



United States Golf Association

DISTANCE INSIGHTS: THE GOLFER EXPERIENCE

March 2021

USGA[®]

Prepared by:

**SPORTS &
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RESEARCH GROUP

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Objectives and Research Goals

Objectives and Research Goals

Exploring the Golfer Experience Through the Lens of Distance

WHY GOLF?

- What drives the recreational golfer to play and enjoy the game, and why are these specific motivators driving them to golf relative to other leisure activities?

WHAT DRIVES ENJOYMENT IN GOLF...AND WHY?

- What is the optimal recipe for enjoyment and how does this vary across different golfer segments?
- Specifically, where does distance fall in this needs hierarchy as both a potential enhancer and detractor?

HOW DOES COURSE SET-UP FACTOR INTO GOLFER ENJOYMENT?

- What matters most from a course design and playability perspective?
- What is the appropriate amount of challenge, what constitutes that desired challenge and why?
- What is the role of distance, course conditions, the concept of par and tee placement/multiple tee sets?

Objectives and Research Goals

Other Macro Level Objectives



Deep dive into the tee / playing length decision made by an individual golfer

- What information is used to make the decision
- How is their personal decision influenced by other members in the same group?
- How often do they select different tees when playing a familiar course (or do they always play the same tees?)?
- Do traditional tee labels or colors impact the decision to not use them?
 - Red = Female
 - Gold or Green = Senior Male
 - White = Regular Male
 - Blue = Accomplished Male Golfers
 - Black/Tips = Best Golfers
- Do golfers enjoy (accept to embrace) combo tees as a viable alternative?
 - Why and how are combo tees used?

Objectives and Research Goals

Other Macro Level Objectives



About the course played during a round:

- How should the course be designed, set-up and maintained to provide an appropriate challenge? (to provide a variety of shot types needed for success)
- Does a course need to have rough or penalty areas?
- Does the course need to have par?
- Is there a minimum hole length?

Objectives and Research Goals

Getting to “The Why” Behind these Specific Areas of Inquiry



Where is golf in context with other leisure activities for various golfer segments?

- In terms of overall enjoyment and self actualization
- As a springboard to directionally identify attitudinal/engagement driven segments

Is golf more about competition or relaxation?

- How difficult should golf be?
- Is golf more inspirational or aspirational

What’s more important—Distance or accuracy?

How does distance impact the overall enjoyment of a round of golf?

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Methodological Overview

Methodological Overview

A Qualitative Deep Dive



126 Respondents

224 Interviews

132+ Hours of Field Work

Methodological Overview

A Broad and Comprehensive Respondent Sampling Framework

Data Reduction Process Utilized to create recruitment rosters and quotas

- Apportions respondents to allow broad representation across each of the following major screening/segmentation criteria and capture the most representative combinations of:



Methodological Overview

Three Distinct Research Phases

80 Depth Interviews

- 30 Minutes in Length

Four Month Longitudinal Tracking work with 26 respondents

- 30 minute Depth Interviews after each of four specific directed exercises
 - I. Initial Depth Interview
 - II. Respondent Moves One Tee Box Forward*
 - III. Respondent Moves One Tee Box Back*
 - IV. Respondent Plays One Tee Box Forward with Reduced Flight Golf Balls

On Course Ethnographic Immersions with Five Foursomes

- 30 Minute Depth Interviews both before and after each round

- Two different courses over three days of field work
- Research Team follows and interacts with the group throughout the round
 - Holes 1-3: Players tee off from “normal” tee boxes
 - Holes 4-8: Players move one tee box forward
 - Holes 9-13: Players move one tee box back
 - Holes 14-18: Players move one tee box forward with reduced flight golf balls
- Mix of players
 - Younger, higher handicappers
 - Single digit handicappers
 - Avid women
 - Mid Handicappers (2 groups)

** Those “normally” playing from the forward most tees, moved up to the front of these tee boxes or fairway. Those “normally” playing from the back tees, moved back to the tips, a flat teeing ground behind them, or played a longer course, as applicable*

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Major Observations: Two Minute Take-Aways

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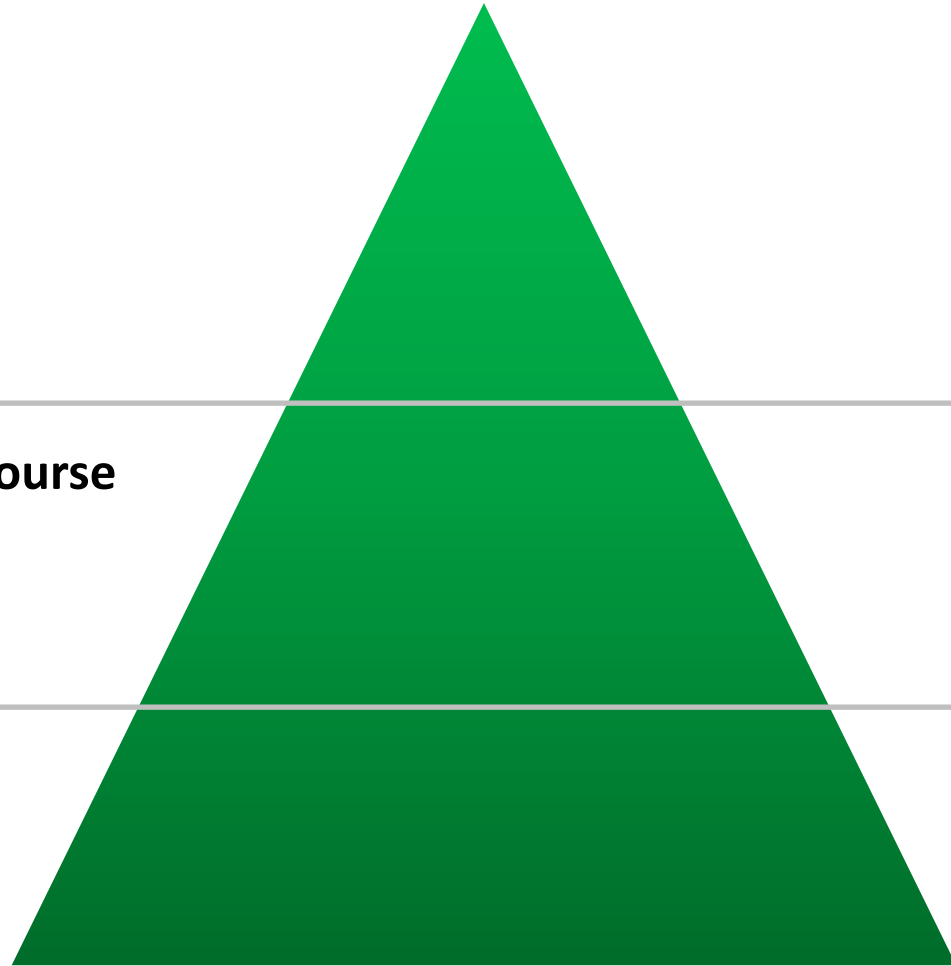
Distance Is Rarely Top Of Mind When Golfers Consider Key Drivers Of Enjoyment and Course Selection

Social and psychic elements

- Camaraderie and convenience
- Relaxation
- “Internalized” competition
- Self actualization

Physical and Environmental elements of the Golf Course

- Communing with nature
- Course Conditioning—The Greens
- Aesthetics and Hazards



Major Observations: Two Minute Take-Aways

...Yet, When Probed, It Is Evident Among Recreational Golfers That Improper Tee Selection Is Prevalent And Detrimental To One's Enjoyment

PROOF POINTS:



- “Follow the leader” decision making is standard
- Normative conformance surrounding conventional tee box conventions
- An overt stigma regarding “moving up”
 - Not surrendering to age and declining skills
 - Perceived as ‘wrong’
- The self fulfilling prophecy of poor performance when playing back

Major Observations: Two Minute Take-Aways

The Biggest Proof Point: Playing Forward, Absent The Stigma, Is Universally Enjoyed And Appreciated, When Forced Upon Longitudinal Respondents



- Brings about new achievements and a “pro” experience for less skilled players
- Is replete with “shot making challenges” for better players
- Courses within courses

Major Observations: Two Minute Take-Aways

For Many, The Frustration Of Increased Yardage/Playing Back Is More About Increased Hazards To Navigate

- Hole length is less overtly intimidating relative to forced carries and introduction of hazards created by the longer distances



Major Observations: Two Minute Take-Aways

Other Key Learnings:



Recreational players **INTERNALIZE THEIR TRAVAILS** more often than attributing it to course set-up factors



Par, though coveted, should be “earned” through **“ATTAINABLE CHALLENGES”**



There’s **A PLACE FOR SHORT COURSES**



Directionally the effect of the **REDUCED FLIGHT BALL** is barely discernable... but **DOES PLAY MIND GAMES**



The **“DEBATE ON DISTANCE”** resonates for a limited but vocal audience

Major Observations: Two Minute Take-Aways

Different Strokes for Different Folks—Archetypes Surface Highly Variable Impact of Distance on Golfers' Experiences

THE CONSCIOUS IMPACT OF DISTANCE CONTINUUM

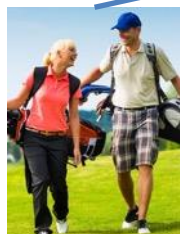
Low Primacy

High Primacy



The Disinterested Dabbler

The infrequent and often reluctant casual player, lowest on the engagement scale and learning curve. Hit ball. Chase ball.



