

Practice facilities made perfect

■ If you're looking for a new golf course project for 1995, consider installing a practice area.

A well-designed practice area can increase the traffic to your course, and perhaps give it the edge you need to beat the competition.

Several options are available, according to the American Society of Golf Course Architects:

- stand-alone driving range;
- extra holes;
- training centers that feature driving ranges and putting greens;
- practice bunkers (which would eliminate having to watch out for people chipping onto the regular practice putting green).

Large practice tee areas enable the superintendent and club pro to spread the foot traffic over a larger area.

Teeing areas can be a half acre in surface area.

Target greens at designated distances from the teeing area are more common nowadays, says the ASGCA. These help keep golf balls in the middle of the facility by giving the golfer a target similar to the targets on the course. These greens can be spruced up with mounds or sand bunkers.

Lesson tees are often designed as separate 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 about 350 yards or more must

be implemented.

Practice greens should be at least 10,000 sq. ft. in area to allow for adequate pin placements.

Revenue from practice areas can then be used to finance improvements or modifications around the rest of the course.

A "learning center" takes the driving range concept a step further, by giving golfers a place to work on a variety of shots.

The Man-O-War Golf Center in Lexington, Ky. has a 30-acre learning center, with a three tiered driving range, chipping area, putting green, realistic target greens and golf-swing video analysis.

Practice facilities often include a separate green to practice chipping and bunker shots.

It would be easy to implement all these improvements would be a breeze if you had a massive budget. But since your budget likely has a limit, start small. Make one improvement one year, and go from there.

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