

USGA, PGA: Golfers are playing wrong tees

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A new initiative from golf's leading organizations may bump up demand for more courses that play at less than 6,000 yards.

The U.S. Golf Association and PGA of America announced today a formal plan to encourage golfers to play from shorter tees. The national initiative, called Tee it Forward, will be put in play at golf facilities across the country from July 5-17.

The idea, **originally proposed by long-time equipment designer and executive Barney Adams**, who saw that many amateur golfers were not playing the same relative course as tour players were. He suggested an average golfer playing a 6,700-yard course would be the equivalent of a tour player playing an 8,100-yard course.

A chart that accompanied the announcement suggests that unless a golfer averages 225 yards off the tee, he or she should not play a course longer than 6,000 yards.

Driver Distance	Recommended 18-Hole Yardages	PGA Tour Professional
3007,150-7,400		7,600-7,900
2756,700-6,900		
2506,200-6,400		
2255,800 -6,000		
2005,200-5,400		
1754,400-4,600		
1503,500-3,700		
1252,800-3,000		
1002,100-2,300		

Simply put, Tee it Forward can make golf much more fun for millions of people," said PGA of America President Allen Wronowski. "We believe that by moving up to another set of tees, golfers will experience an exciting, new approach to the game that will produce more enjoyment and elevate their desire to come back and play even more golf."

The theory is that from shorter tees average golfers would hit clubs that tour pros hit into greens, more 6- and 7-iron instead of hybrids and fairway woods.

"The passion that golfers have for our game has the potential to be enhanced by the Tee it Forward initiative," said Jim Hyler, president of the United States Golf Association. "This is an innovation that we think will appeal to golfers of all skill levels because it gives them a new challenge that better aligns with their abilities. We hope that Tee it Forward will be embraced by players and golf facilities across the country."

The initiative has not drawn any specific comments from the equipment manufacturing community. While there is no definitive resource for assessing how far the average golfer hits his driver, research published by Golf Digest in 2003 suggested that average golfer driving distance was around 205 yards, including all ranges of handicaps. Meanwhile, a 2010 Golf Digest test conducted by AboutGolf, the leading golf simulator research company, showed that in a group of 50 average male golfers with handicaps ranging from 0 to 18, more than a third of the tee shots traveled less than 225 yards, and the average for the entire group was just a shade under 230 yards. Of the group, only six players averaged a driving distance that would allow them to qualify under Tee it Forward guidelines to play a 6,700-yard golf course, and three of them were current club professionals.

One other interesting thought: According to current PGA Tour statistics, there are 15 players who average less than 275 yards off the tee, and therefore, based on the Tee it Forward chart, do not hit it far enough to play a course longer than 6,900 yards. There are only four tournaments on the PGA Tour where the primary or host venue is less than 6,900 yards.

Among those who might be considered too short to play a typical PGA Tour course (or presumably should be asking to play a shorter length course): Kevin Na, Zach Johnson, Jerry Kelly, Scott Verplank, Brian Gay, Rocco Mediate and Paul Goydos. Of course, combined that group has won 26 times and earned more than \$123 million in prize money.

As for the LPGA Tour, the current average driving distance is 250 yards. So based on the chart, LPGA course lengths should not exceed 6,400 yards. So far this year, the LPGA has not played a tournament on a course that was shorter than 6,400 yards.