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- Dave Pelz



Before



After



Jeffrey D. Brauer is a licensed golf course architect and president of GolfScapes, a golf course design firm in Arlington, Texas. Brauer, a past president of the American Society of Golf Course Architects, can be reached at jeff@jeffreymbrauer.com.

PRACTICE FACILITY GUIDELINES

For golf to thrive, many say the construction decade of the 1990s should be followed by the instruction decade of the 2000s. I see an increased demand for new, or improved, practice areas at public, private and resort facilities. At public facilities, practice areas can provide learning programs and increase revenues. At private and resort facilities, they can provide superior practice conditions.

Good practice facilities are necessary to attract play. Recently, we renovated a public course to add a driving range because business surveys showed the facility lost play and range use to nearby courses with practice areas. We located the new range close to the clubhouse and parking lot to maximize off-the-street, range-only business. A costly rerouting was needed to accomplish this, but the business plan suggested it was necessary.

Space requirements make adding a practice range to an older course tricky. Modern driving ranges use 15 to 17 acres, compared to 10 to 12 acres a decade ago. Increased distance suggests driving ranges should be longer than 300 yards. For divot recovery, tees should be 45 to 60 yards deep. If tees are at both ends, total range length should exceed 400 yards. For years, the standard was 300 yards.

Recognizing that the greater volume of range balls hit – thousands per day versus 100 to 250 on golf holes – increases the potential of impacts from wayward balls, ranges are widening to increase safety. Ranges are better placed in the interior of a layout rather than in border areas because golfers, generally, are more aware of their surroundings and potential dangers while they're playing.

Distance is a better safety buffer than netting, mounding and plantings for use next to roads, parking lots or surrounding property. Most errant shots land within 15 degrees of the intended line, but a few stray as far as 22.5 degrees off line. Thus, driving range tees should curve inward to

direct shots toward the center of the range, and landing areas should be at least 500 feet wide (wider than 600 feet is preferred) based on potential stray shots.

Sheer size doesn't make the ideal range, though. Besides safety, a range should be located in an area where mature tree loss during construction is minimized and the potential for lost range balls to creeks, forests or native areas during ongoing operations is minimized, too. However, remote locations can affect operating costs because of increased cart use, vandalism and theft.

... size doesn't make the ideal range ... however, remote locations can affect operating costs because of increased cart use, vandalism and theft.

Ranges should be near the clubhouse for golfer convenience and visual control, near the first (and, if possible, the 10th) tee and consistent with general traffic flow. To distribute use evenly, the main access point should be centered rather than at one end, which tends to concentrate use on the near side.

The ideal range is aligned in the north-south direction to avoid facing the sun, and aligned into prevailing winds to shorten typical shots and produce the best practice environment for good players. Headwinds accentuate offline shots, assisting with swing evaluation.

The modern practice facility provides more than an open field on which to hit balls. The setting should be equal in quality to a good golf hole, ideally playing over a slight valley and slightly downhill for visibility. It should allow the golfer to see

the ball land and roll out for feedback and replicate the playing experience:

- A target fairway similar to the golf course in terms of turf, width, etc.
 - Target greens, shaped to the style and almost the size of the course, and ideally with bunkers, if maintenance cost isn't prohibitive, at various distances with good distance marking from multiple tee spots for distance assessment.
 - A private lesson tee that's secluded, yet convenient.
 - An indoor video and teaching area.
 - Tee areas replicating course conditions.
 - Uneven and sloped lies on the fairway and rough.
 - An area to practice hitting out from under trees.
 - A fairway practice bunker, best aimed out into the range for ease of ball pick up.
- A short-game practice area should be located near the main range, and also should simulate the on-course experience:
- A practice chipping green with all surroundings found on the course:
 - Fairway chipping areas
 - Rough
 - Mounds, grass bunkers, cross, uphill and downhill slopes, etc.
 - Greenside sand bunkers, because skulled shots should land in safe areas.
 - A 30- to 120-yard wedge game practice area marked in 5-yard increments to practice distance control.

Creature comfort is important. Details such as portable shades, fans and mist systems in summer and enclosed covered hitting areas for winter are popular. Refreshment stands stocked with water and sunscreen, chairs, bag stands, club cleaners, in-ground trash receptacles and a visible clock to ease fears of not being on the first tee on time all add character and function.

