

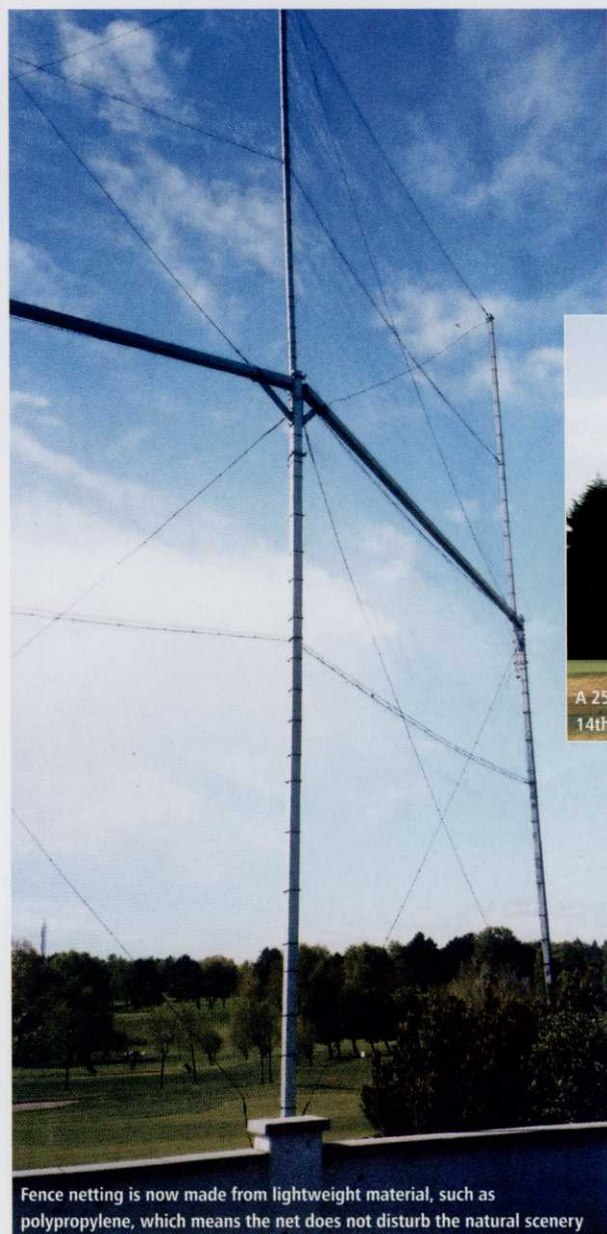
# All Caught Up!

Gareth Jones rigs himself up as he takes a look at the protective netting that can be installed at golf clubs to solve those tricky health and safety dilemmas.

Being a novice golfer, and that's putting it the nice way, I have a major error within my swing that causes my ball to dramatically fly off to the right. If facing a cruel dogleg it's wonderful to see your soaring Titleist arcing majestically around the protruding hazard to the awaiting green. However, when you are attempting to hit the damn thing straight down the middle of the fairway it's not pride and joy I feel but embarrassment and anger.

My personal golfing troubles and dented esteem apart, this is actually a very serious health and safety issue at the majority of golf clubs. While a player losing ball after ball as he slices out of bounds might mean great business for the pro shop, it could mean a hefty law suit landing on the doormat of the golf club.

On the course both greenkeepers and players are at risk from misplaced shots. Often a muffled cry of Fore does not provide the needed time to dive behind the trusty utility vehicle to avoid the oncoming missile. Driving ranges can be even more dangerous.



Fence netting is now made from lightweight material, such as polypropylene, which means the net does not disturb the natural scenery

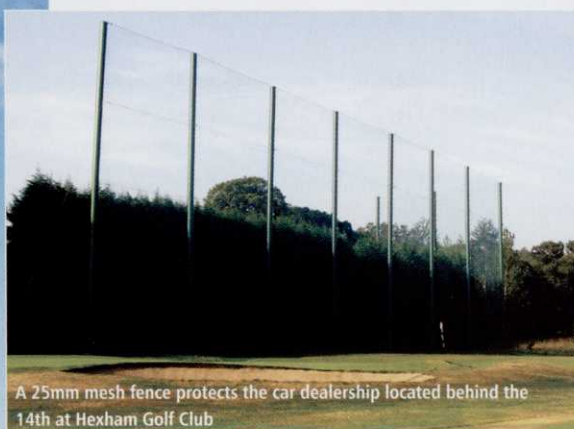
Beginners or seasonal players testing their brand new Big Bertha that they got from Santa are happy to spend all their time seeing how far they can hit it. Surely the further the ball goes the better player you are? Practice balls fly left, right but rarely centre and so the range must be safely sealed to protect the rest of the club and it's fragile members.

Passing pedestrians, neighbours and traffic are not safe either. A modest connection from even the weakest of golfer can send a ball looping high, wide and handsome out of the course and into somebody's skull or through a neighbour's window. Hexham Golf Club were recently involved in this scenario.

The opening of a new car dealership behind the 14th green meant that the club had a decision to make - shorten the hole by 90 yards or erect a ball stop fence. The choice was an easy one; with a 20m by 90m long fence being created that contained a 25mm by 25mm green mesh netting.

"We were able to work with the greenkeepers to minimise any course impact. The end result is an extremely high fence that Hexham can be are proud of," recalled Lawrence Green, of Tildenet, who installed the fence.

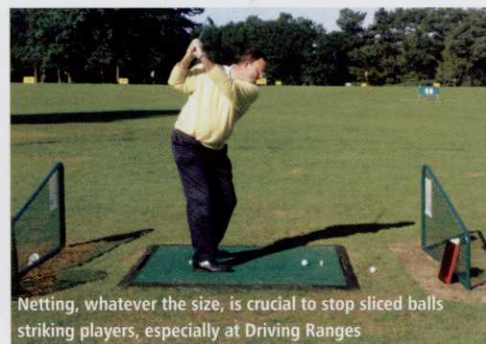
This protective netting is a major way to solve the predicament of the famed but feared 150 yard slice. Fencing has become a vital necessity for any club wanting to shield passing pedestrians, vehicles and property from wayward golf balls.



A 25mm mesh fence protects the car dealership located behind the 14th at Hexham Golf Club

Traditionally knotted nets have been used for this purpose, with specialist fencing companies, such as Tenax, stating that this is "a must when providing protection from high impact shots". However, large runs of knotted netting can become very heavy and be difficult to install. An increase in the weight of the nets means stronger support fixings are required and these need regularly maintaining.

Many net fencing systems are now created using lightweight materials, such as polypropylene. This eliminates many of the concerns related to knotting netting, including damage caused by differing weather conditions. These can be easier to fit and have lower maintenance requirements, although any type of net fencing should be



Netting, whatever the size, is crucial to stop sliced balls striking players, especially at Driving Ranges

examined frequently to spot wear, damage and holes.

So erect that fence to halt those ill timed sliced shots shooting out of your course, before you find yourself building a barrier around it to stop all those injured, complaining neighbours getting in.