

Cupless Flagsticks On Practice Putting Greens

Palm Aire Country Club
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Issue

Practice putting greens receive considerable golfer traffic, especially during peak playing seasons. Ideally, holes on a practice green would be changed daily or every other day to disperse traffic and maintain good turf quality. However, this may not be practical for facilities with limited budgets or small practice greens. Changing holes too frequently on a small green can quickly create concentrations of unhealed plugs, causing aesthetic and playability issues. When a new practice putting green was constructed at Palm Aire Country Club in 2015, Superintendent Jay Mullen was looking for a way to protect the new green and avoid the negative aesthetics of unhealed plugs.

Action

He decided to try cupless flagsticks on the new practice green. These are practice green flags that are inserted directly into the turf rather than into a cup. Using cupless flagsticks



Using cupless flagsticks on a practice green can reduce labor, improve turf health and enhance aesthetics – a win, win, win.

reduces surface disruption and makes it easier to move the flags around the putting green. Cupless flagsticks also eliminate the risk of poorly set plugs.

Results

Cupless flagsticks have been very successful on the practice green at Palm Aire Country Club. They can be moved daily with very little effort, which helps improve turf health and disperse wear stress. Cupless flagsticks can also be moved by the same staff member that mows the practice green, eliminating the need to have an additional staff member change holes in the practice green. This saved approximately three hours of labor each week, the equivalent of \$2,000 annually that could now be allocated elsewhere on the golf course.

Using cupless flagsticks required an education process for both staff and golfers. The benefits were explained to the staff and they were trained to move the flagsticks daily to minimize traffic damage. Golfers also had to adjust to the new system. Some golfers were skeptical of the cupless flagsticks at first, as they preferred having their putts roll into a hole. However, they quickly accepted the change when they saw improved conditions. Some golfers have even said that using the smaller targets has improved their putting.