Dipping Their Toes In the Water

New to the game, low on the learning curve and lower on performance expectations



Public Weekend Warriors

Golf's "everyman" distance is elusive and often subjugated by other internal and course set up elements



Good Time Golf 'Bros'

It's all about the social aspects. Distance comes most into play in its relation to "macho" grandstanding



She's All That

Serious about the game and fighting 'second class citizenship' perceptions, thoughtless tee placement among them



The Aging Athlete

Hanging on to the past, moving forward is anathema, but cherished when forced upon them



Country Club Traditionalist

Strong desires to preserve the "integrity" of classic courses, yet feeling left behind. Disciples of the Nicklaus POV



Young Stick

Elite players. Accuracy supercedes distance, which remains top of mind

Major Observations: Two Minute Take-Aways

Different Strokes for Different Folks—Archetypes Surface Highly Variable Impact of Distance on Golfers' Experiences



The Disinterested Dabbler



Dipping Their Toes In the Water



Public Weekend Warriors



Good Time Golf 'Bros'

Gender	Male or female	Male or female	Male	Male
Facility Type	Public <\$50	Public or golf association	Public—Mix of green fees, more apt to be \$50+	Public <\$50
Lifestage	Mixed	Married or partnered	Mix of married or single at various lifestages	Single or newly married
Frequency	Casual	Casual to Core	Avid	Casual to Core
Tenure	<5 years	<5 years	5+ years	Mix
Handicap	None. Doesn't break 100 or keep score	Does not break 100	13+ or no handicap/regularly breaks 100	Typically does not break 90
Engagement Rating	3-5	4-7	8-10	6-8
Distance Impact	Lack of awareness; but frustrated overall	Would love more GIR, but internalizes the root cause	Mix of perspectives, but generally less focused on distance	Grandstands when hitting it far, but will make it fun, regardless

Major Observations: Two Minute Take-Aways

Different Strokes for Different Folks—Archetypes Surface Highly Variable Impact of Distance on Golfers' Experiences



**She's
All That**



**The Aging
Athlete**



**Country Club
Traditionalist**



**Young
Stick**

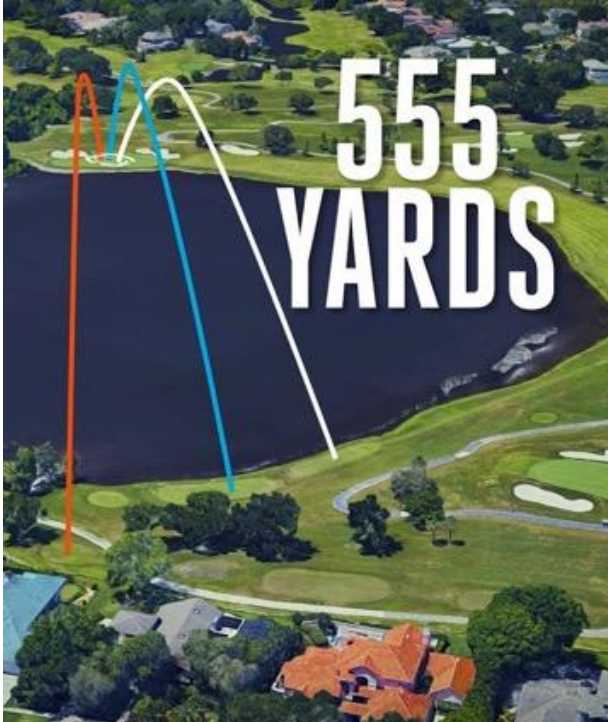
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Male
Facility Type	Private—dues \$5k+ or Public	Public or Golf Association/Private <\$5k	Private—Dues \$5k+ or Public	Private—Dues \$5k+ or Public—Green Fee \$50+
Lifestage	Married no children at home	Married	Married with no children at home	Single or married with children at home
Frequency	Avid	Avid	Avid	Avid
Tenure	5+ years	5+ years	5+ years	5+ years
Handicap	16-28	15-24 or high 80s/90s	15 or less	Single digit
Engagement Rating	8-10	6-8	8-10	8-10
Distance Impact	Sensitive to thoughtless tee placement and unreachable holes	Acutely aware but unwilling to accept reduced distance	Resents lost ability to keep up with today's longer courses and sees them as a threat	Looking to optimize all aspects of their elite abilities, distance being one

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Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Distance Is A Subconscious Or Lower Tier Driver Of Enjoyment



- Rarely cited organically as a key enjoyment driver
- Widespread lack of awareness of total course yardage
- One of many inherent challenges that doesn't naturally surface to the top in assessing one's personal struggles
- Suboptimal performance is typically internalized rather than ascribed to course length or set-up

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Distance Is A Subconscious Or Lower Tier Driver Of Enjoyment



- Most recreational players have little true knowledge or highly distorted/aggrandized perceptions of how far they hit the golf ball
- Accuracy consistently supersedes distance in perceived importance
 - A 330 yd hole can be more challenging or interesting than a 400 yd hole based on how it sets up
 - Older players, and even the lower handicappers realize that they can't hit it as long as they want, so accuracy becomes the achievable challenge
 - Golfer recollections of their most memorable hole ever, are consistently replete with sticking an approach (or iron tee shot on a par three) close to the pin on a signature or aesthetically beautiful hole, and making the putt. "It's not about "bombing it"
- That aside, one needs to reach a basic level of "distance competence" for beginners or less skilled players, before accuracy and other finer points of course management and scoring become important or achievable

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Distance Is A Subconscious Or Lower Tier Driver Of Enjoyment

SPEED OF PLAY: Players must maintain their position on the golf course at all times. If a player is unable to complete a hole within the allotted time, they may be required to leave the course to maintain pace of play.

- **REPLACE DIVOTS, REPAIR BALL MARKS, RAKE BUNKERS.**
- **Alcoholic beverages may not be carried on the premises.**
- **The 19th hole will service your needs.**
- **Players are responsible for their own pace of play.**
- **All yardage markers measured from the center of the green.**

Quad Valley Golf Club
 9000 N. Rd.
 Linderoom, VA 17340
 717-595-8453
 www.quadvalleygc.com

HOLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	OUT
PAR	4	3	4	5	4	4	3	4	5	36
YARDS	352	137	340	495	117	283	145	320	451	2620
FEET	1171	416	1115	1515	357	869	443	984	1384	8256
METERS	322	41	104	148	35	86	44	98	138	795
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Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Distance Is A Subconscious Or Lower Tier Driver Of Enjoyment



- Decision drivers regarding where to play, are usually tied to convenience and consensus among playing partners, with course condition also a key factor
- Value/pricing is also considered, but is generally not perceived to be as significant a decision driver unless:
 - The other factors are at parity
 - Budget/economic conditions dictate it
- In considering and recalling the “most difficult” courses ever played, distance is not typically cited without prompting. It typically comes down to:
 - Abundance of well placed hazards
 - Reputation/history of hosting significant championships
 - Topographical conditions
 - Premiums placed on accuracy/penalties for inaccurate shots
 - Fast greens

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Distance Is A Subconscious Or Lower Tier Driver Of Enjoyment

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"If not the bottom, then [distance is] very near the bottom as long as there are other obstacles and angles involved" —**William C.**

"It's as difficult as you want to make it. Yeah. It's difficult but I'm top 10% in my club...Even if I play from tips, I've only broken par once...But can shoot under par from ladies tees fairly often. It's more inspirational---It's a place to clear your head and get some exercise...Lots of internalization"—**AJ S.**

"Golf should be difficult enough where it would require years of practice to be really good. It's impressive to be able to watch a good golfer and know the amount of effort that went into it."—**Andrew B.**

"If you hit it accurately, you can always recover and give yourself a chance and do ok on the hole." —**Barry F.**

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Distance Is A Subconscious Or Lower Tier Driver Of Enjoyment



IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"The typical hole is too long for me, because I don't have the skill yet. Not for others. It would be fun to play off tees that are beginner or in training vs. gender based tees".—Mindy C.

"It takes time to get good at this. Some may hit it straighter and not as far and get a better score. You are going to gain strokes around the green and that's where you should practice. Sure, you'll hit 12 tee shots, but the other shots matter more."—Brian E.

"It's a very involved game that requires focus and it's more of an interpersonal competitive game." —Mallory C.

"I hit it far now but most important for the game of golf is accuracy – if you are a country mile off course it doesn't help your game." —Andrew V.

"Golf should be challenging enough to make you want to perfect your chip, drive, putt, but not too challenging that it gets to the point where you feel like you are not progressing." —Rick C.

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

For Most, The Game Remains Primarily About Camaraderie, Socialization And Relaxation Paired With The Game's Unique Ability To Challenge Golfers

- Competition in golf is strongly tied to the sport's social elements and fun
 - The friendly wager
 - Bragging rites
- The most serious competition in golf is versus the golf course and against yourself
- Golf is unique in its ability to challenge the golfer mentally as well as physically
 - “Competition” is often internalized
 - Puts the focus on one's perceived internal shortcomings, rather than on the golf course itself
- This lack of serious competitiveness further subjugates distance and course yardage as secondary to golf's inherent value for all but the most serious players (who regularly participate in organized events/competitions)
- The right mix of great weather, great course conditions and great friends relegates course distance to a second or third tier consideration for all but the most competitive and accomplished recreational players



Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

For Most, The Game Remains Primarily About Camaraderie, Socialization And Relaxation Paired With The Game's Unique Ability To Challenge Golfers

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"[Golf is] more of a mental game that offers new friendships, work on your mental game, and get outside for exercise and fresh air." --Heather H



"[Golf is more about] relaxation – it's just fun to go out and have fun with your friends. Have a cigar and a couple beers. I think it should be some level of challenging. It doesn't have to be extremely difficult."--Dwight D.



"My job is stressful and this is a respite for me to escape that stress."--Vinnie M

"Anyone can hit it far, but the twitch of your eye or your stance can mess up an accurate swing."—Roddry D.



"It's more of a strategic sport that requires you to focus; essentially it is you vs. yourself." —Scott O.

"It takes you on a nice walk to see nature with your friends." —David B.

