

NATIONAL FORUM ON ACCESSIBLE GOLF II
Lone Tree Golf Club, Littleton, Colorado
August 14-15,1993

Background Information

The National Forum on Accessible Golf II was a second meeting convened by the National Center on Accessibility at Indiana University and Clemson University's Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism. The first Forum, was held in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, February 25-28, 1993. Proceedings of that meeting are available from Clemson University or the National Center on Accessibility. The first Forum focused on bringing together representatives of major golf organizations, golfers with disabilities and organizations representing golfers with disabilities for general discussions on the implications of the Americans with Disabilities Act on the game. This second Forum was more specifically focused on golf course design considerations.

Introduction

The Americans with Disabilities Act specifies that golf courses are places of public accommodation and therefore are subject to the provisions of the Act. While in rare cases, private golf courses may be exempt from these provisions, the vast majority are subject to the provisions of Title I (employment); Title II Public Services (state and local governments and/or Title III (Public Accommodations (private entities providing services for the public).

The Americans With Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) specify what constitutes accessible elements. These guidelines largely deal with the "built environment". As many outdoor recreation activities are conducted in unique environments, e.g. golf courses, play grounds, campgrounds, etc., there are questions as to how these guidelines apply. As a result, the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) has created a recreation advisory committee to make recommendations for proposed rule making that will cover recreation facilities and areas. The Access Board has the responsibility for promulgating rules and regulations for accessibility. In cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice, The Access Board has enforcement responsibilities for compliance to accessibility standards.

The recreation advisory committee is currently in the process of looking at various outdoor recreation areas, including golf courses and will make recommendations to the Access Board regarding accessibility standards in mid 1994.

Purpose of NFAAG II

The second National Forum on Accessible Golf was convened to provide a broad cross section of input on design considerations for golf course accessibility to the Recreation Advisory Committee's golf sub committee that will be reporting its recommendations to the Access Board. Participants included representatives from The Access Board (as well as golf sub-committee members), golf course architects, golfers with disabilities, representatives from various organizations representing the game of golf and individuals representing research, training and technical assistance interests.

(see appendix for complete listing of attenders).

Day 1:

The Forum was convened Saturday afternoon, August 13, 1993 by Forum moderators Gary Robb, Director of the National Center on Accessibility at Indiana University and Larry Allen, Head, Department of Recreation Parks and Tourism at Clemson University. Robb opened the Forum by addressing the challenges that lie ahead in providing the Access Board with information that would assist them in making decisions in the best interests of persons with disabilities AND of the golf course industry. His major points included:

1. The golf industry is already feeling the effects of the Americans with Disabilities act as several complaints and/or law suits have already been filed and are being considered by the U. S. Department of Justice.
2. This Forum presents an opportunity to provide significant input into the U. S. Access Board's rule making process.
3. While this particular meeting will focus on design issues, there should be no mistake that other issues are at least as equally important to address at future Forums, i.e. awareness, education and instruction. As examples of these issues, Robb cited many concerns that he has encountered within the golf industry over the past year, including:
 - a. the misunderstanding that the law will require golf courses of the future to resemble airport runways.
 - b. the concern that golf courses will be deluged with wheelchairs
 - c. the question of where golf course responsibilities begin and end relative to providing specially designed golf cars or golf clubs.
 - d. what will be the impact of wheel chairs and other assistive devices on greens?
 - e. how do golf course operators determine if a person is disabled?
 - f. what impact will all of this have on insurance premiums?

All of these issues are program access issues, and need to be addressed.

4. Finally, Robb urged Forum participants to recognize that there may be some guidance for future decision making relative to golf course accessibility as a result of the established complaint process that has been in place since 1968

when the Architectural Barriers Act was enacted. Environmental protection case law, and historic preservation case law may provide some assistance in arriving at conclusions regarding accessibility to golf.

Peggy Greenwell, Accessibility Specialist for the Access Board outlined the process that the Board is using to culminate in rule making related to accessible recreation facilities and areas. She indicated that the time line was to conclude sub committee work by late next spring and for the Board to publish proposed rules by late 1994 or early 1995.

