

# A 'living laboratory' for growing golf

The Longleaf Tee Initiative was borne from a redesign project completed by Bill Bergin, ASGCA, at the Longleaf Golf & Family Club in Pinehurst, North Carolina. *By Design* finds out more.

In 1987, Dan Maples, ASGCA Past President, took 170 acres of North Carolina land and designed and developed a golf facility that included a clubhouse, driving range, tennis courts and more. Longleaf Golf & Country Club held its grand opening in November 1998.

By 2015, U.S. Kids Golf Foundation (USKGF)—maker of golf equipment for kids—was looking for what their president Dan Van Horn describes as “a living laboratory for growing kids and family golf in a club environment, implementing best practices in a





real-life situation.” They found this laboratory at Longleaf, buying the property and working with Bill Bergin, ASGCA, (read our interview with him on page 12) to bring their vision to reality. They renamed the facility Longleaf Golf & Family Club.

A key feature of the redesign was the conversion of the club’s traditional four tee pads per hole to a new system developed by USKGF.

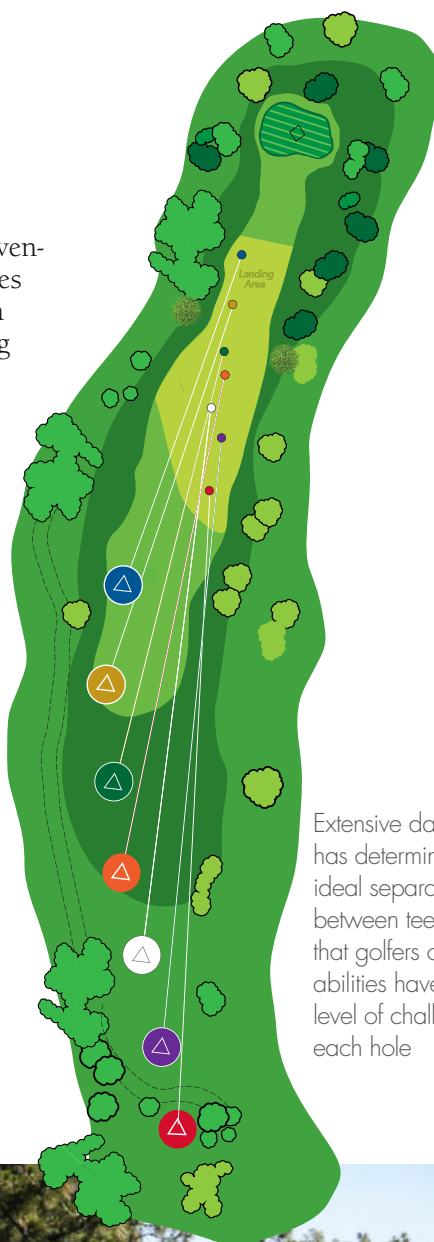
Following extensive data analysis, it was determined that on any given course there would ideally be a total of 600 yards of separation over a typical 18-hole layout between each tee marker option. Beginning with 3,200 yards from the forward tees, most golf courses can be fit with six, seven or even eight yardage options to choose from. The gap between markers on each hole is about 30 yards, but that decreases on par threes and increases on par fives.

With a broader range of tee locations, every golfer, regardless of skill, can play at a good pace, shoot lower scores, and have more fun.

At Longleaf, they settled on a seven-tee system, following the principles set out above but also factoring in the course’s topography, choosing locations that facilitated ease of construction.

Forty tee pads were constructed, mostly related to size or conditioning rather than location. 29 tees were cut into existing fairways, of which four had to be shaped and a few more may be modestly levelled in future. Because of the increased number of tees, size-per-tee could be reduced, and many existing tees could be reduced by simply adjusting mowing lines.

The back tees and more heavily-used middle tees may hold more than one set of markers each, and are respectively about 800 sq. ft. and between 900-1,200 sq. ft. each. The forward two-to-three sets of tees are smaller, approximately 400 sq. ft. each.



Extensive data analysis has determined the ideal separation between tees to ensure that golfers of varying abilities have a similar level of challenge on each hole



Photos: Longleaf Golf & Family Club



With the tees in place, the next challenge for Longleaf was to communicate the system effectively to golfers. A crucial part of this is clear signage. “The charts and illustrations elevate this over other tee initiatives. From the pro shop and range to the first tee and scorecard, it is all packaged in a way that encourages more players to play from the correct tees,” says Bergin. On the practice range, there is a guide for golfers that shows which tees they should use, which is determined by the distance they hit their drives.


“The beauty of the Longleaf Tee System is that you don’t lose the integrity of the design,” says Jeff Cowell, General Manager of Longleaf Golf & Family Club. “It’s not just an


From the pro shop and range to the first tee and scorecard, it is all packaged in a way that encourages more players to play from the correct tees


arbitrary layout of the tees to make a hole shorter. So most importantly, the players still feel a sense of great accomplishment and fun as they play. Since Bill’s work here at Longleaf, our total rounds are up nearly 20 percent over a year ago and I’m hearing from a lot of happy members and guests.”

“This tee system has given me a completely different confidence about playing,” says Longleaf Golf & Family Club member Emily Simeon. “I can go out and play with many people who are much better golfers than I am—and I can compete.” ●

A guide on the practice range shows golfers which tees they should use, determined by the distance they hit their drives


**LONGLEAF**  
 Golf & Family Club


**U.S. Kids Golf**  
 ACADEMY

1.5 Play our blended tees to create a new experience each visit.  
 Use the arrows to select the correct tee during the round. 

HOLE		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	OUT	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	IN	TOTAL
BLUE 1	1.5	228	156	76	90	300	83	185	265	177	1560	174	83	212	223	280	187	251	76	195	1681	3241
GOLD 2	2.5	257	190	102	97	326	95	220	296	203	1786	216	96	242	260	312	223	282	87	215	1933	3719
GREEN 3	3.5	283	260	135	118	369	120	240	343	220	2088	247	107	275	298	391	247	325	103	239	2232	4320
ORANGE 4	4.5	317	290	153	143	390	132	269	388	244	2326	287	139	300	339	420	291	377	135	270	2549	4875
WHITE 5	5.5	342	322	171	153	400	138	301	448	280	2555	304	145	328	377	451	325	421	169	304	2824	5379
PURPLE 6	6.5	381	363	187	177	483	166	340	500	310	2907	352	184	360	387	483	353	464	200	342	3125	6032
RED 7		409	404	201	185	534	177	370	532	335	3147	392	208	388	423	525	391	507	233	388	3455	6602
PAR		4	4	3	3	5	3	4	5	4	35	4	3	4	4	5	4	5	3	4	36	71
HANDICAP		11	1	7	15	13	9	3	5	17		8	10	14	2	6	16	18	12	4		HCP NET
																</						



Photos: Longleaf Golf & Family Club