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

While There Is A More Relaxed And Social Element To Golf, There Is Also A Strong Desire To Improve At Any Stage



- Golfers at all skill levels strive for the feeling of accomplishment knowing they can improve and see the results on the course
- “I am good enough to where I know I can get better”

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

While There Is A More Relaxed And Social Element To Golf, There Is Also A Strong Desire To Improve At Any Stage

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"We all want to get/be better, and golf is the perfect sport for it." –Greg A.



"Golf is more inspirational as it makes me want to improve myself and get better." –Jeff P.



"It is more aspirational at this point, still aspiring to be much better than I am." –Mallory C.



"The levels of improvement are noticeable and it makes golf enjoyable." –Michelle M.

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

There Is An Overt Negative Stigma Of Forward Tees/Moving Up



- Tee marker colors are ingrained and fuel perceptions and habits
- Even without colors, golfer semantics affix rigid expectations to the different tee boxes, most notably, The Tips, Men's, Senior's, Ladies and less often Juniors
- Expectations that one is “supposed to play from the ‘Men’s tee’...not the ‘ladies’ or ‘senior tees’”
 - Makes one highly self conscious of moving up
 - An assault on one’s personal vision of self worth/posturing
 - A refutation of aging and declining physical prowess

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

There Is An Overt Negative Stigma Of Forward Tees/Moving Up

“The course offers seven tees to accommodate players of all skill levels.”

	Driver Carry Distance	Total Distance with Roll	Recommended 18-hole Yardage
BLUE 1	100yds	125yds	3200yds
GOLD 2	125yds	150yds	3800yds
GREEN 3	150yds	175yds	4400yds
ORANGE 4	175yds	200yds	5000yds
WHITE 5	200yds	220yds	5600yds
PURPLE 6	225yds	245yds	6200yds
RED 7	250yds	270yds	6800yds
BLACK PGA TOUR	275yds	295yds	7400yds



- For some, moving up provides an “illegitimate” sense of accomplishment
 - Akin to cheating—birdies and pars are less legitimate
 - Not playing the course as it was designed
 - Depriving one of all that the course intends to offer
- Notable exceptions:
 - Bad weather
 - Playing to total distance
 - Recommendations from the starter
- The perceived role of tee boxes is to segment golfers by skill level, further adding to the resistance/stigma

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

There Is An Overt Negative Stigma Of Forward Tees/Moving Up



IN THEIR OWN WORDS



“The stigma of playing up and “putting on a skirt” is a major detriment to the game of golf and affects people’s egos and approach to the game.” --Joe W.



“Forward was kind of fun, but I’d rather get good from my normal set of tees and challenge myself rather than giving myself a layup.” — Courtney I.



“One thing about playing up close, when other groups came up...Made me feel like a lesser golfer...That was a negative...A lesser golfer. They came up and saw us moving up...it created a self conscious stigma.”—Jonathan P.

“The stigma of the further back you are the better you are is what holds players back from trying to play up.” —William C.

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

There Is An Overt Negative Stigma Of Forward Tees/Moving Up



IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"The whites are my base level and if I'm trying to improve my game....Like practicing free throws, you still go back to the foul line...Still trying to make my free throws, despite shooting around...and when you play through work and other social situations, you maintain a comfort level"...Steve S.



"I play with a lot of guys in their 70s who struggle with distance but make up for it in accuracy.. They don't want to hit off the ladies tee for pride so they rather hit off white and they come up short."—John F.



"I was in it for fun...And felt [playing forward] was legitimate...He didn't. He wouldn't enter it in his handicap app. He only played from one of the fairways. He's by the rules."—Arden P.

"It would be fun to play off tees that are beginner or in training vs. gender based tees."—Mindy C.

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Those Who Enjoy The Back Tees, Welcome The Challenge, The Potential Accomplishment and Self Validation

- Back tees are a ‘badge of honor’—a validation that “I’ve still got it”
- Unpacking the full scale and grandeur of the course design—as the course was designed by the architect
- A confidence builder when you play well
- A total test of skills and thinking your way through the challenge



Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Those Who Enjoy The Back Tees, Welcome The Challenge, The Potential Accomplishment and Self Validation

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"I like playing tips because its harder. [Playing up] was nice and nice to know that its available and be able to make birdies...But a pride thing drives it. I'd gladly take extra strokes to say I played from the tips today. I've been an athlete all my life and to be approaching 50 and still being able to do that, gives me a feeling like I still got it....Distance is important to me because it is a sign of my vitality ...There are folks who are super happy as they get older and folks who are not. And you hear these folks who get joy getting birdies from red or green...and it's cool that it can still be a challenge moving up...But as of now, I don't need that." ---Travis S.

"I liked the tips because the view that you get is so grander...It's a bigger scale and the fairway looks smaller and further and you take in the peripherals of gullies and undulation and dirt and rocks...whereas up a box your eye just catches the fairway." —Travis S.

"I like going to the furthest [tee] because I am a man and I like to challenge myself." — Roddry D.

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Yet, Playing Forward, Absent The Stigma, Is Universally Enjoyed And Appreciated, When Forced Upon Longitudinal Respondents



- Brings about new achievements and a “pro” experience
 - Previously elusive accomplishments are addictive, compelling and motivational
 - “It’s more fun to shoot lower scores”
 - Demonstrates “how the game is intended to be played”
 - Builds confidence among less skilled players
 - Poignantly surfaces a previous inability to recognize the true impact of distance on enjoyment
 - Encourages easy/smooth (and as a result) more accurate swings

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Yet, Playing Forward, Absent The Stigma, Is Universally Enjoyed And Appreciated, When Forced Upon Longitudinal Respondents



- Still is replete with challenges—some enjoy “switching things up”
 - You still have to make putts and execute shots
 - Varied club selection on approach shots from atypical positions
 - Requires thought and deviation from normal patterns/course management
 - New layers of decision making on doglegs
 - Akin to creating multiple courses at a single facility
 - Playing “a shot maker’s course”
 - Different course features and required adjustments come into play

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Yet, Playing Forward, Absent The Stigma, Is Universally Enjoyed And Appreciated, When Forced Upon Longitudinal Respondents

- The research exercise itself, prompts greater consideration of the role of distance in driving enjoyment
 - Playing up was more fun than expected
 - Accomplishment, a new challenge and removal of the stigma are a recipe for a good time
 - The short game is where you really score
- Strong camp behind objective or performance driven tee assignment
 - By age
 - By average distance (The Rule of 36/Operation 36)
 - By average score/HCP
- Women lament a lack of perceived tee box choices
 - Adds to stigma of being “second class citizens
 - Where are the Senior or beginner women’s tees?
 - Some aspire to move back as their game progresses



Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Yet, Playing Forward, Absent The Stigma, Is Universally Enjoyed And Appreciated, When Forced Upon Longitudinal Respondents

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"The guy I normally play with had more pars- 7—that he ever has had...a new record for him. He was a fan. He also didn't like conditions but will keep playing from those tees." Jonathan P.

"Playing up is exciting cause it hones you in on your skills. We like that, and will do that again."—Fred M.

It was kind of fun because I'm finding myself in different places...This gave me different sorts of trouble and that was fun, even as a 3.1 handicap. It was a different kind of challenge. I definitely wouldn't say it was too easy. Putting is exactly the same and you still have to make them."---AJ S.

"I know it sounds bad, cause you aren't supposed to be playing those tees, but it was more fun. I played the course the way I felt I was supposed to."—Steven P.

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Yet, Playing Forward, Absent The Stigma, Is Universally Enjoyed And Appreciated, When Forced Upon Longitudinal Respondents

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"[This longitudinal study] has changed my perspective. I'm definitely in the school of thought that shorter isn't going to change how much fun you have with a round. Is it more fun to compete shooting an eight iron in or more fun to see who mishits their hybrid or wood? Most would agree it's more exciting to play those shots that are closer to where you'd see it on television. It changed my attitude where I won't ever have that feeling that you have to move back to play real golf."—Steven P.

"I've seen where you take your 5 iron and multiply it by 36 and that yardage, those are tee boxes you should use."-- Dennis N.

"I got to play more aggressively." --William C.

"They jokingly called me a cheater for using the shorter tees." Tom F.

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

As Lesser Skilled And Newer Players Get More Opportunity To Hit GIR, They Begin To Experience The Challenges Of Course Set-up And Shotmaking Not Typically A Part Of Their Golf Experience



- It is fun, invigorating and sets greater/different aspirations
- Elimination of blind shots and the opening up of the green is a welcomed experience that adds a new dimension of fun for these recreational players, and in this case it seems to fuel a heightened desire for greater levels of engagement with the game

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

As Lesser Skilled And Newer Players Get More Opportunity To Hit GIR, They Begin To Experience The Challenges Of Course Set-up And Shotmaking Not Typically A Part Of Their Golf Experience

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"I'm used to being in certain areas and playing from those areas on the course. Up a tee it's new...So I enjoyed this...playing a cool part of the course that I usually zip by and don't notice those features of the course that are now in play...It's almost like a playing a new course."—Travis S.

[On playing up] On the second, I parred a hole which was kind of cool. I felt that strokewise and distance wise I was playing more as intended....and two strokes to the green on a par four.... The fact that I was paring holes and making it in regulation...it hit home that I need to work more on my game, and opened up a different perspective... O.K. this is how this game can feel."—Courtney I.

"I definitely think after moving forward that distance plays an even bigger role than when we last spoke. Being in better position to play the course as it was designed to be played, I felt more like I was playing real golf...vs. hit a decent drive and then just get in position to scramble".—Steven P.

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

As Lesser Skilled And Newer Players Get More Opportunity To Hit GIR, They Begin To Experience The Challenges Of Course Set-up And Shotmaking Not Typically A Part Of Their Golf Experience

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"It was easier because when you are teeing off there are a couple holes that have certain landscapes that were avoidable by playing up. I didn't have to focus on those and it made the game easier for me and made it slightly more fun. I might even start looking for courses with junior tees to boost my confidence to play with other groups and friends." –Carol P.

