



## Fake It Until You Make It

### *A case for artificial tees*

Let's face it, very few golfers enjoy practicing on artificial tees. Golfers prefer to hit from real turf that simulates the conditions found on the golf course. Artificial turf seems out of place in a sport that is enjoyed outdoors in manicured natural surroundings. Artificial turf is a foreign object that interrupts the natural experience of playing golf. However, the use of artificial tees has grown along with the popularity of practice.

Practicing has become a more important part of the golf experience for several reasons. Unlimited range ball programs, a growing desire to improve one's game and limited time to play full rounds of golf have contributed to the growing interest in practice. As a result, turf on practice tees simply cannot recover fast enough to keep up with demand.

Ideally, practice tees should be enlarged to accommodate growing use. However, some golf courses do not have space to enlarge the practice tee. Other facilities enlarge their practice tee only to find that the amount of practice grows right along with it and turf conditions do not improve.

Including artificial tees as part of a practice facility helps reduce wear on the grass tee and gives turf time to recover from divots. Artificial tees should be used more often when turf recovery is



***Shade canopies protect golfers from sun and rain as they practice. They can be used with artificial tees because there will be no impact on turf growth.***



slow due to increased play or poor weather. In southern regions, artificial tees are frequently used during the winter golfing season because warm-season turf is either dormant or growing slowly. In northern regions, artificial tees are used more often during midsummer when cool-season turfgrasses struggle to recover during high heat and humidity. Artificial tees also help spread wear during large events or following rainfall when conditions are soft and damage is magnified.

Fortunately for golfers, technology is improving the experience of practicing on artificial tees. Newer materials allow golfers to insert tees into the mats at the height they prefer. Some artificial tees utilize track systems that allow mats to be rotated and replaced as they wear out. Also, there are longer- and shorter-fibered materials that provide the look and feel of hitting from the rough or fairway. Some facilities even have shelters over their artificial tees to protect golfers from sun and rain.

Artificial tees have grown in acceptance and are important features on many golf courses, especially those with small practice tees. However, some still may argue that artificial turf does not simulate the feel of real turf, but neither does the trampled turf and bare ground resulting from the overuse of a grass practice tee is overused.