

# WARMED-UP BUT NOT WORN-OUT

by PATRICK J. GROSS

Agronomist, Western Region, USGA Green Section



*Creating a warm-up area close to the first tee will allow golfers to warm up without causing damage to the turf. To ensure safety, adequate space must be provided between the warm-up stations so golfers can swing freely without the fear of hitting each other.*

**A**THLETIC TRAINERS and sports medicine professionals agree that a proper warm-up before physical exercise is essential for top performance and injury prevention. This is true even for golf. Most golfers find that the ideal place to warm up is on the first tee. It is the natural place for people to congregate before they begin their rounds. Unfortunately, extensive turf damage can result from the heavy traffic, a multitude of practice swings, and even a few "Mulligans." This damage is even more pronounced at busy public golf courses and during the winter season when the turf is not actively growing.

For years, the H. D. "Dad" Miller Golf Course in Anaheim, California, fought this very same problem. It is a busy public facility that plays host to more than 105,000 rounds of golf each year. Superintendent Gary Wimberly came up with a creative solution to save the turf and still give the golfers an

opportunity to warm up. During the renovation of the clubhouse in 1991, the cart parking area was expanded and warm-up stations were built close to the first tee. The cart path was widened and six warm-up stations were constructed. To separate each station, low fences were constructed using 1-inch tubular steel and expanded metal fencing. A 5-foot by 5-foot artificial turf mat was placed over the concrete surface to simulate actual playing conditions.

To ensure the safety and success of the warm-up area, several other points were considered:

- Each station is at least 8 feet wide so that golfers can swing freely without fear of hitting each other.

- The warm-up area is adequately separated from the cart path to prevent pedestrians and golf carts from getting too close. This is accomplished with a few strategically placed planters or a similar barrier.

- The warm-up area is located close to the first tee, yet not so close as to disturb the group on the tee.

- The stations are used for stretching and practice swings only. No chipping or hitting golf balls is allowed in the warm-up area.

- The golf shop staff and course marshals routinely inform golfers about the function of the warm-up area and explain that their cooperation helps reduce wear on the first tee.

- The artificial turf mats are replaced annually to maintain a clean appearance.

The warm-up area of "Dad" Miller Golf Course has been a great success! Not only have the golfers been very cooperative about using the area, it also has significantly reduced wear on the first tee. By giving the golfers a separate area to take a few practice swings, they still are able to get warmed up, but the turf is not worn out!