

Forward tees good for all players, game

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By [Bob Buttitta](#)

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A few weeks ago I played in the annual Ryan O'Neil Memorial golf tournament at Las Posas Country Club. With its membership aging, Las Posas has introduced a new set of forward tees as part of the PGA of America's Tee It Forward movement.

Like most charity golf events, it featured a scramble format, with each foursome being required to use at least one drive from each player in the group.

Normally that rule stresses me out because I only average about 180 yards off the tee. Having to play my tee shot usually means my group is giving up any chance of reaching a green in regulation and ends up scrambling just to make par.



Pat Patten (left) and Charlie Burns (middle), Las Posas Country Club president, and Tony Danluck (right) play golf early in the morning at Las Posas Country Club. With its membership aging, Las Posas has introduced a new set of forward tees as part of the PGA of America's Tee It Forward movement. Photo by Juan Carlo, Ventura County Star

But this time around, I didn't have that stress. My group used six of my drives during the round, not because we had to but because my drive was the longest in the group.

That happened because me and my cart partner Charlie Burns, who is the president at Las Posas, played from the club's new forward tees.

The club created the new tees about six weeks ago in response to USGA/PGA of America's Tee It Forward campaign. Tee It Forward encourages all golfers to play the course at a length that is aligned with their average driving distance. Golfers can speed up play by utilizing tees that provide the greatest playability and enjoyment.



Las Posas Country Club president Charlie Burns hits from the forward tees at Las Posas Country Club. With its membership aging, Las Posas has introduced a new set of forward tees as part of the PGA of America's Tee It Forward movement. Photo by Juan Carlo, Ventura County Star

Las Posas also made the move to add these tees as a way of better serving the membership and keeping the facility more viable for as many members as possible.

Like many country clubs, Las Posas has an aging membership with 23 members over of 80, including the 87-year-old Burns.

For the majority of the club's older members, and even many of its younger members, even the white tees make it impossible to play the course as it was designed. When most golfers can't reach the majority of the greens in regulation, they get frustrated and many stop playing.

The new forward tees take the total yardage from 6,205 yards (the white tees) to 5,056.

“On every hole now I have a chance to be on in regulation,” said Burns, who last week shot an 81, six strokes lower than his age.



Tony Danluck tees off on the forward tees at Las Posas Country Club. With its membership aging, Las Posas has introduced a new set of forward tees as part of the PGA of America’s Tee It Forward movement. Photo by Juan Carlo, Ventura County Star

There are probably golfers who believe the forward tees give some an unfair advantage, but that’s simply not true. All they do is even the playing field and my experience at the O’Neil event is proof of that.

While my group used six of my drives, all it did was put us in position to score, just like when we used the drives of our two longer-hitting teammates.

We still needed to hit our approach shot on the green and we still had to make putts. While we finished with a respectable score of 9 under, we didn’t win or even finish in the money.

We did play faster than any group in the field and because Charlie and I were able to contribute more drives and other shots as well, we all enjoyed the round.

Don Meyers, general manager at Las Posas, said he’s received nothing but positive comments from members who have used the tees and those who have played with those members.



Las Posas Country Club president Charlie Burns (right) hits from the forward tees as Tony Danluck (left) looks on. With its membership aging, Las Posas has introduced a new set of forward tees as part of the PGA of America's Tee It Forward movement. Photo by Juan Carlo, Ventura County Star

"I really feel these new tees are going to prolong our members ability to continue playing golf and enjoying the course," Meyers said. "That's because they are not frustrated by not being able to play the course as it was meant to be played,

"I feel it's going to be a selling point for drawing new members as well, especially families who may have younger kids.

"These tees can help expose juniors to the game in a way where it's not too hard and they can have more success."

Golf legend Jack Nicklaus is a huge advocate of clubs and public courses adopting the Tee It Forward philosophy.

"All of us deeply involved in the game constantly encourage golfers of all skill levels to play the proper tees, but too often golfers want to bite off as much of the golf course as they can," Nicklaus said. "What ends up suffering is their scorecard and their overall enjoyment. This program should help stimulate people to play the proper tees and maximize the golf experience."

Getting golfers to drop their egos and play the right tees won't be easy. But for the good of the game and its growth, more clubs and courses need to follow Las Posas lead and promote the idea of teeing it forward.

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