



TEE PEG LITTER

Dennis Divot writes about the problem of broken tee pegs littering the course.

Secretary At Work: January 2011 *(reviewed May 2011)*

Am I alone in finding the quantity of broken tees currently littering on and around the teeing areas unsightly and offensive? I have a particular aversion to the bright plastic pink ones which appear to be especially brittle, with their broken remnants scattered about the tees on all of the par-4 and 5 holes. It is not just at my home club where there appears to be this litter rash. Wherever I have played this season there has been the evidence of the epidemic. Even at the clubs that provide “Tee Marker Cups” on every tee specifically for the disposal of the broken bits, players seem to be either ignorant of their purpose or they just can’t be bothered to use them.

As a good will exercise and to reduce my frustration at having to wait for the group in front to play, I started to collect and dispose of the broken bits on each tee. I was amazed to find I can collect about 15 or 20 bits on every tee each time I play, even when it is only two or three days between rounds, and my club provides a litter bin at each tee on all 18 holes.

It is unrealistic to expect the staff maintaining the tees to pick up all the broken bits before cutting. The cylinder blades hitting the “castle” types, especially the longer grey, pink and white ones, must have a detrimental effect on their sharpness. The cutters were designed to cleanly sever thin blades of grass not 1 centimetre thick lumps of brittle plastic.

Historically there has always been a relationship between the tee peg and the driver face. I am just about old enough to remember the open square based pyramid tee boxes filled with sand, but their use to provide the sand to build a tee had long been superseded as a receptacle for litter and cigarette ends. The replacement of sand by wooden pegs had a damaging effect on the driver face. The edges of the horizontal grooves on the face became chipped with the constant striking of wood on wood. In the late fifties it became standard practice to fit a plastic insert into the faces of wooden clubs, and the expression “hit it out of the screws” was born. With cheap coloured plastic pegs becoming readily available in the sixties, the previous problem of the hardness of the peg being the same as that of the club-face reappeared. Golfers in the know always used wooden pegs for their driver, thus preventing the soft peg damaging the face. This problem disappeared completely with the introduction of metal woods. On the Mohr’s Hardness Scale, softwood pegs are 2, plastic pegs 3, hardened steel 6.5 and titanium 7. Using either type of peg has no detrimental effect on the club-face yet many golfers still insist on using only wooden pegs.

The introduction of the technology of the deep faced titanium drivers required the ball to be struck by the upper part of the club face, hence the need for longer tee pegs. Using the more fragile wooden ones almost guarantees the breakage of several per round. My pro sells them in bags of a hundred! The plastic grey ones are much less likely to break but are particularly difficult to see against the grass background, and I remain convinced that pink ones have a special ingredient in them to ensure they break easily. The same ingredient appears to be in the new bright orange ones that have been marketed recently.

What is the answer? I remember in the sixties that one could buy a pair of square topped pyramid tees, tapering to a point, dimpled on top to take the ball and joined together with a piece of cord. The cord attached to the second peg restrained the first on impact, but as both were constructed of hard plastic they fell out of use because of the damage they caused to the driver face. Some of the senior members of my club appear to have resurrected this concept, by fastening several pegs of different lengths together, or by fastening a wide variety of differing objects to the peg to increase their air resistance. In my ignorance I thought they were simply mean old pensioners trying to save a penny but I now realise that I did them an injustice. They and I have wholeheartedly embraced the concepts of conserving the earth's resources and reducing our carbon footprint. I have now had my current "driver" tee peg since the end of June; I only wish I could make my golf ball last as long.