Making the short-game areas and a portion of the practice tee ADA accessible is required and is a good idea because many disabled golfers use the range only. Truthfully, I'd be tempted to confine my golf to an ideally designed range as well. **GCI**

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Jim McLoughlin is the founder of TMG Golf (www.TMGgolfcounsel.com), a golf course development and consulting firm, and is a former executive director of the GCSAA. He can be reached at golfguide@roadrunner.com or 760-804-7339. His previous columns can be found on www.golfcourseindustry.com.

A MODEL JOB DESCRIPTION

As promised in my last column, the following is a model job description for a GCSA chapter executive director.

Nature and scope. The executive director is the chapter c.o.o. engaged, presumably, as an independent contractor to avoid the legal entanglements of an employer-employee relationship. The executive director might work out of the chapter office or his/her residence depending on circumstances with board of director approval.

Personal characteristics. As the representative of the chapter and its members, the executive director shall have a neat appearance in person and dress, demonstrate an enthusiastic approach to his/her work, be familiar with the private golf club environment, be an efficient public speaker and publication writer, and play golf with an approved USGA handicap.

Community relations. As its representative and spokesman, the executive director shall educate the regional golf community about the chapter's mission statement and liaison effectively (including making guest speaking appearances and providing guest written articles) with regional entities such as sister golf organizations, government and public service organizations, nonpolitical environmental groups, vendors, valued corporate leaders, charitable organizations and youth groups – among others.

General chapter duties and responsibilities. The executive director shall:

- Be responsible to the board of directors for the administration of the chapter.
- Contribute to policy-making and execute decisions made by the board of directors on a timely basis.
- Ensure the chapter is insured properly for the full scope of its activities and responsibilities.
- Attend and ensure proper minute-taking at board of director and selected committee meetings as a member of each without the right to vote.
- Promote, register participants and

manage chapter golf tournaments, activities and educational programming, which includes helping to obtain guest speakers.

- Present a monthly state-of-the-chapter message to the board of directors.
- Ensure all chapter records, paperwork and legal and historical documents are maintained and secured at a location designated by the board of directors.
- Ensure the chapter office (if any) operates in a professional, efficient and courteous manner.
- Attend appropriate regional and national shows (the GIS), educational forums and meetings as provided for within approved annual budgets.
- Ensure all chapter standing committees function with applicable mission statements.
- Provide an effective orientation program for new board members and committee chairmen.

Re: staff. The executive director shall:

- Periodically review the chapter's need for administrative support and establish or adjust staffing as required.
- Annually evaluate staff performance.
- Ensure applicable job descriptions are available for key staff personnel.
- Hire and fire staff as authorized within approved operational budgets.

Re: chapter members. The executive director shall:

- Ensure membership databases and directories are managed and maintained current.
- Ensure sample employment contracts are available to chapter members as they negotiate with employers.
- Circulate regional and national job availability notices on a timely basis.
- Establish an effective interface with regional golf club/course boards, green committees and search committees to best ensure chapter members are employed within fair market value written agreements, which includes establishing an effective chapter club employment relations committee.

- Ensure the preparation and presentation of printed and Web site informational materials to educate these same club/course elements to the principle that golf course superintendents, as a professional class, have earned the right to written employment contracts.

- Maintain an annual record of the percentage of chapter members working with written contracts.

Re: communications. The executive director shall:

- Phase in the conversion of chapter communications from hard copy (newsletter, member directory, event notices and registration, etc.) to a paperless electronic format (ensuring the proper management of a chapter Web site) at a pace appropriate for chapter members to digest. This would include allowing chapter members to pay dues and event fees online.

- Write for chapter publications and Web site as circumstances suggest.

