

## Hills: Ranges take pressure off golf course managers

Practice facilities are taking the pressure off golf courses by providing areas for golfers to improve their shot-making and for beginners to learn the game, according to Arthur Hills, president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects.

"Golfers who can't get a tee time can work on their game at practice facilities, which are usually more accessible than golf courses," said Hills. "In addition, golfers who don't have the time to play an entire round can practice

putting, driving and many other shots even if they have less than an hour to spare.

"Practice facilities allow beginner golfers to learn and enjoy the game without the pressure of playing on the course," he said. "New participants also can learn the etiquette and rules of the game, which will make for a more enjoyable experience once they actually play a round on a regulation course."

### DESIGN TRENDS

There are several types of prac-

tice facilities, including stand-alone driving ranges, extra holes on golf courses, and deluxe training centers that feature driving ranges, putting areas and bunkers. Large practice tee areas allow the golf course superintendent and golf professional to distribute wear over a larger area. Teeing areas are often one-half to one acre in overall surface area.

Target greens at designated distances from the teeing area are becoming more common. Lesson tees are often designed as sepa-

rate teeing areas at the end of the practice range or at the sides of the teeing area. If the lesson tees are located at the end of the range, an adequate buffer distance of approximately 350 yards (or greater) must be implemented.

Practice bunkers and practice greens are often implemented into designs by the golf course architect. Practice greens should be of ample size; 10,000 square feet plus is typically a desired surface area which allows for a variety of cup settings.

### PROVIDING ADDED VALUE

Practice facilities built in conjunction with golf courses help golfers develop skills, while providing an excellent location for testing new equipment before purchase.

In addition, these facilities offer an excellent source of revenue for golf courses.

"The additional revenue generated through lessons and from the driving range can be used for capital improvements to the course," said Hills.

### LEARNING CENTERS

A typical driving range has 40 to 100 tees, requires approximately 15-20 acres of land and can accommodate hundreds of golfers each hour.

Taking the driving range concept a step further, learning centers offer golfers the opportunity to work on a variety of shots. As an example of an elaborate learning center, Hills cites the Man-O-War Golf Center in Lexington, Ky.

"The 30-acre project features a three-tiered driving range, chipping area, putting green, realistic target greens and golf-swing video analysis," and entice them to return."

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CIRCLE #141

## Ears for hearing?

Continued from page 10

The problem is: Ignorance is not blessed — it's just absence of intelligence; and a cause can all too often be the sole embodiment of folly.

And to those who apologize for an environmental activist's distortion of certain facts or refusal to scrutinize or give credence to scientific findings, I say: An excuse is a only reason stuffed with a lie.

### NEW FINDINGS, NEW OFFICIALS

Does this all sound like we're fighting a lost cause in getting environmental activists and government officials to really pay attention to scientific research like:

- Dr. Tom Watschke's pesticide runoff studies;
- superintendent Edward Nash's tests at Bayberry Hill Golf Course which corroborated the Cape Cod Study figures; and
- University of Florida and Missouri State University practice golf green investigations?

Perhaps. Perhaps not.

President Bill Clinton and Vice President/self-proclaimed environmentalist Al Gore have brought with them a new chief of the Environmental Protection Agency — Carol Browner.

She is said to be tougher on people, easier on land.

The golf industry should be quick to find out if she has ears to hear and eyes to see. It will then know from the outset what, and whom, it is facing in this age of rewritten wetlands legislation and tree-cutting mitigation.

But at the same time, the golf industry should make sure it is not itself deaf to truths spoken by the new people on the block.