"Trying to hit between clubs is different, trying to shorten up will 'screw you up. It was harder because of having to shoot different with clubs you are accustomed to.'" --Tom F.

"I might play from a white tee now to make it more enjoyable." –Joe W.

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Golf's Social Constructs Abet Groupthink And Often Improper Tee Selection

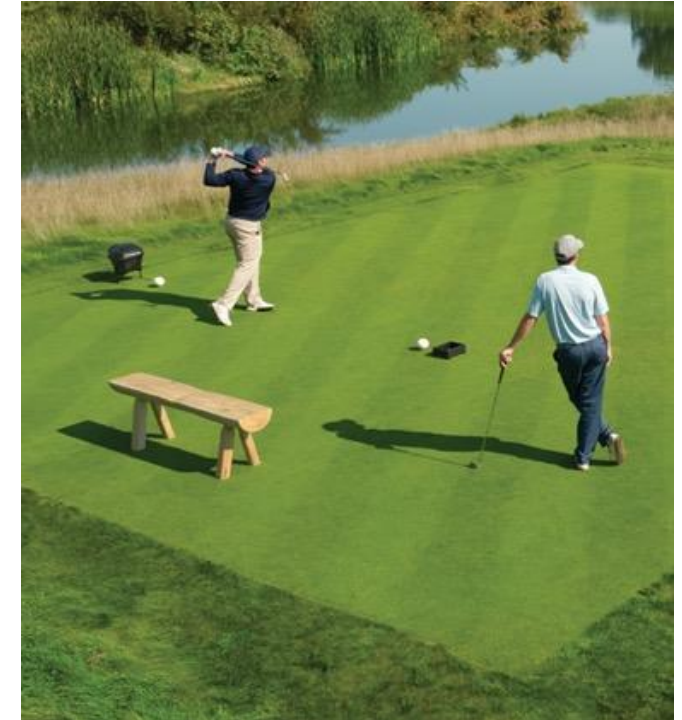
- Golf's networking and human bonding occur at the tee box (and on the greens), so playing from a common set is critical and expected by most
- Pervasive agreement that many “others” play from the wrong set of tees
 - “The Macho, other guy” complex
- Beginners and those with declining skills can only legitimize moving up, if it is a group decision
 - Being 30-50 yds behind where you used to be is demoralizing
- “Enlightened” golfers—highly skilled with strong and deep connections to the game, are more than willing to move up if it means playing with the group
 - An opportunity to work on different aspects of their game
 - An opportunity to represent the game favorably



Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Golf's Social Constructs Abet Groupthink And Often Improper Tee Selection

- When pressed, most recreational players who frequent daily fee courses were uncertain how many different tee sets were available where they typically played
 - Blue, White, Red and “Pro”, “Regular”, “Ladies” (with the occasional “Seniors” and “Juniors”) are most pervasive, with less certainty about other options or naming conventions
- Combo tees are less known by name and infrequently utilized by all but the most experienced players
 - Rationale behind the concept is generally less understood and thus receives luke warm support
 - Those familiar with it, typically embrace it
 - Some have organically created their own “combo layouts” to balance challenge with positive reinforcement



Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Golf's Social Constructs Abet Groupthink And Often Improper Tee Selection



- For the most part, customer facing golf staff do not actively recommend or legitimize the selection of player appropriate tee box selection
 - Preference to avoid conflict or confrontation
 - “The customer knows best”
 - More casual golfers are more amenable

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Golf's Social Constructs Abet Groupthink And Often Improper Tee Selection

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"Golf is too hard for the average golfer, who is often playing from wrong set of tees. The average golfer makes it harder on themselves. He goes to a difficult course and plays from back tees as a macho thing." —Harry H.

"Some sales guys and friends who played college golf, hitting from same box as me and are 30-40yds further which may be more companion golf..They could move back but we want to stay together."—Mike A.

"It never occurred to me to move up. I'm a rule follower." —Mindy C.

"If I'm out and my wife has given me four hours to hang out and play, I'm going to go out and its much easier to do that from the blues. If I invite guys out as guests who are great guys but not great players, I'll move up...One guy hit a screamer near a guys window...So for him, the member tees take that out and we play them...I don't want to have to explain why the ball went through a dude's window. I'll play with those I'm with. I'll move with them."—Logan H.

"On different courses..I change it up...Par 72s I'll play red tees, especially with other women...With my husband I'll use his white tees."---Leanne S.

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

Golf's Social Constructs Abet Groupthink And Often Improper Tee Selection

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"People who give myself and others that play up a hard time, need to stop it. It just makes for a better game for everybody.. Country club members shouldn't shoot in the 90s. It can't be fun shooting 93-94. It's important that clubs should really suggest that to their players rather than men's golf associations. People should move up so everyone can shoot better scores."—Harry W.

"Maybe some people out there.. retired men ...who should play the ladies tees but will never play it cause it's called ladies tees."—John F.

"I like the option of the junior tees a lot! Being able to choose a tee box that helps you avoid certain features on the hole is a great option and I would search for that." --Carol P.

"The average golfer plays from too long a set of tees. The guy I play with tomorrow is a retired minister who plays from blue tees and only hits 175. He won't reach greens in regulation. I don't have to play from back. Sometimes I love playing a 5,200 yd course. I'd be happy at red tees.. Too many macho people won't do it."—Don V.

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

The Professional/Elite Game Remains a 'Distant' Aspiration



- A minority remain obsessed with and derive great satisfaction from bombing the ball off the tee, but this remains beyond most people's realistic expectations
- Reinforced by strong images of Tour players hitting monster drives

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

The Professional/Elite Game Remains a 'Distant' Aspiration



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"[Playing from the tips] was miserable, Horrible. Never again. One of the worst rounds that either of us have had. When you look at it from back there, you were hitting over junk, every single time, and if you didn't, you were done....You don't think 30 yards is that difficult, but it really was. And its not just about how far back you are, but how the holes set up"—Jonathan P.

"For the most part, there can be a pride factor where people play further back than they should." --Jeff P.

"We are outgrowing the golf courses; technology is allowing us to do that." —David B.

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

For Many, The Frustration Of Increased Yardage/Playing Back Is More About Increased Hazards To Navigate



- Hole length is less overtly intimidating relative to forced carries and introduction of hazards created by the longer distances
- The monotony of having “everything in the bag” for second (and sometimes third) shots
 - Less skilled players are typically chipping onto the green, regardless of hole length
- Net-Net, playing back is a more frustrating, less enjoyable and “unnecessary” experience for all but the most accomplished or traditional players, who welcome the challenge
- Better players note a tendency to overswing to compensate for the perceived added challenge

Detailed Discussion of Major Themes

For Many, The Frustration Of Increased Yardage/Playing Back Is More About Increased Hazards To Navigate

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"In a lot of cases it might have been psychological impact of hazards. The 8th hole has this huge pond and you are way up on this tee box...that I never had to go over, I went over the reeds on the side...and I'm horrible about water..The hazards that I have to navigate around, and be pretty exacting in my shot. The difficulty of hazard adds to it."—Courtney I.

"The par fives definitely became extra difficult, because I'd get in a situation, where a drive isn't long enough, so you have to layup and then I made a bad club selection, where I had to lay up twice, with a creek fronting the green.. It's frustrating to have to lay up twice."—Steven P.

"I found out that reason I moved to greens initially was that I was trying to kill the ball and I got in more trouble and mentally I couldn't adjust...I wanted to try to get to the same spot off the tee. The mind ruins you in golf. I was pressing."—Harry W.

"It puts more pressure on your iron play I think in particular because you're hitting longer irons in which generally means your proximity to the whole is further away so you're relying on your short game--chipping if you missed the green. If you're on the green, [normally] having a 15-25 foot putt, you may now have a 30-55 foot putt... so your lag putting is really tested. —Bill G.

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Observations of Note

Observations of Note

For Most, Pars Should Be Earned, But Not Be Totally Elusive

HOLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	OUT
MAROON	74.2/139	404	185	408	565	427	350	186	384	541
BLACK	72.1/135	385	167	387	555	375	339	170	375	523
WHITE	70.5/130	364	151	349	506	358	320	160	358	509
HANDICAP	15	11	3	5	1	13	17	7	9	
Bob	4	3	6	7	4	5				
PAR	4	3	4	5	4	4	3	4	5	36
GOLD	M 68.0/125 W 71.9/130	332	137	340	495	317	283	145	320	451
GREEN	M 64.8/112 W 69.3/122	302	129	331	405	273	246	122	310	405
TARGET TIME	:14	:25	:39	:56	1:10	1:24	1:35	1:49	2:08	

- Golf is supposed to be hard. That's part of its challenge
 - No participation trophies/Golf's built in equity
 - Distance is part of the challenge, but everyone has their ceiling
- Yet the ability to make par, brings recreational players back
 - Everyone needs the little victories
 - Scoring well and a sense of accomplishment are critical ways to fuel golfer passion and commitment, and that is intrinsically linked to course design and distance, even though many don't organically express it
- Golf is about attainable challenges
 - For Seniors (and some beginners) who can move past the stigma of playing up, forward tees are a necessity to keep the game's challenges attainable
 - Sentiment that mid handicappers should be able to reach GIR if they are playing well

Observations of Note

For Most, Pars Should Be Earned, But Not Be Totally Elusive



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"The game is set up so par is a number and if someone doesn't have the distance, moving up in distance so they have the possibility of achieving par is more enjoyable. I guess for some people if its too challenging it discourages them...that could be bad for the game... Maybe the below average player is left behind. With most courses having five or six tees, you should find your spot. "—AJ S.