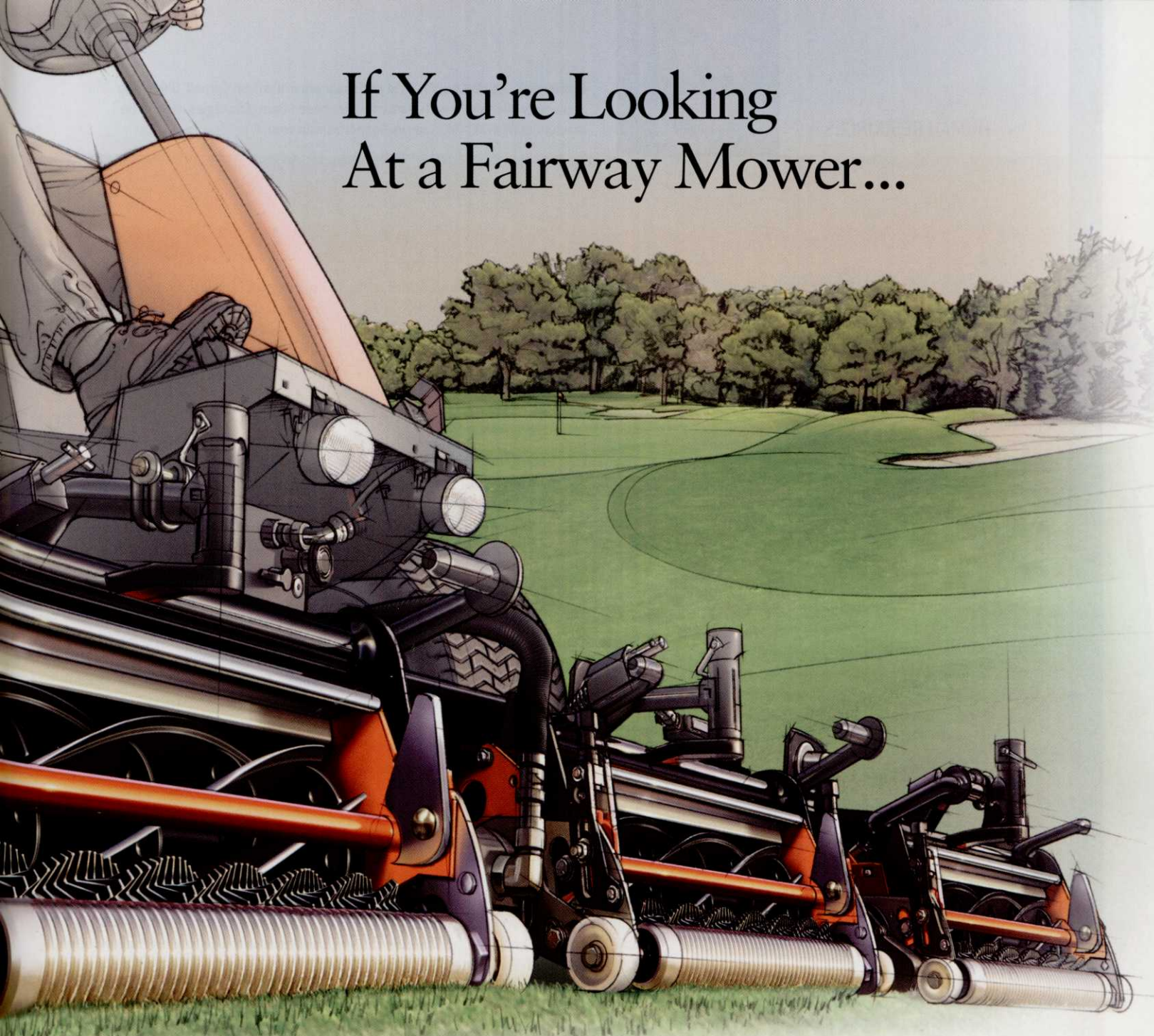
- Design polls and surveys to feed and support a database to be used to educate chapter members and the regional golf community about key issues.

Re: fiscal. The executive director shall develop a fiscal management strategy to include:

- Optimizing the selling of ad space within chapter publications (magazine, newsletter, etc.) and Web site.
- Helping obtain sponsorship for chapter activities and events.
- Ensuring the proper collection of dues and the appropriate management of accounts receivable and payable.
- Ensuring the preparation of appropriate operating and capital budgets on a timely basis for board of director approval.
- Developing annual fund-raising programs.

Newly hired executive directors need not undertake all the detailed assignments profiled within the above job description. Rather, they should look to phase into their new assignments only to the extent that's natural to support their chapters' current mission statements. **GCI**

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Robert A. Milligan, Ph.D., is professor emeritus from Cornell University and senior consultant with Madison, Wis.-based Dairy Strategies. He can be reached at 651-647-0495 or rmilligan@trsmith.com.

