



Driving Range Architects

**An Interview by Colin Goehring, director of Golf Lessons Online,
with Golf Course Designer Kevin Norby** February 26, 2007

Kevin, tell us - what are the most important considerations when someone is setting up a driving range?

Frequently, when people approach us about designing a driving range they are just thinking about the range. When we meet with our clients, we try to help them understand that it may make sense to think about this as more than just a driving range. Ideally it should be a golf learning center. This can include a putting green, some practice bunkers, possibly a place for some indoor lessons.

We try to help them understand that, as a marketing tool, the nicer your practice facility is the better positioned you will be at attracting new members, especially if you are a private club. It really is a benefit and an asset. If we can do something more than just a driving range, it will serve the golf course well.

What are the kinds of things you look at when setting up an exceptional driving range?

In this day and age, with the developments of technology, we generally have to set up the range to be about 330 yards long because people are simply driving the ball that much farther these days.

So we start with a driving range, then we like to set up an area at the back of the tee where we can set up mats. This is helpful because sometimes you may need to work on the driving area and you might want the turf to be able to recuperate.

We also like to see a good putting area that is about 10,000 – 15,000 square feet.

We also encourage some sort of short game facility. That could be another practice green that would have some chipping areas, some practice bunkers, something that you could hit something 20 – 60 yards.

We generally try to provide some sort of a facility that would allow you to practice all aspects of the game, including: driving, chipping, putting and sand shots.

I'm sure safety has to be an important consideration when you are setting these up?

Orientation and having adequate space are two important considerations.. We generally would not want to have a driving range that would have other high traffic areas such as a golf hole or the clubhouse or houses on the right side of the range, the slice side of the hole. So we always try to separate that a little bit.

What about driving range nets?

Whenever possible, we try to put the practice facility where we don't have to use nets. Nets can be quite expensive and not particularly attractive so we avoid them whenever possible.

What about how the range stalls are set up and the design of actual facility?

There's some common sense issues like circulation on and around the teeing area, things that we do about radiusing the tee (pointing the tee a little left of center), looking at the overall orientation, the prevailing winds, the rising or the setting sun. Ideally we would like to set the range up to the northeast – we don't like it pointing directly to the east or the west.

We also like to set up some target greens on the range so that there is something interesting for people to aim for.

What about considerations for the actual landing area? There can be problems with the golf balls getting beat up if the surface of the driving range is not in good condition. Problems like rocky surfaces, poor drainage, etc.

This is really a function of turf quality and maintenance and proper construction. You want to make sure that rocks and debris are removed before you put the seed in the ground. You need to also make sure that you have a quality stand of grass out there. Irrigation, fertilizer, maintenance and drainage are all important to make sure you have good healthy turf.

Any other considerations that a developer should consider when they are developing a driving range?

I would suggest that if people are considering building a practice facility they should find themselves an architect to work through the process of exploring their options. I would encourage them to get detailed plans and work out all the details of drainage and safety issues.

How can people get a hold of you if they'd like to consult with you on these issues of building a driving range?



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