"Rules shouldn't be changed just to make it easier or to put everyone on equal footing. I don't want to see that emphasis on effort, rather than achievement, which is being eroded in society. I don't like that whole participation trophy thing. Golf has built in equity that doesn't always exist elsewhere in society."—Elizabeth S.

"Golf should be hard. But I think it is as hard as you want to make it. You can always pick up."—Courtney I.

Observations of Note

For Most, Pars Should Be Earned, But Not Be Totally Elusive



IN THEIR OWN WORDS



“GIR isn’t necessarily something for everyone though it might be exciting to play a round where that happened. It’s part of the allure of coming back. It’s nice to have short par fours and not have to make miraculous shots.”—Steven P.



“500 yd par fours are unreachable as are 450 yard par fours. You have to play the tees that fit your game...Recreational players should be rewarded for good shots. A high handicapper should be rewarded with pars, and if you get better then you get birdies.”—Greg H.



Observations of Note

Golfers In Their Pursuit Of Lower Scores, Typically Do Not Focus On Distance



- Rather, they work on ways to compensate for their lack of/declines in distance

Observations of Note

Golfers In Their Pursuit Of Lower Scores, Typically Do Not Focus On Distance



IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"As I've aged, accuracy has become more important. 10 years ago it was hitting it further. It shifted in mind that getting better in the game was more about how you could place the ball and want to not lose balls. Older means more wisdom rather than just being one who tries to hit it as far as possible."--Travis S.

"Realistically I am not a big hitter, and that took some time to accept that." --Gabriel P.

Observations of Note

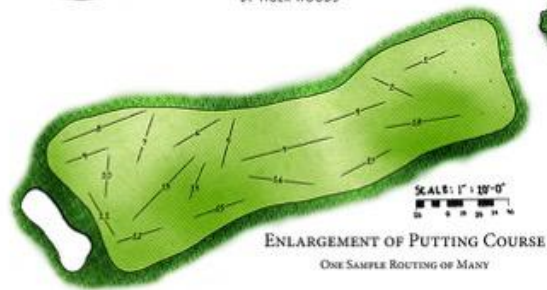
There's A Place For Short Courses—Most Won't Preclude Playing Them

NEW SHORT COURSE

PEBBLE BEACH, CALIFORNIA

SCORECARD

HOLE #	PAR	YARDS
1	3	57
2	3	106
3	3	82
4	3	47
5	3	48
6	3	77
7	3	61
8	3	92
9	3	100
TOTAL	27	670



- Entry Ramp
- Good practice
- Change of pace
- Every course brings its challenges
- But typically 'discounted' as apart from the true experience

Observations of Note

Staggered vs. Linear Tee Boxes



- Courses that stagger their tee boxes rather than take the straight-line/runway approach are credited with positive perceptions including premium quality, variety, enhanced aesthetics and responsiveness to players of varying abilities
- Better players are more likely to embrace moving up when staggered tee boxes bring new challenges into play

Observations of Note

Staggered vs. Linear Tee Boxes



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Having to take it around an extra curve is more challenging than just moving the tee boxes back" -Breann A.



"You could play a different set of tees, it's like playing a different golf course." --David B.



"I like the idea of playing from different starting points to change complexity of the hole." --John O.



"I like that there are more opportunities and variations of the hole." --Mallory C.

Observations of Note

Thoughts On Maximum Length Vary For Those Who Think About This

HOLE		1	2	3	
Black	M: 75.4/141 W: 82.3/150	439	543	472	3
Gold	M: 73.5/136 W: 79.9/145	415	522	454	3
Blue	M: 71.2/131 W: 77.3/139	390	501	419	3
White	M: 68.5/124 W: 74.0/132	362	464	384	3
Men's Handicap		3	7	5	1

- Highly variable by skill level and experience, maximum par four length converges around 380-420yds for the more serious recreational players
- Overall yardage while not something that many focus on, converges around 6,000-6,400 yards for men and 4,800-5,200 for women willing and able to confidently make an assertion
- Particularly among women, there are some courses that are “too long” even from the forward tees

Observations of Note

Thoughts On Maximum Length Vary For Those Who Think About This

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



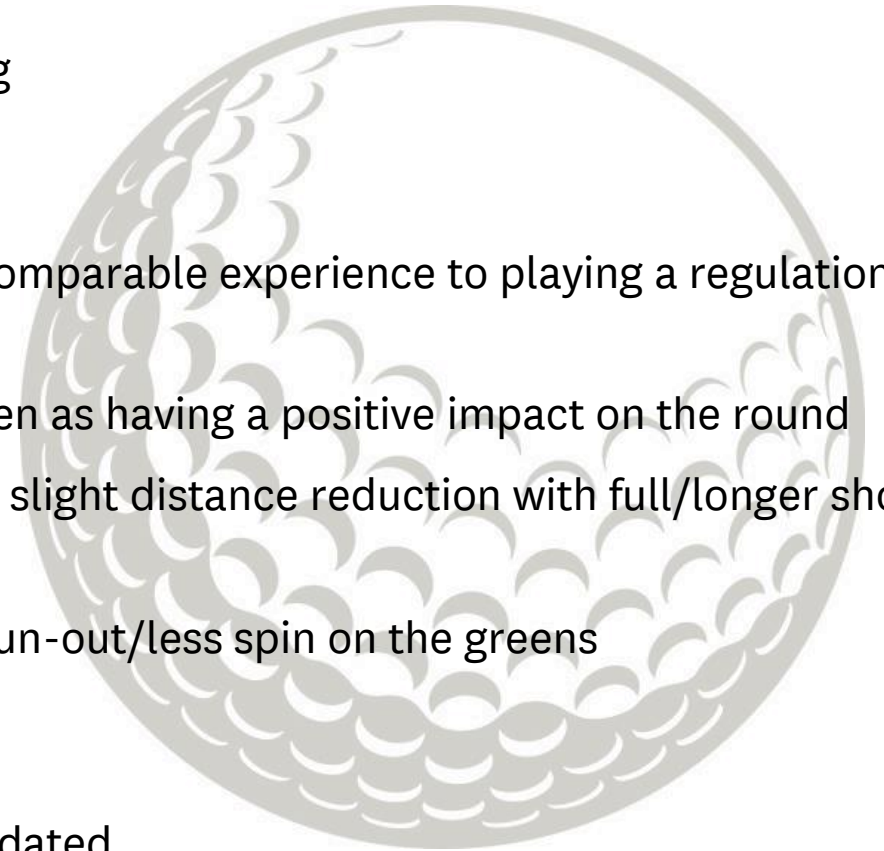
"Some courses that I play with people of my skill level I will not go back to, because they are too long. Men have senior tees... Women have women's tees regardless of how old they are.. Maybe there needs to be senior women's tees. As you get older, you lose distance. I have some friends who quit golf prematurely because it became too hard for them to compete in their flight... Maybe if they had Sr. women's tees you could choose them."—Doris F.

"I think the hardest part for me with long ones is par threes are 210 and 220 and I can't get on in one there."--Dan V

Observations of Note

The Reduced Flight Golf Ball Has Barely Discernable Impact For All But The Longer Hitters

- THEY ALL HAD ADVANCED KNOWLEDGE
- For some, the psychological effect (negative expectations) is inhibiting
 - A difficult “sell” given the stigma of ‘reduced distance’
 - Lack of known branding is also foreboding
- Net impact of forward tees and reduced distance ball is an easier or comparable experience to playing a regulation ball from typical tee box
- Additional thought process and problem-solving nearly universally seen as having a positive impact on the round
- Placebo affect for many, that accuracy improvement accompanies the slight distance reduction with full/longer shots
 - Several would trade reduced distance for greater accuracy
- More saw the ball as ‘heavier’ with dulled sound at impact and more run-out/less spin on the greens
 - Some saw greater spacing between dimples
 - Others noted variations in dimple shape (More square)
- Virtually all would not voluntarily play it, but most could adjust if mandated



Observations of Note

The Reduced Flight Golf Ball Has Barely Discernable Impact For All But The Longer Hitters

IN THEIR OWN WORDS



"These golf balls felt a little more leaden....a little harder. I could still tell when you hit it well, but the feel off the clubface was harder. They sounded a little different."—Courtney I.

"I didn't notice too much difference. Hit more fairways...maybe less spin. Dimple design was different. This didn't spin as much. Hit and rolled forward two feet. Dimple design seemed that the ridges all touch each other and this had larger spaces between the dimples."—John F.

Observations of Note

Which Par Four is More Satisfying—The Short GIR over Water vs. The Scramble on the Unreachable Par Four?



SCENARIO 1:

- Conquering the challenge of a forced carry over water
- Playing the hole as it was designed
- More fun by eliminating the tougher to hit, longer approach shots
- Mastering the hole vs. getting lucky
- Two-putt on a challenging green is seen as a major win



SCENARIO 2:

- Three perfect shots, showcases more skills
- Tougher rated hole equals greater accomplishment
- Getting up and down for par, paired with the longer hole feels more difficult

Observations of Note

Absent Moderator Prompting, Few Respondents Surface “The Distance Debate”

- Those who do, typically consider it irrelevant to the recreational game
 - Seeking every possible advantage to improve their performance
 - Perceive distance increases/course obsolescence as an issue that only impacts a fraction of a percent of elite players
 - More apt to internalize the issue as courses being too long for the average player



Observations of Note

Absent Moderator Prompting, Few Respondents Surface “The Distance Debate”

- However, those most experienced and engaged in the game are the ones most likely to echo Jack Nicklaus’ POV, often overtly paraphrasing him as reflective of their opinion
 - They organically understand and can play back statistics and implications espoused in early Distance Insights releases...though without DI attribution
 - Several lament a perception that new course design is all about combatting increased distance of elite players at the expense of shotmaking and absent doglegs

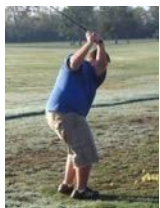


Observations of Note

Absent Moderator Prompting, Few Respondents Surface “The Distance Debate”



IN THEIR OWN WORDS



“Kids today hit the ball way too far, and have taken the fun out of it for them...Not for me. My course is 6,400 and they are never hitting four or five irons. I’m on a greens committee...and one of the things about a short course...Use baseball as an analogy and think of MLB using aluminum bats...That’s what golf has done to these guys...They’d hit 100 home runs and they’ve ruined the difficulty of it. My son who plays five times a year hits driver and 56 degree wedge where I’m hitting driver and 8 iron. It’s all about \$\$\$. I’m on the Jack Nicklaus realm of that.” –Brian D.

