

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE SEAS

Miniature Golf: The Way Ahead?

The world's first commercial golf court will be opened later this month at Lensbury conference centre, at Teddington Lock, by Laura Davies.

A golf court is a new concept in golf, designed by Compac Golf Ltd, that enables a full 18-hole round to be played on 18 acres of land compared to the average 150-acre golf course. The concept can also be adapted to fit smaller areas of land.

Mathematically designed to include four greens and eight tee areas, a golf court offers players all the challenges of a full 18-hole course, incorporating Par 3, 4 and 5 holes on a smaller area and can be completed in far less time. The game on a golf court is very easy to follow, the tee and yardage markers and flags are all color coded. Each hole is different. They vary in both length and perspective. A golf court is as safe as a golf course and each golf court will undergo a PGA safety audit.

Like a tennis court, a golf court can be booked by the hour offering the golfer the flexibility of playing six holes in one hour, 12 holes in two hours or a full 18 holes in just three hours. The game is considerably quicker than on a conventional golf course because the system of play means waiting time is virtually eliminated.

Like a tennis court, a golf court can be booked by the hour offering the golfer the flexibility of playing six holes in one hour, 12 holes in two hours or a full 18 holes in just three hours. The game is considerably quicker than on a conventional golf course because the system of play means waiting time is virtually eliminated.

The potential for golf courts is enormous. Hotels, conference centres, property developments, universities, inner city areas and leisure clubs are just some of the areas with limited space that could feature a golf court.

A golf court is around £300k. It is inexpensive to maintain, requires very little watering and, being so compact, is easy to floodlight for night-time golf.

"It means having the opportunity to play golf safely and it will bring golf to a whole new category of players for whom golf has not been feasible or available before." said Bob Hunt of PGA Golf Management, who advises on the building of golf courses.

True Grit: Sand Research

A frequent source of debate within golf clubs concerns the performance of bunker sands. Regular complaints about bunker sands include excessive crusting, soft and fluffy lies, excessive plugging of the ball on impact and unstable footing. Undoubtedly, some of these comments are influenced by the way in which the sand was installed and its subsequent maintenance. However, the physical composition of the sand also has major effects on the performance of golf bunkers. The objective of this article is to review research studies that have looked in detail on the effects of sand type within bunkers, particularly on playing performance.

Apart from playing characteristics, many issues need to be taken into account when choosing sands for bunkers. The sand should be free draining and in particular contamination with silt and clay may reduce drainage rates. High silt and clay contents may also contribute to the development of a surface crust following rainfall and subsequent drying. As a guideline, sands with more than 2% silt and clay should be avoided.

Windblow is an important consideration. On links courses, most of the local sands used within bunkers fall in the size range of 0.1-0.35 mm diameter. This may be appropriate for the generally deeper and narrow bunkers typical of a links course but this would be a potential disaster on many inland courses. The fine sands on links courses are usually a product of transportation by wind before stabilization by vegetation. Therefore, their use on more open bunkers, particularly on exposed inland courses, would be a recipe for disaster.

In selecting a bunker sand, it must always be remembered that golfers are liable to blast sand out of bunkers while playing from the hazard. If the sand contains a lot of coarse material, greater than about 1.5 mm, this is liable to remain on the surface where it can interfere with putting and may also damage mowers. The localized accumulation of considerable quantities of excessively coarse sand splashed from a bunker may also make the turf more drought susceptible. Similarly, on inland courses, the lime content of the sand is important. If the sand contains appreciable amounts of lime (eg. as shell fragments), this may accelerate the invasion of annual meadow-grass and broad-leaved weeds, encourage earthworm activity and on newer, sand-dominated greens make the turf more susceptible to take-all patch disease.

Sands can stack at different angles. When moisture is present, a sand can easily be raked up and remain against a very steep bunker face. Fine sands retain moisture more readily and they can maintain a steeper angle for longer periods than coarse grained sands, which can quickly dry-out. Dry sands have a maximum slope, known as the angle of repose, above which they will not be stable. If the sand has a higher angle of repose, it remains against bunker faces more easily and thus less maintenance is needed.