PRICELESS

One of the most common frustrations I've encountered during my 20 years of working with superintendents is an insufficient budget to pay maintenance staff employees what they deserve. With economic issues facing the golf industry, this frustration will only grow. Perhaps employers need to think differently about compensation.

When thinking about compensation, most people think salary or wages, and other economic benefits such as social security, unemployment insurance, vacation and sick days, health and life insurance, retirement, etc.

Think about why you chose to be a golf course superintendent. Was it because of money? What were the main reasons? I suspect they were mostly noneconomic.

Now, think about why employees work. Economic and noneconomic compensation come to mind. Their economic return includes a salary or hourly wage, as does yours. Your noneconomic compensation includes love of turf and the outdoors, golf, tradition and successes or accomplishments. Noneconomic benefits for the maintenance staff, while not exactly the same as managers, produce similar results. Employees go home with noneconomic benefits such as accomplishments, job satisfaction, being part of a successful crew and personal growth.

With this broader view of compensation, think about what you can do to provide the best possible compensation package for your employees by adding improved noneconomic compensation.

When my sons started to play sports, I enjoyed coaching their baseball teams. Several other coaches in the league believed playing ball should be just about having fun. Although those coaches were well intentioned, I rarely observed their team members getting a lot of satisfaction out of playing baseball. They weren't having fun. As for me, I wasn't overly competitive, yet I provided two things to the kids on the team:

- An opportunity to be a member of a winning team that didn't necessarily mean we won every game. It meant everyone did their best. We got better, and we encouraged rather than criticized each other.

- An opportunity to succeed. Everyone played the same number of innings, but each player was positioned where he had an opportunity to succeed. We didn't put players in key positions until they had a likelihood of succeeding.

In this way, the winning – the satisfaction and fun – came from being a member of a successful team (not necessarily a team with many victories) and from personal success and improvement. Similarly, providing noneconomic compensation for employees isn't about making work fun. It's about being a member of a successful crew, and the personal growth and success that contribute to the crew's success.

The following are suggestions for providing greater noneconomic compensation for your maintenance employees:

1. Provide high-quality, positive feedback. By high quality I mean very specific, so the employee knows exactly what he did to earn the positive feedback. The result of this noneconomic compensation is that most days an employee leaves work with the satisfaction of having had a successful day.

2. Provide maintenance staff opportunities to learn and succeed by building on their strengths. A sense of accomplishment from excelling at some tasks and learning and mastering others provides the noneconomic compensation of satisfaction from accomplishment and growth. The focus on

building on strength comes from excellent research throughout the last two decades that shows we can make greater progress by building on our strengths than by trying, usually unsuccessfully, to overcome our weaknesses.

3. Provide excellent supervision. The relationship an employee has with his supervisor is, apart from his relationship with his family and a few close friends, the most important relationship in his life. Remember the supervisor's responsibility is to provide the training, direction, coaching, and support to enable the employee to succeed.

4. Engage your employees in the success of the course. Do everything you can to encourage your employees to have pride in the course. Each of us wants to be a member of a winning team. Contribute to this form of noneconomic compensation:

- Always speak positively of your course, your club and your industry.
- Continually reinforce your vision for the course and your plans for the future.
- Provide items – hats, shirts, etc. – that confirm their importance to your course
- Seek their ideas and input into course decisions.

Remember noneconomic compensation contributes to the total compensation employees receive and it's the least expensive compensation you can provide. **GCI**

... provide the best possible compensation package for your employees by adding improved noneconomic compensation.



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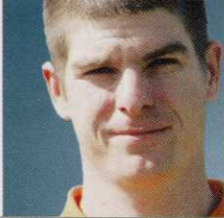


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SETTING THE CUTTING UNIT

Cutting units generate some of the most controversial questions in the turf equipment industry. Do you backlap? Do you spin grind? Do you relief grind? The real answer is ... whatever works best for you at your facility.

But when you analyze this answer, what can you learn from it? If you were learning how to set up a cutting unit properly, where would you find information about this procedure? Every property has its own unique challenges that require you to understand what cause and effect you have when setting up cutting units.

The most common problem with cutting unit setup is inconsistency. Many golf courses have more than 40 cutting units to maintain, and each one needs to be set just right to achieve accurate results. One of the biggest mistakes can be made when setting the height of cut. It's not necessarily as easy as it sounds.