“Listen to what Jack Nicklaus says, move forward and have fun. I don’t want to play 7,000 yds...6,400-6500 and we look at that and determine which tees we want to play...They’ve done a good job and hybrid tees are part of it.”—Brian E.

“New courses are all about distance. It’s not that they are all like U.S. Opens with narrow fairways and high rough. Newer courses are built to accommodate the golf ball. The older courses from Tillinghast and Ross force you to navigate the course. Newer courses don’t have doglegs. You can hit it far and people value being able to bomb a driver...which is a big draw. I don’t hit it a mile...but that plays into your ability to score. Old architects make you think through every club vs. a bomb and gouge.” --Casey M.

USGA DISTANCE INSIGHTS 2021

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment

Caveats: A Purely Directional Exercise

- Drafting off of the rigorous sampling approach
 - Representation of a wide range of recreational golfer experiences, demographics and engagement levels
 - Buckets respondents into identifiable archetypes to unpack the variety of awareness levels, perceptions and impacts of distance on golfer experience
 - Allows the research team to assert a framework for future attitudinal and behavioral segmentation



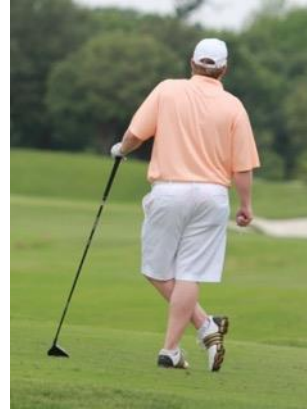
Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



The Young Stick



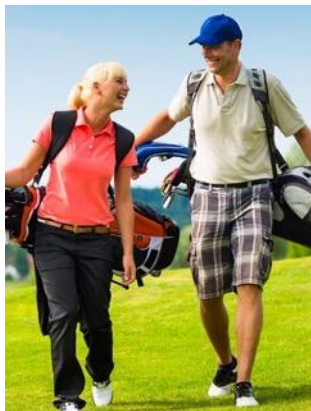
The Country Club
Traditionalist



Public Weekend
Warriors



The Aging Athlete



Dipping Their
Toes In The Water



Good Time
Golf 'Bros'

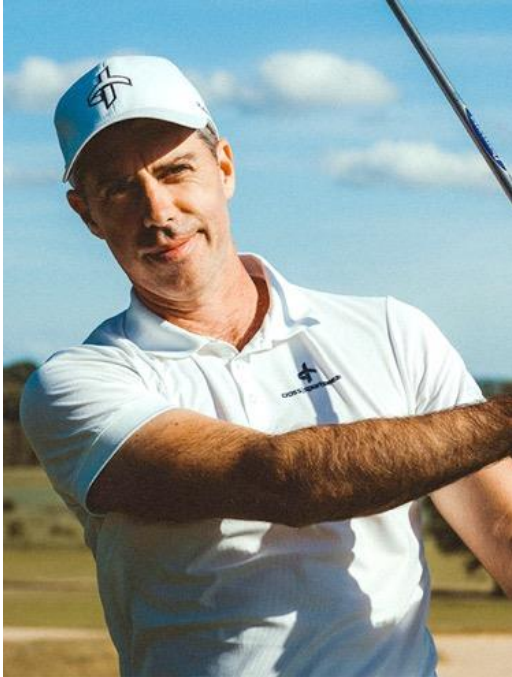


She's All That



The Disinterested
Dabbler

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



The Young Stick

Gender: Male

Facility Type: Private—Dues \$5k+ or Public—Green Fee \$50+

Lifestage: Single or married with children at home

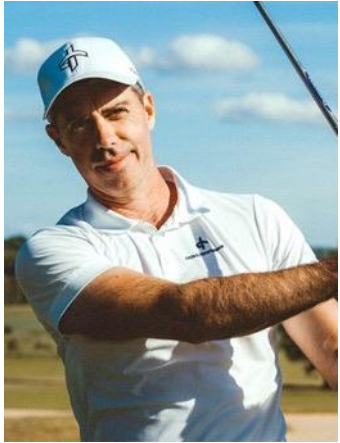
Frequency: Avid

Tenure: 5+ years

Handicap: Single Digit

Engagement Rating: 8-10

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



The Young Stick

Logan played college golf at Okla. State for Mike Holder, but he lapsed for awhile as he built a family and career. It's still his favorite leisure activity, but he plays now more for relaxation and escape than for competition, even though he is still a single digit. He respects the rules and prefers to play the Blue tees (not the tips), but will move forward to be at same tees as his playing partners. He appreciates and can find challenges regardless of distance, and prefers the short par four scenario because he is expertly executing each shot. He seeks the opportunity to score well without making the game excessively hard. He has already played at an elite level and now it is more about just having fun (within the rules) and introducing his son to the game. He is a big believer in how the slope system can help one figure out the appropriate set of tees for their game.

Jonathan is a long hitter from Lake Tahoe...Enjoys hitting it far. Appreciates and welcomes golf's challenge but recognizes that for some players, holes are set up too long so that they can't carry hazards or reach fairways. Gains real actualization from accomplishment and doing things that he sees better players do.

A.J. holds a single digit handicap at a Western Club and loves to mix it up and play from lots of combo tees, and even plays forward often. Likes the variety given that he plays 80+ rounds per year. Sees the game as equally competitive (against par or in a match or tournament) and relaxation. Generally will play as far back as his playing partners will be willing to play but likes to see everyone play from same set, because he highly values the networking and social aspects of the game, which happen at the tee and on the green. Asserts that shorter course length doesn't take away from golf's challenges...He can derive different types of challenges from each set of tees...but totally recognizes that greater distance equals greater difficulty, and places higher value on hitting good shots on a longer set-up

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



The Country Club
Traditionalist

Gender: Male

Facility Type: Private—Dues \$5k+ or Public

Lifestage: Married with no children at home

Frequency: Avid

Tenure: 5+ years

Handicap: 15 or less

Engagement Rating: 8-10

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



The Country Club Traditionalist

Harry is articulate and well versed in the game. He belongs to two private clubs. Clearly and unprompted has issue with the length of golf courses for the average amateur player and feels that everyone should have a chance to hit GIR. He moved up to the green (Sr) tees last year because he hated that he was 30-50 yds behind others in his group.

Thoughtful and competitive, **Jim** is a 72 year old who is much aware of how distance can create unfair situations on a golf course. Like others, his advancing age has led to a recognition that distance is not attainable so the focus is on accuracy. He has a strong aversion to “tricked up” unfair holes, where even with a great drive you have a forced carry that the average player can’t accomplish. He feels that 15 handicappers should have an opportunity to make birdies on most holes unless they really make poor shots.

Brian E. is a 65 year old Akron, OH country club single digit handicap who used to play competitively and subscribes to and cites the Jack Nicklaus philosophy on distance. His dream course is a short course that is lit. Wants to see everyone have opportunities for birdies or pars and loves playing hybrid/combo tees. Generally picks his tee boxes based on the overall length of the golf course being about 6,400 yds. Feels that 450 is about the max that a par four should be for someone like him who now only gets 215-225yds of carry off the tee. Sees the skill and maximum enjoyment coming from the short game.

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



The Country Club Traditionalist

Brian D. An accomplished but aging, country club golfer who has played everywhere and played very well. He is a poster child for the Jack Nicklaus school of thought that the game is being ruined by the young guys hitting it too far and making classic courses obsolete...and makes all of the points about why the golf ball needs to be reigned in. As one that used to be competitive, he sees the emergence of the bombers further amplifying the erosion of his own skills, which forces a shift in the perspective. Golf has become more social because he reluctantly can't be as competitive.

Britton, while still in the prime of his life, and not an elite player, appreciates the traditions and values of golf. He subscribes to the notion that all recreational players should have an opportunity to reach GIR and have opportunities for pars. He can appreciate a short course and its ability to enable him or others to achieve accomplishment and better scores and fuel that addiction to pars that brings people to love the game. He values the Nicklaus design principles that put the onus on accurate approach shots, rather than raw power.

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



Public Weekend
Warriors

Gender: Male

Facility Type: Public—Mix of Green Fees, more apt to be \$50+

Lifestage: Mix of married or single at various lifestages

Frequency: Avid

Tenure: 5+ years

Handicap: 13+ or no handicap/regularly breaks 100

Engagement Rating: 8-10

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



Public Weekend Warriors

Steve is a thoughtful recreational player who doesn't always keep score, though he does keep track of pars, birdies or bogeys. Doesn't really think much about distance...It is what it is, though he'd love to be able to reach greens in regulation. Goes out for nine holes; 2.5 hours with buddies or by himself. He loves the scenery and being outdoors. It's a social experience and distance is not consciously a part of it.

Dennis has been playing for five years and is getting close to shooting in the 80s. He recognizes the impact that distance has on his ability to score, and does exhibit some frustration on longer holes where he acknowledges hitting clubs that he is less able to control or hit with any consistency. His antennae goes up on any par fours longer than 400 yards. He acknowledges the importance of choosing the right tees but tends to always select whichever box is one forward of the tips.

