

IN DISCUSSIONS ABOUT RANGE USE, YOUR EXPERTISE IS EXPECTED



By Andy Hilts, *Director*

This month's newsletter looks at tech options and programming to enhance the golf practice experience and bring new energy to greengrass ranges.

As our story (*see page 9*) points out, some of these "changes at ranges" are geared toward entertainment and others are designed to help serious golfers achieve meaningful improvement.

The more this trend gets talked about, the more you may wonder what effect it will have on the range where you teach. It would make total sense for the facility's owners or managers to get your take on these matters—and very likely they will or already have. Either way, it's important you study what's going on and develop a well-considered point of view on what's worth investing in, and why.

Beyond price, there's another consideration—the confusion factor for golfers as they view various data points and attempt swing adjustments on their own. My career has included extensive work with young golf coaches just starting out, and even with decent training they often struggle to grasp all the data at their disposal. It worries me to think about all the do-it-yourselfers out there, as they interpret various metrics on-screen and guess at ways to make the numbers come out better.

Don't get me wrong—technology is something I value highly. I appreciate what it's done for golf instruction and I look forward to what comes next. Having more ranges outfitted with Toptracer or TrackMan is going to give coaches great diagnostic tools and help their students improve faster. However, for facilities that can't spend that kind of capital, I still think we have many ways to engage customers and better utilize our practice facilities. Again, since the range is your "home away from home," you ought to be the thought leader at the club in suggesting how this facility can be better utilized—often for very little hard cost.

So, spend a little time thinking about your current range usage. What are the peak hours and how much revenue are they

generating? When is it slow and in need of more activity? Can you do something after dark on the range to find new revenue? Are there times of year when the course is closed but the range could be open, or vice versa? Are there slower times when you could get greater ROI by hosting an event? Here are some possibilities:

- Recently my family spent an evening in a friend's backyard with a projector and an inflatable movie screen watching a Hollywood classic. The kids loved reliving the drive-in movie experience, as did the adults. Of course, during a film everyone needs some popcorn or other food and beverage option, and your club would certainly be glad to provide it, at a profit.
- Try spicing up your demo day with a wine tasting or craft beer tasting that a local spirits rep or brewery will host—most likely at no charge, if they are able to sell their wares on-site.
- Change the mowing pattern and height slightly around the range to create a two- or three-hole course. You could also create a 9-hole short-game course with tee markers and a scorecard. Challenger golfers to get up and down 9 times for a par of 18.
- Create your own Mike Bender-style wedge range complete with four-by-four concrete slabs. Again keep score—actually, keep "course records" in various categories.
- Once a week set up your putting green with holes to play. Think Bandon's Punchbowl. Keep score, post the five or 10 lowest totals and award at least nominal prizes.
- Take it beyond golf—a climbing wall would only take up a small section of the range. In keeping with the seasons, use your range for an egg hunt at Easter and a July 4th event, complete with barbeque, fireworks, decorated bikes (or golf carts) and a kids' carnival with a bounce house and other amusements.

Whatever you do, I would strongly suggest you add music. I have been to several clubs that have music playing from fake rocks and it completely changes the vibe. People start talking more, getting social and having fun versus just grinding ball after ball.

Whatever you do, be the thought leader, offering expertise and ideas. Helping your club maximize engagement and revenue as this trend unfolds will allow you to keep building your value. **PG**

PROPONENT GROUP CALENDAR

SAVE THE DATE: One-Day Event in Las Vegas on August 13th. Details upcoming in the June Newsletter.

SAVE THE DATES: Proponent Summit '18 will be November 4-6 at Cowboys Golf Club in Dallas, TX