Allen summarized the discussions and outcomes of the first Forum held in Myrtle Beach. In addition there was much informal discussion on current research efforts (USGA and Association of Disabled American Golfers); Clemson University golf course design; and Fox Hollow golf course (a Denver course that opened in July, 1993 designed with accessibility considerations).

It should be noted that participants at the Forum appeared to be in agreement on the following, from the outset:

1. There was no interest in promoting design requirements that would restrict architectural creativity, i.e. no one wanted to see so called "pancake courses" or courses that are essentially flat and without creative definition.
2. While design guidelines for the construction of new golf courses was the task at hand, the group recognized that the greater problems in making the game of golf accessible to people with disabilities hinge on the development of effective awareness, education and training programs for the various segments of the golf industry as well as for those with disabilities.

It was felt by Forum participants, that these issues need to be focused on, possibly in a 3rd Forum to be held at a later date.

Day 2:

At the suggestion of Peggy Greenwell, the Forum participants agreed to focus on design factors that would affect **NEW CONSTRUCTION ONLY**. While recognizing that there are many pertinent issues related to existing courses, it was felt that by dealing only with new construction at this meeting, issues around alterations or retrofitting of existing courses would be easier to address once agreements related to new construction were reached.

Forum participants agreed to deal with each area of the golf course as a single entity then look at any other design considerations that might not have been addressed. The entities addressed included:

- TEE AREAS
- FAIRWAYS
- ROUGH
- BUNKERS
- HAZARDS
- GREENS
- PRACTICE AREAS
- SPECTATOR AREAS
- OTHER AMENITIES

Specifically, Forum participants agreed to examine the golf course entities by focusing on:

- ACCESS ROUTES
- DESIGN OF AREA
- OTHER AMENITIES associated with each entity

The following represents the items that were generally agreed to by Forum participants. Extensive discussion ensued on each of the following. Where a clear consensus was not arrived at, such is noted. While no votes were taken, the following represents at least the agreement of any/all who expressed opinions.

TEE AREAS

It should be noted that in the context of Forum discussions "teeing area" was considered to be the total area generally referred to by the public as the "tee box".

1. Access route

- A) There should be at least one entry point to the teeing area that does not exceed a slope of 1:20, i.e. a one foot rise in a 20 foot run (Accessible route is defined in

the Americans With Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines [ADAAG-section 4.3]

Any slope that is considered the "accessible route" to the teeing area that is greater than 1:20 is considered a ramp and may need a railing and

level landing at either end.

- B) There should be at least one accessible tee on each hole which can be reached from the car path (or recognized golf car parking area) with a slope of 1:20 or less.

Exception: There should be an effort made to make all tees accessible where possible.

NOTE: There was not a consensus on this issue. Some Forum participants felt that a minimum of two accessible teeing areas should be required. The reasons for the higher minimum include a) allowing a greater number of options for golfers with disabilities and with different golfing ability levels; b) additional tee boxes will provide a greater likelihood that the disabled golfer will tee from the same area as non disabled playing partners c) the greater likelihood that teeing areas OTHER THAN the forward tees are made accessible and d) in NEW CONSTRUCTION it did not seem unreasonable to some Forum participants to believe that multiple tees could be made accessible without sacrificing architectural design freedoms. There was also a concern that even if two tees were required to be accessible, that there be assurances that tee markers would not be placed arbitrarily just to satisfy the requirement, i.e. placed a few feet or yards forward on the same teeing area.

2. Design

- A) The accessible tee should be wide enough to allow ingress and egress from a forward moving golf car with no cross slopes greater than 1:50 (one foot rise in 50 foot of run)

- B) The accessible tee should not be designated differently from all other tees, e.g. by using the international symbol of accessibility, and should be constructed with the same or similar surface material, i.e. grass as on all other teeing areas

3. On Course Amenities

- A) Ball washers, trash receptacles, water coolers, control mechanisms, access routes, and placement would be subject to CURRENT ADAAG guidelines for controls and operating mechanisms. (ADAAG-4.27)

- B) Signage- Teeing area signage (If any, will follow the guidelines (ADAAG-4.30) for informational signs., except for the sprinkler-head

signage used for yardage. [It was felt that making sprinkler head signage accessible would alter the effective use of the sprinkler].

