon on Friday to play 18 but has a dinner date at 6 p.m., that person knows to come here to play,” says Mike Miesle, co-owner and superintendent of the 6,532-yard, links-style course.

There's order on the course at Hunter's Ridge because every third hole has a clock posted near the tee. The clocks don't tell the correct time; they inform golfers of their tee times. How does this ensure steady play?

Say your threesome tees off at 8:50 a.m. Miesle, who consulted USGA's formula for pacing, has it figured that the group will take a certain amount of minutes to complete each hole. For instance, the golfers who tee off at 8:50 should arrive at the third hole in 30 minutes. On that hole, the golfers will see a clock with the sign, “This is your tee time.” If the clock says 8:50, it's telling the golfers they're on time. If the clock is later than the group's tee time, say 8:55, then the golfers are five minutes behind the course's pace and need to pick it up. If the clock says 8:45, the golfers are five minutes ahead of the pace.

When the threesome arrives at the 6th, 9th, 12th, 15th and 17th holes, the clocks will also say 8:50 if they're on time. If all goes well, the threesome should complete their round in 4.5 hours.

“There are courses in the area where six-hour rounds are common,” Miesle says. “So our clients appreciate what we're doing. A golfer knows he can check in, hit a bucket of balls on the range and be back in his car and on the way home in five hours.”

It's elementary why Miesle's clock plan is good for business — despite having to extend tee-time intervals from eight minutes to 10 minutes to make the plan work.

“We lost a few tee times, but we're not hearing any complaints,” Miesle says. “Our players are happier.”