

## New Forward Tees Improve The Golf Experience

**Eugene Country Club**  
**Chris Gaughan, CGCS, superintendent**

**Eugene, Ore. 97401**

### Issue

Eugene Country Club was facing a problem that confronts many golf courses; the course yardage from the forward tees – 5,619 yards – was simply too long for many players. As a result, pace of play was slowing because many golfers playing the forward tees found the course too long for their ability. Something needed to be done to improve pace of play and make the course more enjoyable for golfers of all skill levels.

### Action

Eugene Country Club decided to add new forward tees on certain holes to address the issues. The new tees would improve pace of play, help shorter hitters enjoy the course, promote economic sustainability and attract new golfers. A golf course architect was consulted and they identified 11 holes where a new forward tee would be beneficial. The course yardage from the new forward tees would be shortened from 5,619 yards to 4,668 yards.

The new tees averaged 625 square feet in size and were elevated no more than 12 inches above the surrounding grade. They were built from a mixture of sand, soil and organic material that would retain sufficient moisture to allow the existing irrigation system to provide the necessary water without adding any supplemental sprinklers. Three of the new tees were constructed within the existing fairways and were shaped to allow easy mowing with fairway units, minimizing the disruption to normal maintenance practices. The tees were planted in spring and opened for play after a few weeks. The entire construction cost for adding the 11 new forward tees was approximately \$20,000.

### Results

Golfers that use the new forward tees have reacted very positively to the improved playability and all golfers at the course appreciate the faster pace of play. After the new tees were added, staff in the golf shop reported that pace of play improved by at least 10 minutes per nine holes. The staff also said that



*Adding forward tees is a low-cost way to improve the golf experience. With careful planning, new forward tees have little impact on normal maintenance.*

the new tees receive regular use by both male and female golfers, and that there are far more smiling faces at the end of each round.

Building the new tees from a mixture of sand, soil and organic matter enabled them to retain sufficient moisture from the existing irrigation system, eliminating the need for supplemental irrigation and the costs associated with adding new sprinklers. The low profile of the tees located in the fairways allows them to be mowed as part of routine fairway mowing, rather than using a specialized smaller mower. This helped minimize the impact that the new tees had on staff time and equipment hours.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, several members that were contemplating leaving the club because the course was too long and difficult for them reconsidered and are now actively using the new forward tees. Adding the new tees proved to be a low-cost way to improve the golf experience and the careful planning process ensured that the new tees had very little impact on normal maintenance. The project has definitely been a win-win for players and the maintenance staff at Eugene Country Club.