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## Green Section

### FORE THE GOLFER

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## PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE TURF ON A GOLF COURSE

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As the saying goes, “Practice makes perfect,” and most golfers love to work on their game. Unfortunately, all that practice can be hard on practice tee turf. After a busy week, some practice tees can look like they were rototilled, and turf recovery will be slow due to the countless divots taken. Superintendents continually change hitting locations on the practice tee so the turf has some time to recover, and they use maintenance practices like topdressing and fertilizing to help the turf heal. Golfers can also do their part to help speed practice tee recovery by being mindful of their practice technique.

Due to the vulnerability of the turf on practice tees, we need to be sure to practice in a way that limits turf damage. Taking divots in a linear pattern – instead of a scattered or clustered pattern – damages smaller areas of turf and helps the practice tee recover faster. Here are a few tips to help you successfully use this method to minimize practice tee damage:

- Once the first divot is taken, the next ball should be placed in the healthy turf directly behind the

initial divot, within 0.5 to 1 inch of the back of the divot.

- Placing the ball farther behind the divot is unnecessary and will actually increase the amount of damage done with each swing.
- Golfers who cut across the ball can still take divots in a linear pattern. The line may not be perfectly straight, but any linear pattern is still better than the alternatives.
- A total of 15 to 20 shots can typically be taken before it is necessary to create a new line of divots alongside the first line.
- The next line of divots should be taken approximately 4 inches to the side of the initial line to optimize turf recovery. Getting the lines any closer to each other will remove too much turf and recovery won't happen as quickly.

Using a linear divot pattern gives us the opportunity to limit turf damage during practice sessions. Your fellow golfers will benefit, and the practice tee will become an even better place to practice and have fun.