

How Much Challenge is Too Much?

By Jeremiah Hoffmann, PGA Golf Professional, Rolling Meadows Golf Course

If you bring up pin placements at the bar after a round of golf and you are bound to get many different opinions. Some players thoroughly enjoy brutal spots while others want them easier than easy and will still blame the pin placement for their lack of skill. The question for golf pros and superintendents alike is “Can pin placements affect people’s view of your course?” If you have a few very tough spots on a busy Saturday will it cause players think twice about coming back the next time? The answer is sometimes yes.

As you stand in the golf shop and greet players following their round, the most common complaints we hear are: “The group ahead of us was really slow” or “who made the guy that set the pins mad?”

As long as many of us have been in the business, we know that things are not nearly as bad as players make them out to be. The problem is that many times, perception is reality.

A few years ago we had a retiree who loved playing changing cups and did not understand why everyone didn’t love that one zinger per round. He would occasionally or

maybe regularly pick a difficult spot which led to more complaining than you could ever imagine. Eventually his duties were changed to include different tasks as he could not resist that urge to put one crazy pin placement on the course.

That took place at least three years ago. To this day, when a pin placement is borderline, the regulars curse this guy even though he hasn’t touched the cup changer in years!

The regular players played anticipating a bad pin placement, which took away from their enjoyment. The idea is to try and make the pin placements challenging but fair and get players around the golf course. Most players like to test their skill but hate having a ball roll off the green or roll back to them.

I’m sure many of you have heard of the “TEE IT FORWARD” campaign but maybe aren’t totally familiar with what it entails. The basic premise is that players play golf courses that are too long for their abilities. Barney Adams, founder of Adams Golf, is the driving force behind the program with substantial support from the USGA, GCSAA and the PGA. Adams asserts that if tour players had to hit the clubs into greens that most amateurs do, they would have to play a golf course approximately 8100 yards! The net result of playing a golf course that is too long is higher scores, less enjoyment, more players quitting the game or playing less often and long rounds. We cannot afford for the players that we do have to quit!



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THE GOLF SHOP

This new campaign promotes playing a set of tees that is compatible to the distance a player can hit a driver. It's trying to help the average player get that 7, 8 or 9 iron in their hands more often. Hitting shorter clubs into greens will give players more birdie chances, help them have the opportunity to score better and ultimately play faster.

The biggest obstacle is human nature, especially the male human nature. Players often times remember that one drive that was down hill, down wind, when the ground was harder than a rock and they hit it 275. The more we can convince people to move up to a set of tees that are realistically equal to their skill set, the better the program will work.

As golf industry leaders we can help them along with course and tournament set up. Have a week that you

TEE IT FORWARD	
This chart is a guideline to help golfers align their average driving distance with the course length best suited to their abilities.	
Average Driver Distance	Recomended 18 Hole Yardage
275	6,700 - 6,900
250	6,200 - 6,400
225	5,800 - 6,000
200	5,200 - 5,400
175	4,400 - 4,600
150	3,500 - 3,700
125	2,800 - 3,000
100	2,100 - 2,300

play each color tee up a set. Offer a senior tournament and put everyone up on the senior tees. Have a red tee championship. Our seniors who are usually too proud to play the senior tees for daily play enjoy them during tournaments and a few actually switch permanently. Try and think outside the box to promote excitement and to get players enjoying themselves.

Play Golf America surveyed TEE IT FORWARD participants and found:

70% of golfers found playing more enjoyable

47% felt they played faster

91% are likely to use it again

52% stated they were likely to

play golf more often knowing they could TEE IT FORWARD

For more information on Tee it Forward, please visit www.pga.com or www.playgolfamerica.com.



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