Typically, when you have someone set the height of cut, you want the same person setting all the units of that type because each person who holds the gauge bar on the cutting unit might hold it differently or apply more or less hand pressure. While this seems minor, it can cause a slight inconsistency with cutting units.

Setting the attitude of the cutting unit also plays a large role. The attitude describes the position of the bed bar as it sits in the cutting unit in its working position. Typically, you can find the correct settings and procedures to this process in the operator's manual that comes with the equipment. Each cutting unit must be set up with the same attitude, or it will cause a different look on the turf.

Also, keep in mind the reel diameter plays a huge part in this process. If the reel on one cutting unit is more worn than the other, the attitude will need to be adjusted so they all match and are consistent. A good measuring device to check reel diameter is a Pi Tape, which provides the most accurate measurement of reel diameter.

Cutting units should be checked after each use to determine the proper setting for the next mowing. Using a cutting unit that's maintained regularly ensures the best quality of cut and maintains consistency and a sharp edge. The most common way to maintain cutting units is by using sheets of paper to check the quality of cut and a hand file to dress the front face of the bedknife. A hand file maintains the angle the bedknife as it was ground originally. You don't want to change that angle by using

It's important to realize that whether you relief grind, backlap or spin grind, you can achieve the correct look if you set up the cutting unit properly.



hand grinders that don't lock your angle in place.

Before you grind the cutting unit, execute a series of checks. First, look for any signs of reel damage: cracks, bends, nicks, etc. Then check all bearings from reel to rollers. If there's any play, they might need to be adjusted or replaced, depending on the type of cutting unit. Avoid grinding a cutting unit with bad bearings because this will impact the grind considerably.

Once you've determined your bearings are OK, it's a good idea to remove the bedknife and check the bushings to make sure you don't have significant wear that will affect the setup once you're finished.

Now you're ready to grind the cutting unit. It doesn't matter which method you use. The idea is to have a sharp reel. Whether you have relief or not, you can still have an excellent quality of cut either way. Once the grind is complete, check the bearings to ensure nothing is loose.

Once you double check the bearings, you're ready to install the bedknife. Read the manual to see how to install the knife properly. Some manufacturers have plastic washers that need to be set a certain way to prevent bed bar tweaking.

The final stage in setting up the cutting unit is to "parallel." This seems to be the most difficult process to understand. The sharpest, most correctly ground cutting unit in the world is ineffective if it's not parallel. This process aligns the reel and rollers, ensuring all three are on the same plane so the downforce of the cutting units and cut line remain the same across the length of the unit. If one roller is slightly off, the weight won't transfer evenly and will cause those dreaded dark lines and a mismatched cut. You can learn paralleling procedures in the operator's manuals or on www.igcema.org.

There are many ways to achieve great quality of cut. Achieving a consistent mowing pattern on every golf course is no big secret. It's important to realize that whether you relief grind, backlap or spin grind, you can achieve the correct look if you set up the cutting unit properly. **GCI**

