

Is There FootGolf in Minnesota?

By Maciek Gralinski, FootGolf Minnesota

I have been asked that question many times in the last year or so and I am happy to report that the answer is an enthusiastic YES!! As this new and exciting sport is taking over the world, our local golf courses in beautiful Minnesota are not far behind. As of mid-October 2014 we can proudly say that we have over 264 FootGolf courses in 41 US states and 10 in Minnesota. When I say we, I mean American FootGolf League (AFGL), which is responsible for bringing this sport to the US, as well as overseeing the development of it in this country. What I admire the most about AFGL is the insistence on featuring FootGolf ONLY on existing golf courses. So, FootGolf is not competing with golf, but living in a special symbiotic relationship with golf, because if you ask yourself the question what FootGolf is, the simple answer is GOLF, but with a soccer ball. We follow the exact same rules and etiquette as golf and our dress code is closely related to traditional golf attire – think Payne Stewart. We do have bigger balls (!) and use our built-in clubs (feet), but that is where the differences end and similarities begin. We got pars, birdies, eagles and yes, hole is ones!!



Laying out the FootGolf course at Cragun's Resort in May 2014

FootGolf course parameters

An average FootGolf course is built on an existing Par 3, nine hole course. Due to shorter holes, Par 3 golf courses are perfect for featuring nine hole FootGolf courses.

The average FootGolf distances are shorter, as players do not kick the ball as far as golfers. FootGolf par 3 ranges between 50 to 90 yards, par 4: 90 to 150 yards and par 5s are longer than 150 yards.

Given those distances, executive Par 3 courses can install 18 holes of FootGolf, as the distances are a bit longer and you have room to implement two FootGolf holes for each traditional golf hole.

Same can be said about 18 hole golf courses, which can add 18 holes of FootGolf on either front or back nines of their courses. Currently in MN we have three 18 hole and seven 9 hole FootGolf courses. Two of the 18 hole courses are located on 18 hole golf courses (Columbia and Hiawatha, Minneapolis) and one on executive Par 3 (Angushire, St. Cloud).

Depending on the golf course layout, one can design the FootGolf course on each hole or skip a hole and install two FootGolf holes on a longer fairway. Water is generally avoided, but not always, as the ball floats, so depending on the depth of the pond it can be retrieved, but to make things easier for FootGolfers, holes featuring water are not used.

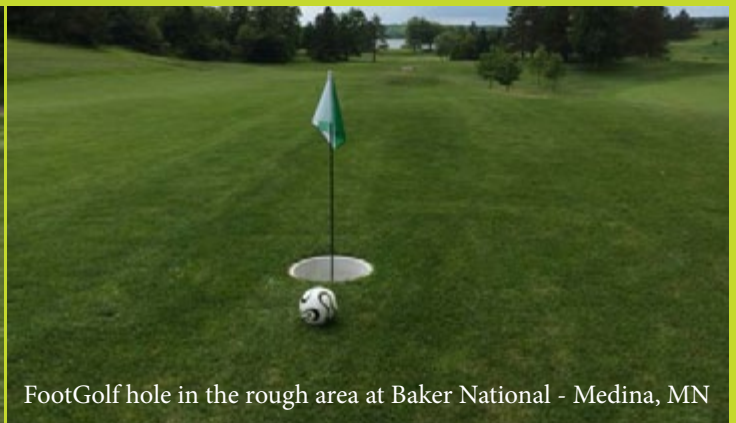
FootGolf greens

I can imagine reactions from golf enthusiasts when they are learning that this FootGolf thing is going to be installed at their course and there will be this huge 21 inch hole on their greens!!! Well, relax folks, we respect golf and we leave the greens alone. FootGolf greens are usually located off the golf greens and whenever our soccer ball lands on the golf green, we carefully remove it from there and take a free drop, then we take our kick from outside of green.

FootGolf green locations vary greatly, depending on the golf course layout. We do like to have a “green” as well. Not so perfect as golf green, but close enough. Having grass cut to a shorter length, fairway cut is perfect. Some holes are located on the fairways, in the rough, some are off fairways, allowing the maintenance crew an easier path to mowing. There are no regulations as far as how big the FootGolf green should be. It is left to the golf course designer or FootGolf course designer.



Nicely cut FootGolf green area at Angushire GC - St. Cloud, MN



FootGolf hole in the rough area at Baker National - Medina, MN

We have some awesome FootGolf greens in Minnesota. My most favorite hole in the state is at Cragun’s Legacy Reversible Par 3 course in Brainerd area. They have an interesting reversible Par 3 course, where you play to the same green from different tee boxes. As we were designing their FootGolf course in early spring, Eric Peterson, the course manager suggested that we actually put hole number 9 (or 1, depending which direction you are playing) on the actual golf green, as there was no other spot available off the green and the green was very big and able to accommodate the 21 inch cup, without interfering with golf holes.

The first time I played that hole after returning to Cragun’s last summer, I remained there, after our round, for at least 20 minutes just putting to that hole. My kids were getting antsy to leave, but I kept saying: “One more putt!”. They finally had to steal the ball from me to make me leave.



Hole number 9 (or 1) at Cragun’s Legacy GC - Brainerd, MN

FootGolf cups

AFGL regulation cups are 21 inches in diameter and 15 inches deep. They have a hole in the bottom to accommodate a standard golf cup and flag stick. Installation of FootGolf cups is fairly easy, if you have a 20 inch auger. The old fashioned way is not too bad, unless you have 18 holes to dig!

We FootGolf purists like to have the cup about quarter inch below the turf, so the ball rolls into the cup easily without any obstacles – just like golf!



Practice hole at Bakers National - Medina, MN



FootGolf hole with cover - Hyland Greens, Bloomington, MN



We had a wet spring - remember? Hyland Greens, Bloomington, MN

FootGolf equipment

FootGolfers are very picky about their equipment, at least the more advanced ones. We use standard soccer balls, size 5 for adults or size 4 for younger FootGolfers.

We do not use cleats or studs. Recommended shoes for FootGolf are flat or turf soccer shoes, however any comfortable athletic shoe will do just fine.

It is very common for golf courses to have soccer balls available for rental, as the new wave of beginners may need them. Most players bring their own.

I met some South American FootGolfers during various FootGolf tournaments, who will search the internet for a specific kind of ball, which they claim can gain them a few yards as well as make their putts go in. Since they have been winning most tournaments, there must be something there!



Hole number 5 at Hyland Greens, Bloomington, MN



Laying up or going for it - at Hyland Greens, Bloomington, MN

Playing FootGolf

FootGolf is a lot of fun to play. It is a bit easier than golf, plays faster and less expensive. What else can I add to make it more attractive?

It is interesting to watch folks who play soccer trying FootGolf for the first time. They seem to think that they can just kick the ball very hard and it will just roll into the hole. Well, they forget about the wind, the grass, the fairways, the undulations, the bunkers (beach soccer anyone?), the smart alecks who play with them, the roll outs, the near misses, the ball stopping on the edge of the cup – sound familiar?

I like to compare FootGolf to a proportionally enlarged golf green and golf ball as the same rules of trying to get the ball in the hole apply. It takes a bit of thinking and strategy and paying attention to detail to make sure you make par or birdie or eagle or dare I say hole-in-one! It very much resembles the game that we have been playing for a long, long time!

Happy FootGolfing!!



Hole-in-one at hole number 16 at Columbia Golf Club - Minneapolis, MN