One trend in golf that I actually think might be working and getting a foothold is the “Play it Forward” program. The premise behind this program is the idea of making golf easier and more fun. Sure, golf is a difficult game and takes time to learn, but once a person gets smitten with the golf bug, it’s hard to get it out of their system. With this in mind, however, many golfers continue to make things difficult on themselves and take the pleasure out of the game by playing the wrong teeing grounds.

No shame in playing it forward

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The request to build forward tees is coming from not only public facilities, but also resort courses and yes, even private golf courses.

We’ve recently constructed forward tees at several high end private clubs with aging memberships who have come to realize that if they are going to spend four-and-a-half hours out on a golf course, they want to enjoy the experience and not come off the 18th green feeling like they’ve been beaten up.

The great thing about the “Play it Forward” concept is that it is generally easy to implement and relatively inexpensive. Many golf courses that cannot afford to build actual forward tees just place tee markers out on the beginning of the fairway and market them as junior tees or “play it forward tees.” In some cases this simple recognition of shortening the golf course to increase the pleasure of the round works quite well.

I’ve even heard that many of the well-known golf course architects (including Jack Nicklaus) have embraced the “Play it Forward” program. Like all of us, Jack is aging and doesn’t hit the ball as far as he used to. But more importantly, he understands that in order for the golf industry to continue to recover — and even grow — golf needs to be fun.

So, I encourage all of you to promote this concept at your clubs. Because it actually works.

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