

MAKE GOLF FUN AGAIN

We've all heard it said "golf is too hard, too expensive and takes too much time". We've also heard it said that kids are the future of our game. Unfortunately, I still see ads and websites inviting golfers to come play their "challenging course" and wonder how they can so disconnected. We are an aging population and our youth and families have many opportunities for activities that don't cost as much, have as many rules or take as long as the game of golf does. Foot Golf and Snag Golf are good ideas but don't really address the fact that we need to have golf courses that are fun, playable and accessible to golfers of all abilities.

We need to be looking at how to attract those who golf but don't carry a USGA handicap or even consider themselves "a golfer". This starts by designing golf holes that have generous landing areas, multiple teeing options and carefully placed hazards.



Studies conducted by the National Golf Course Owner's Association (NGCOA), the USGA and the Royal Little Family Foundation along with our own observations have taught us that most courses are designed with little consideration for the ability of what we call the "average golfer". We know that the average male golfer has a swing speed of 90 mph and hits their driver 230 yards while the average women golfer has a swing speed of 65 mph with an average distance of 145 yards. Although factors like wind, soil moisture, ball spin and cutting height can affect these yardages, what is clear is that too many golf courses are simply designed to be too long and too difficult. Then add forced carries, 2.5 inch rough and poorly placed bunkers and golfers quickly become frustrated and disenfranchised.



So what can be done? For starters, we need to design courses that are enjoyable for golfers of all abilities. That starts with "**proportional tee design**". Much research has been done on swing speed and golf ball distance so it's surprising to me that courses are still being built and holes are being remodeled with forced carries and forward tees that are simply too challenging for kids, women and seniors.

The following is a chart that represents nearly three decades of tee design research by the National Golf Course Owner's Association, the USGA and Golf Laboratories on proportional tee placement and the correlation between golfer swing speed and golf ball distance.

<u>Swing speed</u>	<u>Yardage</u>	<u>Relationship to other tees</u>
65mph-average woman	3900-4100	65%
75mph	4700-4900	78%
85mph	5600-5800	93%
90mph-average man	6000-6200	100% * Base tee
95mph	6400-6600	107%
105mph	6800-7000	113%

Most courses, public and private, should be designed for swing speeds between 65-105 mph and yardages between 4,000 yards and 7,000. This means that the forward tees should be roughly 65-75% of the base tee distance. At most regulation courses, this will require at least 5 sets of tee markers. In addition, tees and bunkers need to be positioned so that golfers using the forward tees are not unfairly penalized and required to hit a disproportionately longer approach shot to the green. More often than not, golfers playing the forward tees are left hitting their approach shot from the same yardage as the more skilled golfer. As a result, a golfer playing from the forward tee might be hitting a 5 wood or 3 wood from 140 yards while the player who is hitting from the back tee is playing an 8 or 9 iron from 150 yards. Ideally, properly designed tees would leave both golfers hitting the same or similar club for their approach shot.

<u>Club</u>	<u>Average Woman</u>	<u>Average Man</u>
Driver	145	230
3 Metal	128	210
5 Metal	118	200
7 Metal/3 Hybrid	110	191
9 Metal/5 Hybrid	102	170
5 Iron	94	163
6 Iron	88	151
7 Iron	82	143
8 Iron	76	132
9 Iron	72	120
PW	54	110

Note: These distances are based on data from a variety of sources including Golf Laboratories, the USGA and the Royal Little Foundation.

Many courses have now started using "combination tees". This is a simple and inexpensive way to add more teeing options to make golf more enjoyable for a wider range of golfers.

Lastly, I often suggest to my clients that they abandon the traditional red, white and blue tee marker system and instead utilize a marking system that requires the golfer to select their tee based on the yardage rather than the color of the tee. I've never heard anybody complain that a golf course was too easy or too profitable.

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