

GROWING THE GAME



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 be 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.

At Herfort Norby, we understand what it takes to make golf fun and how to attract those who golf but don't necessarily consider themselves "a golfer". This starts by designing golf holes that have generous landing areas, multiple teeing options and carefully placed hazards.

So what can be done? For starters, we need to design courses that are fair and enjoyable for golfers of all abilities. That starts with what is called "**proportional tee design**". Much research has been done on swing speed and golfball distance so it's surprising to me that courses are still being built and holes being remodeled with poorly spaced tees and forward tees that are too long for kids, women and seniors. See the swing speed chart below.



PROPORTIONAL TEE DESIGN

<u>Swing speed</u>	<u>Yardage</u>	<u>Relationship to other tees</u>
65mph-average woman	3,900-4,100	65%
75mph	4,700-4,900	78%
85mph	5,600-5,800	93%
90mph-average man	6,000-6,200	100% * Base tee
95mph	6,400-6,600	107%
105mph	6,800-7,000	113%



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". This chart 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.

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 which equates to hitting their drive 145 yards. Although factors like wind, ball spin, cutting height and soil moisture can affect these yardages what is clear is that many holes or courses are simply designed to be too long. Then you add forced carries, 2.5 inch rough and poorly placed bunkers and the golfers become frustrated and disenfranchised.

CLUB DISTANCE CHART

<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, Bill Amick and the USGA.

Most courses, public or 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, this means a player from the forward tee might be hitting a 5 wood or 3 wood from 140 yards while the player who is playing the back tee is hitting 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.



Lastly, I usually suggest to my clients that they abandon the traditional red, white and blue tee marker system and use something 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.



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