Casey isn't intuitively or organically focused on distance but recognizes the role that it plays along with other design elements. He doesn't know the length he plays without assistance. He would much rather play a shot makers course with dog legs and a mix of short and long holes that make you think your way around the golf course, than a bomb and gouge track. He has a strong appreciation for the short game, and to some extent sees distance as a means to facilitate one's need to master it because it can put you in position to have to execute those shots.

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



Public Weekend Warriors

Don is all about relaxation and enjoyment...and it seems evident that scoring well and sensing accomplishment are also important. He frequently plays forward and likes the variety of personal challenges to play from different tee boxes and be able to use different clubs. He is particularly pleased and confident with his game tee to green. He's enamored with how you can hit great shots and then horrible shots and as a former engineer is always tinkering but has improved with lessons. He strongly feels that many don't play from the right tees and he has no qualms moving back and forth from tee markers over the course of a round. He laments that there is a certain macho thing that inhibits people from selecting the right tee boxes.

Greg never hit the ball far and distance is a hot button for him. He sees a 6,400-6,600 yard course as about the maximum and is bothered by those who play too far back and slow down pace of play. He articulates the POV that decent mid handicappers should be able to reach greens and make pars if they play well...but there's a limit...Birdies are for better players or exceptional execution, and the game needs to be challenging enough so that lesser players aren't playing for pars and birdies. Also articulates how ego gets in the way of people moving forward.

Mike is a frequent public player who isn't particularly accomplished but has had his moments. He doesn't really pay a lot of attention to actual total course yardages and subscribes to the notion of "companion golf" where everyone plays from same tees to increase social interaction. In his ideal course, he wants to separate the most difficult holes, so that people have a chance to rebound from a bad one.

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



The Aging
Athlete

Gender: Male

Facility Type: Public or Golf Association/Private <\$5k

Lifestage: Married

Frequency: Avid

Tenure: 5+ years

Handicap: 15-24 or high 80s/90s

Engagement Rating: 6-8

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



The Aging Athlete

Travis is an ex youth baseball coach who enjoys the balance between golf's competitiveness and social aspects. He loves the personal connection with others and the opportunity to still be an athlete now that he can't play baseball anymore. Interestingly alters playing from tips vs whites based on pace of play...He'll move back if it's slow so he doesn't have to wait ten minutes to hit on every tee. He doesn't want to let go of what he was as an athlete and go over to the other side of decline...That's why, even though he had fun and hit more GIR, playing up, he'll only do it again, if his playing partners, who are older, ask him to. Distance is important, but it doesn't eliminate all else that golf has to offer in terms of camaraderie and sociability.

Fred is still very competitive and considers himself an athlete who still thrives on hitting it long, shunning the senior tees, unless others want to play up and play money games, which he sees as an opportunity to showcase his short game. He subscribes to the work hard and be rewarded philosophy so he doesn't buy in to watering things down. There are always short courses for people who want that or to work on those aspects of your game.

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



The Aging Athlete

John is a 60 year old who works out and practices every day and was a former competitive ski jumper who has now channeled that competitive fire into golf. He practices or plays every day and he can still hit 240-260. He prides himself as an athlete in better shape than the others he plays with. But he has an acute understanding of how distance can inhibit people's ability to score and he has moved up to white tees, seeking 6,000-6,500 yds as ideal length for him. He feels that age and physical condition are good determinant of where people should play from, but also realizes that there are other factors. He knows his own physical limitations, decline in his athleticism and aches and pains and based on how far he hits it, he selects the tee box that he feels is the fair and appropriate challenge for him.

Harry is a 75 year old who played competitively in his younger years. He is a strong advocate for establishing tees not by color but for indicating which tees you should play based on your handicap. He believes that too many golfers play from the wrong types of tees and 'try to be heroes,' while lamenting the fact that he has lost 70 yards off the tee from the prime of his career and now can't reach greens and play the holes the way that they were designed to test a skilled player.

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



Dipping Their Toes
In The Water

Gender: Male or female

Facility Type: Public or Golf Association

Lifestage: Married or partnered

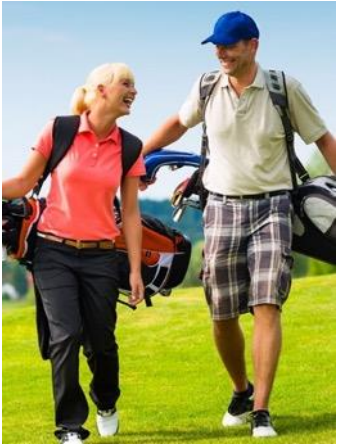
Frequency: Casual to Core

Tenure: <5 years

Handicap: Does not break 100

Engagement Rating: 4-7

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



Dipping Their Toes In The Water

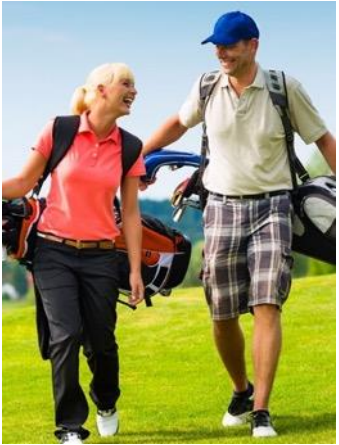
Troy is a young police officer, new to the game, playing with buddies who take him out and have called the shots regarding course and tee selection. That said, he does feel that people should have a chance to reach GIR about 80% of the time. Though he admits that he gets more enjoyment from playing the hole as it was designed to be played. Currently golf is more about being in a remote, relaxing environment with friends.

Courtney is a relative newbie, whose boyfriend has introduced her to the game. She loves and appreciates the aesthetics and physical beauty of the sport, sees women as second class citizens in golf but isn't necessarily angry about it. She wishes that she could reach or be near the greens more, and wasn't confined to one tee set (Red). She rationalizes that because golf isn't top of the activity list, she can still have fun by picking up when she needs to and enjoy the social aspects and being outdoors.

Andi pays a monthly membership to a public short course (Executive course) and plays from the forward most tees. She feels that regulation courses are too long. Interestingly her most memorable hole involved her taking more club than usual on a par three and she put it inches from the cup. She often doesn't keep score and uses golf to be less competitive, except with herself, which is not how she usually is with sports

Mindy is a busy business professional who has taken up the game to spend time with her husband and play in leagues. She is personally competitive but with muted expectations as a beginner at golf. While distance does not come up organically with primacy among the aspects of the game that bring enjoyment or detract from it, she is irked by the "ladies tee" designation, and echoed earlier respondents who spoke to the desire for tees based on skill level or age, rather than gender. She does believe that courses are too long for beginners like her.

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



Dipping Their Toes In The Water

James is a lapsed player coming back. He also doesn't have a good understanding of specific distances but likes to be challenged by the prospects of bettering benchmarks. Par and birdies are important. He aspires to be a better golfer again. He plays tees that will challenge him and goes along with the consensus of the guys he is playing with.

Cherri has begun playing in womens' groups and really doesn't seem to pay a lot of attention to distance or know yardages on the scorecard. She defaults to the forward most tees and doesn't reach the greens in regulation, but doesn't seem to directly associate this with her own struggles to play as well as she would like. She doesn't necessarily associate that with distance but moreso with an erratic short game, weather and other course conditions, such as hazards.

Arden is a beginner who always was intrigued by the game and is now living with a boyfriend who plays. She is enjoying the aesthetics and the challenge, and while early in the journey envisions a day when making a par or two is part of her round. She is not phased by playing red tees and while not experienced enough to really grasp the impact of distance, she aspires to get good enough to play on her own without someone guiding her. She acknowledges a certain frustration with not being able to be near the green in regulation. She appreciates that there is a forward tee for her to play from, while her boyfriend can play two tees back

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



Good Time
Golf 'Bros'

Gender: Male

Facility Type: Public <\$50

Lifestage: Single or newly married

Frequency: Casual to Core

Tenure: Mix

Handicap: Typically does not break 90

Engagement Rating: 6-8

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



Good Time Golf ‘Bros’

Steven is a firefighter who actually moved forward with his buddies after watching a YouTube video that the Lieutenant had seen, that recommended tee boxes based on what you shoot. He highly values course conditioning and aesthetics, and desires a more “Top Golf” like clubhouse to allow buddies to hang out and eat drink and keep up the friendly competition after the round. He wishes that he could reach more greens in regulation and seeks “attainable challenges”...a balance between too hard and too easy...providing those little victories and shots that bring you back.

Byron used to play big money games but has changed his perspective, now referencing it as “four hours of Bloodies”. He feels that golf is hard for a lot of people, but if you just focus on fun and the social aspects, it doesn’t matter how long the course is. He thinks its important that everyone has a chance to make birdies and recognizes that frustration makes people quit...That’s part of why he just likes to yuk it up out there.. As if others are taking it too seriously like he used to.

Andrew enjoys the satisfaction of hitting big drives, impressing friends and trying to reach par fives in two. He feels that being able to reach GIR is something that shouldn’t be accessible to all, but earned through practice and good execution. He appreciates the risk/reward balance that golf provides. He doesn’t see the downside to a longer course, because of its challenge and that it allows people to be out there longer, enjoying nature and friends.

A “Good ‘ol Georgia boy” now living in Florida and playing golf with his buddies for money and good times, **Kevin** sees golf as something that should be challenging and distance is a part of that. He likes to hit it far and that gives him a greater sense of accomplishment....But he is not acutely aware of actual distances or different types of tee boxes. He prefers the blues and sees the challenge and frustration as part of what makes the game fun.

