

# Limited Flight Might Be Your Answer

The use of limited-flight golf balls has proven to be the answer for safety issues at many courses.

BY LARRY GILHULY

**H**ow many times have you gone to the practice facility at your golf course or the local driving range and heard or observed the male-testosterone-induced comment, “I’m taking this baby over the fence”? Depending on the length and width of the facility, this may or may not be possible; however, the lack of intelligent thought given to this attempt produces one of the most dangerous portions of any golf course — the back end or side of a driving range. Although the problem does not generally exist at recently built golf courses, it is a very common problem at golf courses that were constructed during the early 1900s through the 1960s. In most cases, the answer has been a restriction on woods and long irons, the addition of trees, and, finally, the installation of fences; however, during the past few years the improvement of limited-flight golf balls has provided the answer at many golf courses. Are limited-flight golf balls a reasonable option at your practice facility? Read on with an open mind and you may find that they are the perfect answer for reducing your safety concerns.

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Many golf courses built in the 1960s and earlier did not have available acreage for a practice facility. In addition, most of the golf courses built during the first part of the 20th century provided space for warm-up, but full-scale practicing was simply not normal. For this reason, practice tees and especially the landing areas were small. As golf has changed

over the years, practicing your game has become normal; thus, the small landing areas of the past needed to be expanded. Since most were locked in by the golf course, the only answer has been limiting the length of the shots, the addition of trees, and, ultimately, high posts and nets that are an eyesore. Enter the concept of limited-flight balls.

## HERE IS THE SOLUTION!

Limited-flight golf balls have been around for a while, but recent improvements have made them a very viable option for many golf courses facing safety concerns that require ever-higher fencing. While the use of *very* limited-flight balls (Cayman) should only be considered as a last resort, many manufacturers supply lower-compression golf balls that fly 20-25% less when struck with long irons and woods. In several cases, these same balls perform exactly the same as a regular ball up to a 6-7 iron, then the reduced distance becomes noticeable. So why haven’t more practice facilities become equipped with this logical way to reduce safety concerns? The answer generally lies in the mind of the single-digit player who complains that limited-flight balls are not a “true” practice experience.

## TRY THIS TEST

If you have a safety situation at the practice facility at your golf course and the above comment is made regarding limited-flight balls, ask the following question to those who scoff at these balls: “What kind of ball do you play on the course?” If the answer is different

from the type of ball currently used for practice (usually very hard and long balls), the next questions should be, “How can you have a ‘true’ practice experience with a hard ball that is completely different from the ball you play on the course? And why would you place your players in jeopardy of a serious injury when the simple answer is a ball that greatly reduces the odds?”

## HAS IT WORKED?

Thus far, more than 25 golf courses visited in the Northwest Region use some form of limited-flight ball. From British Columbia to Hawaii, all have reported an acceptance level of these balls by the vast majority of players, and no golf course has gone back to the “traditional” long and hard ball. Most important, the number of golf balls leaving these facilities has been reduced dramatically, and the negatives of cost and the visual impact of posts and nets have been eliminated. The use of limited-flight balls has caught on at many private, public, and resort golf courses that simply do not have room or do not wish to install high fences. Another positive is that the incidence of ball theft from the practice facility seems to drop significantly when limited-flight balls are used. After all, who in their right mind would want to play with a ball that won’t go as far as possible with a driver? Certainly not those who like to swing for the fences!

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