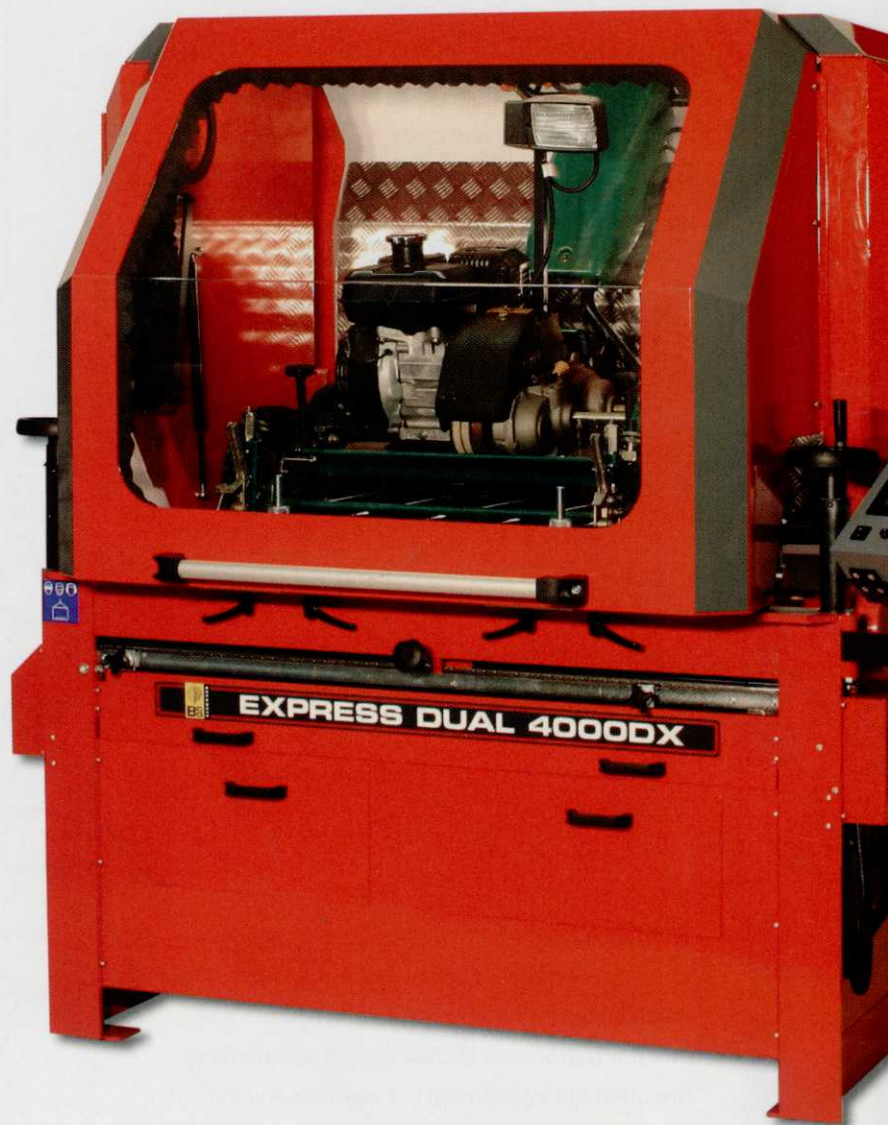
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International golf membership

The international golf membership base has increased significantly during recent years. Now there are close to 7,000 golf courses and almost 4.5 million affiliated golfers in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Still, to grow membership is to manage supply and demand effectively, and few countries within the EMA region can lay claim to such a well-developed golf market.

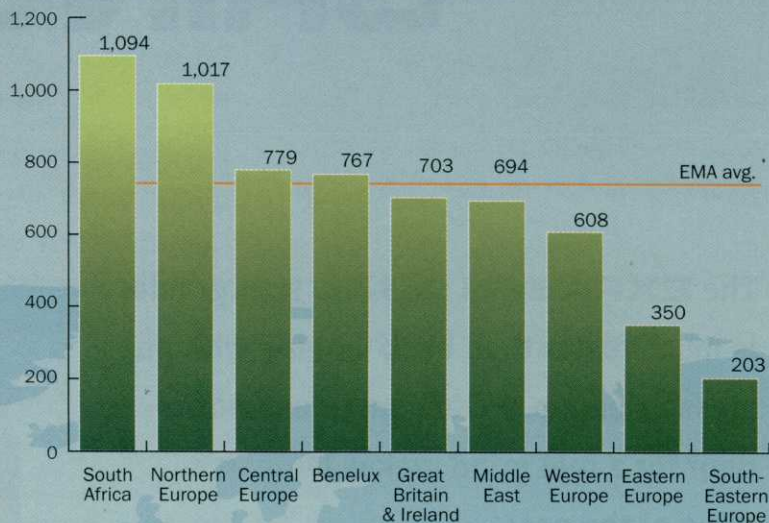
In Europe, golf in Scandinavia is the most affordable, which also explains why golf clubs in these countries have been able to grow their membership bases significantly. Eighteen-hole golf courses in northern Europe, Spain and South Africa have the highest number of members in the EMA region, averaging more than 1,000 people in most of these countries.

Eighteen-hole golf courses in Great Britain, Ireland and South Africa have the highest share of individual male members among all regions (63 percent). On the other hand, the share of female members is the highest at Central European golf clubs, which have about one third of the total membership base on average.

Collating data from almost 1,500 golf courses in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, the 2007 Golf Benchmark Survey allows facilities to compare their individual operational and financial performances against high, average and low performers in their geographic markets. Membership information is a key demand indicator of the survey.

Source: KMPG's Golf Benchmark Survey 2007

Average number of members of 18-hole golf courses.



Membership composition of 18-hole golf courses by region.