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



She's All That

Gender: Female

Facility Type: Private—dues \$5k+ or Public

Lifestage: Married no children at home

Frequency: Avid

Tenure: 5+ years

Handicap: 16-28

Engagement Rating: 8-10

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



She's All That

A recently retired flight attendant, **Didi** has broken 90 at her club, and takes the game seriously...She has taken and advocates lessons, and has gotten comfortable with the 5,200 yd distance from the women's (front most) tees at her club. She understands that she hits her drives 160 and wants to be in a position to reach greens in regulation....Anything over 6,000 yds is pushing it for her. Yet, she also finds par threes under 100 yds to be "silly." Distance, per se, is less impactful than tee positions where a forced carry is unfair or unachievable for her. Hazards are an important part of the game and add to its aesthetic beauty, which drives enjoyment, as long as they are fairly placed and navigable. Visualizing where to place shots is critical, and she is frustrated by blind tee shots. Tee placement and equity in what women's and men's tees look like (size and condition) are important. Concludes that many older courses, have not been designed with women in mind. The tee boxes are afterthoughts and that's a source of consternation.

Doris is a skilled private club member who runs tournaments and volunteers for The First Tee in her retirement and is passionate about the game. While she is self defined as very competitive, she accepts the red ladies tees as where she must play from. She spoke to a desire for senior women's tees as a means with which to keep the game enjoyable for many older golfers that get frustrated once the courses become too long. She asserts that distance is an important part of golf's challenge...Yet there is a ceiling for almost everyone!

LeAnne re-discovered golf about a year ago through a league, and has found it to be a great combination of escape and personal challenge. She falls firmly into the "golf should be challenging and you should strive to get better" camp, but also clearly articulates frustration driven by not being able to reach more than half of the holes she plays.

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



Missy is a 50-something country club golfer who got totally hooked during the pandemic when her job was on hiatus and she was able to improve which has fueled a desire to continue playing at a high frequency. She became active with two different women's groups and leagues and it has been a huge social and networking driver. She plays from three different sets of tees based on who she is playing with, but avoids the "Orange" tees which are "for juniors or 85 year old women." The poster child for the social golfer, she is all about camaraderie and relationships. She has no sense of overall course yardages but realizes that she has her limitations and wants to see courses playable and reachable for all skill levels. She has avoided some of the tougher, more well known bucket list courses that she travels to with clients, because they are "too long and thus too difficult." She doesn't like forced carries over water, but places a premium on course aesthetics.

She's All That

Elizabeth still plays the same tee boxes as the men in her life and believes in having to work hard to achieve things; which is why distance doesn't bother her, yet she does feel that courses are too long for the average person. She loves the elegance and serenity of the game and the golf course and its slower and less intense deliberate pace.

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



The
Disinterested
Dabbler

Gender: Male or female

Facility Type: Public <\$50

Lifestage: Mixed

Frequency: Casual

Tenure: <5 years

Handicap: None. Doesn't break 100 or keep score

Engagement Rating: 3-5

Golfer Archetypes and How Distance Impacts Their Enjoyment



The Disinterested Dabbler

A real “lunch pail type” **Paul** is a frustrated hacker who doesn’t play a lot and doesn’t hit the ball far, yet insists on playing blue tees because there’s no real difference he feels between them and the whites just 10 yards further up on most holes of the inexpensive muni he plays, claiming everyone always plays the blues, he would rib someone who moved up.

Vijay is a mostly casual player who plays occasionally for fun and doesn’t really engage with the game at any type of sophisticated level. He struggles some with golf terminology and doesn’t really think much about or consider the impact of distance...though he has a quite different perspective in that the longer a hole is, the less stress he has to feel about hitting a precise approach....le he’d rather play a long hole because it gives him more time to work on hitting it well without the pressure of getting it close. The game is about mindfulness and breaking away from pressure, so while he recognizes that it can be challenging, he doesn’t approach it from that perspective. He calls it a game of liberation and a stress buster.

Anne is a 20-something beginner who doesn’t own clubs, has reluctantly gone along with others and only plays when others take her. She seems somewhat negatively disposed to the game and its stereotypes as a sport for old white businessmen. She doesn’t keep score and isn’t particularly motivated to play more or improve as she has become more enamored with other sports and activities, particularly disc golf. She wants an activity that takes less time and that she is better at...more instant gratification. Interestingly she typically plays from the set of tees that everyone else plays from and feels that the ladies tees is akin to cheating or providing an unfair advantage.

USGA DISTANCE INSIGHTS 2021

Implications and Some Final Considerations

Implications and Some Final Considerations

Considerations for Course Design and Set-up: Variety is the spice of life



- Emphasize new challenges on every hole that make distance even less important.
- De-emphasize or rebrand traditional —color and age/gender based tee box naming conventions
- Make it easy for players to customize their round by varying distance
- Communicate that the course was designed with each tee box creating a new course with challenges at every distance for each player, regardless of skill level
 - Utilize course web-site and booking sites
 - Create strong visual images that showcase each hole from each tee
 - Consider communications immediately after booking a tee time that provide tips for playing:
 - a single round,
 - multiple rounds,
 - the course for the first time
 - returning to the course after a hiatus
 - Find opportunities for staff to assist less skilled, newer golfers
- Emphasize the mental challenge associated with varying tees

Implications and Some Final Considerations

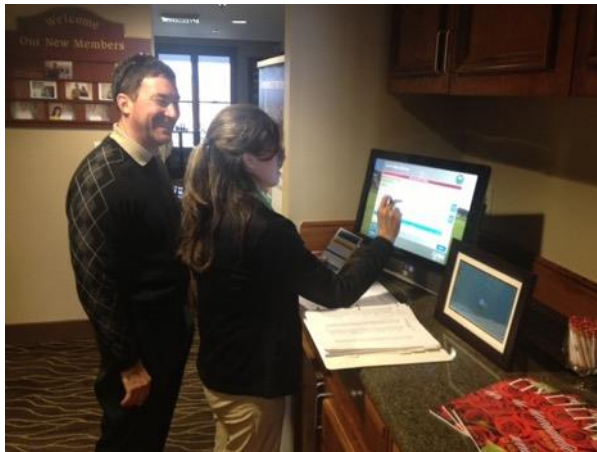
An Idea: Pre-Round Launch Monitors as a Pathway to “Smart Tee Selection Options”



Enamored amidst a trend towards advanced analytics and technology aided decision making

- Shown in other research to legitimize and provide quantitative rationale to equipment decisions
- Stand alone fun as gamification element
- Embraced and accepted in the phase three on-course observational phase

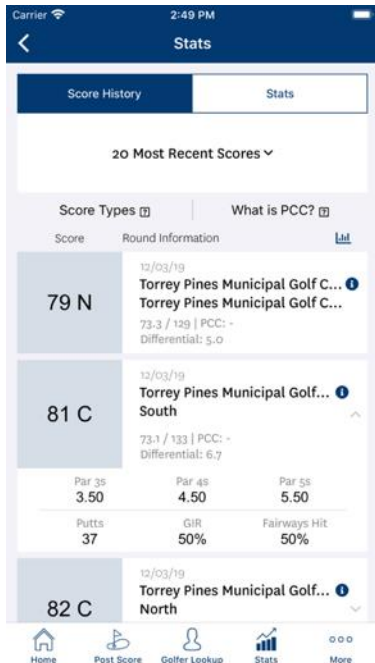
Coupled with key golfer attributes and desires could quickly generate “fact based” tee box recommendations through a “typing tool” exercise and algorithm factoring:



- Golfer age and gender
- Average Score or HCP
- Course specific variables (Slope rating)
- Launch Monitor Provided Swing Speed/Smash Factor
- Golfer preference for “today’s round” —Examples:
 - A relaxing and non competitive experience
 - A less rigorous experience that still provides for a variety of shots
 - A typical and fair challenge to achieve average scores
 - A more difficult test
 - A championship level experience

Implications and Some Final Considerations

An Idea: Pre-Round Launch Monitors as a Pathway to “Smart Tee Selection Options”



The screenshot shows a mobile app interface for golf scores. At the top, it says 'Carrier' and '2:49 PM'. Below that is a 'Stats' header. The main content area is titled '20 Most Recent Scores' and lists three scores: 79 N, 81 C, and 82 C. Each score entry includes the date '12/03/19', the course name 'Torrey Pines Municipal Golf C...', and the hole number. Below the scores, there is a table with columns for 'Score', 'Round Information', and 'Stats'. The table shows the following data:

Score	Round Information	Stats
79 N	12/03/19 Torrey Pines Municipal Golf C... 73.3 / 129 PCC: - Differential: 5.0	
81 C	12/03/19 Torrey Pines Municipal Golf... South 73.1 / 133 PCC: - Differential: 6.7	
82 C	12/03/19 Torrey Pines Municipal Golf... North	

At the bottom of the screen, there is a navigation bar with icons for Home, Post Score, Golfer Lookup, Stats, and More.

Output—A Set of considerations to achieve each of the above experiences

- Inclusive of a predictive mechanism or target scores for each, that further frame the overall experience (Here's the range of scores you are expected to shoot from each of multiple tee box options)
- Potential element that identifies “at risk” ratings for potential lost golf balls with each option



Potential Benefits—‘Pick your own fun’:

- Removes the limiting and often negative semantics of gender, tee box color or age/experience level tee box naming conventions
- Offers choice of experience rather than dictates recommendations and leaves the customer “in control”
- Sets realistic expectations and a level of gamification beyond the concept of “par”
- Optional and recreational, only so as not to water down the traditional game, and leave that experience intact, for all who desire it

Implications and Some Final Considerations

Quantifying Golfer Needs and Attitudes Regarding Distance and the On-Course Experience

WHAT IS THE POPULATION INCIDENCE OF THE ARCHETYPES?

Attitudinal and behavioral segmentation

- Validates and projects the magnitude of these still directional findings
- Refines the archetypes where needed
- Ties each segment to specific demographics and behavioral profile elements
- Affords opportunity to test resonance of various messages and potential actions

