



From the driving range tee, golfers cannot tell the difference between "fake bunkers" and real ones.



A thoroughly compacted sand will support traffic from ball retrieval and mowing equipment.

# DECEPTIVE DEFINITION

*A little make-believe can go a long way.*

by DAVID A. OATIS

**T**HE GAME OF GOLF has never before enjoyed its current level of popularity, and fortunately for all of us, this popularity continues to grow. New courses are being built and the number of rounds played on existing golf courses continues to increase each year. Practice facilities also have enjoyed an increase in popularity, and many of the courses I have visited in the past few years have or are getting ready to implement practice facility improvement programs. Tee expansion is most common, but building short-game practice areas or creating tall berms to contain golf balls and provide better safety and separation also are popular.

There also is an increasing trend to add target greens to driving ranges. This is not a new idea, but the target greens of today are a far cry from the nondescript, shapeless mounds we have all seen. The greens are becoming larger and more elaborate, and they are now frequently embellished with bunkering. In a few instances, I have observed real bunkers installed in ranges, but the results are rarely satisfactory. Balls must be retrieved manually from real bunkers, and this can be quite hazardous if performed when the driving range is open.

The labor to maintain *real* bunkers also is substantial, and time is an ex-

tremely precious commodity, especially when it comes to performing maintenance procedures on a heavily played driving range. The result is that *real* bunkers cannot be maintained properly when they are built on driving ranges, and they usually look messy and unkempt. Using real bunkers to set off target greens is impractical at best.

While I am not sure who created the first *fake* bunker, Hugh Kirkpatrick, golf course superintendent at Westmount Golf and C.C. in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, has produced the best *fake* bunkers I have observed. They do a fine job of improving definition while having little impact on the maintenance budget.

*Fake bunkers* must be designed from the tee, and this can be done most efficiently with hand-held radios and either paint or some type of flexible material to outline their shape. Superintendent Kirkpatrick used turf paint, but irrigation hose, reflective tape, or rope all could work well. Once the shapes of the bunkers are outlined, they can be adjusted based on their appearance from the tee. The hand-held radios can save a lot of running.

After the design was finalized, Superintendent Kirkpatrick removed a thick layer (1" - 2") of sod and filled the cavity with a hard-packing limestone

sand. Mr. Kirkpatrick then rolled and compacted the sand to complete the project. An added bonus is that the sod removed from the bunkers can be used elsewhere on the course. The *fake bunkers* look like real ones from the tee, yet are firm enough to easily support mechanical ball retrieval equipment. They do not require raking.

Definition is an important component of the game, clearly adding to its aesthetic appeal. Installing *fake* bunkers on your driving range is a wonderfully simple idea that can enhance the appearance of target greens and add to the enjoyment and value of practice. After all, there is nothing so intimidating as a starkly defined hazard staring you in the face as you prepare to hit a golf shot. Definition is an important component of the game, clearly adding to its aesthetic appeal. Adding *fake bunkers* to your driving range is a deceptive means of improving definition, and the additional feature can be installed without a significant impact on the budget.

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