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New golf facility is tremendous benefit to teams

Nick Jungheim

4-5 minutes

The complex opened in January on St. Paul campus.



[Jack Rodgers](#)

Junior Thomas Longbella lines up a shot on the putting green in the new indoor golf training facility on Monday, April 1. The facility borders the Les Bolstad Golf Course and allows for practice throughout winter months.

Until recently, the men's and women's golf teams had no place to call their own during the long Minnesota winters. When temperatures dipped and snow piled up outside, the teams would have to utilize a number of different facilities around the Twin Cities metro area to practice.

That all changed at the beginning of this semester when the John W. Mooty Golf Facility opened on St. Paul campus, immediately adjacent to Elizabeth Lyle Robbie Stadium, the home of the Gophers soccer team. For the programs, having a year-round facility to themselves not only benefits the current players, but also gives them a boost in recruiting as well.

“For a northern program, you really can't compete, especially in recruiting without one,” said men's associate head coach Justin Smith. “A lot of the best programs in the north have it. Our facility gives us exactly what we need to compete across all ends.”

The completion of the facility could not have come at a better time because neither team has yet practiced outside due to weather. The results have pleased coaches and players, as both teams have shown improvement during the spring season.

According to women's head coach Michele Redman, the facility has inspired her team to work harder on its game. With its convenient location, players now have extra opportunities to practice, a luxury they didn't have before.

“The biggest thing is time management for our student-athletes,” Redman said. “We're 2 miles from the facility now, and ... I think they're finding they want to go out when we don't have practice, as well.”

Redman, along with director of men's golf John Carlson, took an

active role in raising funds for the complex. Though the process of constructing the building happened quickly, with approval in December 2017 and groundbreaking last June, the teams spent a long time planning for the facility.

“Coach Redman and myself started about four-and-a-half years ago,” Carlson said. “Talking with architects and really looking at how we could make this a facility that could be our home.”

Carlson expressed complete satisfaction with how the facility turned out. He said every aspect, including the practice areas, lounge, locker room and offices, exceeded his expectations.

“We’re just thrilled with how it turned out,” Carlson said. “I would be lying if [said] I didn’t think it turned out better than I even imagined. It’s all elevated from even our first talks with architects.”



The indoor facility puts the Gophers on par with other programs in the Big Ten. The teams raised \$3.18 million dollars to fund the project, with \$2.69 million coming from private donations,

[according to Star Tribune reporting](#). The John W. Mooty Foundation, for whom the building is named, contributed \$1 million.

“I did it for [my players],” Redman said of her role in fundraising. “We have really good student athletes. They come for both school and golf. And I think the fact that they’re not having to drive 35 to 40 minutes one way to hit golf balls for an hour and 45 minutes to two hours is big for them.”

Inside, the facility contains state-of-the-art technology the team uses to track performance. The putting green area has projectors that help players visualize the paths their putts need to take. There are also driving bays with TrackMan launch monitors, which display a ball’s flight path.

Smith said the facility’s convenience and technology make his job easier as a coach. For him, seeing the contributions of donors and the University affirmed their commitment to fielding competitive golf programs.

“There are so many people that had to sign of on this, get behind it and support it,” Smith said. “The list is endless, but we’re certainly so appreciative that our sport with golf can get put in the spotlight a little bit.”