C) The designated accessible tee(s) on each hole should be indicated on the score card.

FAIRWAYS

1. Access Route

A) When there are golf car paths, there should be a defined, level access point to the fairway, at a maximum distance of every 75 yards. These points would begin at the beginning point of the fairway. Exceptions to this would include: extreme safety and terrain issues; environmental issues such as wetlands and protected areas. NOTE: Golf car paths should NOT be considered part of an accessible route using the ADAAG definition. As paths are designed for golf cars and not pedestrian traffic, they should not be subject to the ADAAG accessible route provisions. Rather, the access route from the path to each element should be accessible.

2. Design

A) Forum participants agreed that there should not be grade or cross slope regulations governing the actual fairways. Doing so would adversely affect design freedoms and may change the fundamental nature of the game.

3. On Course Amenities

A) None, except that the accessible fairway entry ways may be designated as such in cases where golf cars may normally not be permitted access.

ROUGH

No design or access issues apply.

BUNKERS

1. Access

There was much discussion, but no agreement on acceptable design features for bunkers. Some Forum participants felt that the game of golf is not intended to be played out of bunkers, therefore there should be no design considerations. There was a concern that any design requirements for bunkers would restrict architectural freedoms, e.g. pot bunkers. Some Forum participants felt that there should be an *attempt* to provide at least one access or entry point into most bunkers. Design considerations for effectively maintaining the consistency of sand (types) and keeping sand within the perimeters of the bunkers (lips) do not need to be adversely effected. The concern for providing an access point (even with a lip or edged area) was that as technology increases it may well be possible for persons who use wheelchairs to access bunkers that are not too severe. Grass depressions, sometimes referred to as grass bunkers, were not considered to contain any design issues.

Since agreement was not reached on this issue, it was agreed that the above discussion would be recommended to be included in an advisory section of the standards and that this section should be reserved for further study.

HAZARDS

No design or access issues apply. Hazards are addressed adequately in the rules section.

GREENS

1. Access

A) There should be at least one accessible entry and/or exit point on each green which can be reached from the golf car path (or recognized golf car parking area) with a slope of 1:20 or less. Exceptions to this would include extreme safety and terrain issues and environmental issues, such as wetlands and protected areas.

2. Design

A) no design issues (same rationale as with fairways)

NOTE: Forum participants recognized the anxiety that exists regarding access to and onto greens by wheelchairs, golf cars and/or other personal assistive devices (e.g. crutches, walkers). However these were not considered design

issues. As with the teeing area, Forum participants felt that alternative greens, different surfaces or different rules were not acceptable alternatives to providing persons with disabilities access to the greens for the purpose of holing out.

While these are NOT design issues, they obviously are of critical concern to designers, golf course superintendents, golf course managers and to disabled golfers. They are issues that require research and education.

PRACTICE AREAS

1) Access

A) Each type of practice area (tee, green, bunker) should be accessible with an accessible route from the car path (or recognized golf car parking area) with a slope of 1:20 or less.

2) Design

A) Each practice area shall have a minimum of one (with a ratio of 1 to 25) accessible practice station. The dimensions for this station will be a minimum of (8' x 10') {wide enough to accommodate a player playing out of the side of a golf car}.

B) Golf ball dispensing machines should meet current ADAAG requirements for vending machines (ADAAG-5.8)

OTHER AMENITIES

1. In multiple use facilities, parking spaces for persons with disabilities should be located to provide the shortest route to the available amenities (practice area, clubhouse, bag-drop).

2. On course rest room facilities must meet current ADAAG 4.1.2 (6)

3. Rain Shelters- If rain shelters are provided, it must be located on an accessible route. The size of the rain shelter will need to have a clear space of 5' x 8' to allow a golf car to be pulled underneath.

SUMMARY

While the above recommendations may appear to some to lack depth, they were arrived at only after considerable discussion among Forum participants with very diverse backgrounds and perceptions. These recommendations will be presented to the golf subcommittee of the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board for consideration. While they deal only with newly constructed courses, they provide the framework for further design considerations on golf courses that are being altered or changed. Future Forums will focus on further refinement of these recommendations and on other issues, mainly education and training that need to be addressed in order to insure access to persons with disabilities to the game of golf.