

# Foust grows great swings on the farm

## New Driving Range offers more than the long ball

BY DENNIS THOMASON  
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Newport – The coastal plains farming soil of Newport is quite well known for growing bountiful melons and gardens. But there's one "farm" in Newport that now advertises "We grow great swings!"

Welcome to The Golf Farm, Inc., which will have its grand opening Wednesday at 612 Tom Mann Road, a half mile off Highway 70. The new facility is owned and operated by LPGA Tour professional Nina Foust and offers a multi-faceted practice and instructional facility.

"I go by this driving range in Clayton, going back and forth to my folks' home (in Asheboro)," said Foust.

"I went in there and talked to that guy and got some ideas, came back and started looking for some land."

"This became available, and it's perfect because we're surrounded on three sides by the Croatan, so we don't have to worry about hitting any neighbors."

"And the neighbors around, who aren't going to be affected by anything, have been great.

They've been wonderful to us. So, when I got this place – this used to be an old farm – I said let's just call it The Golf Farm."

Foust, who is a member of the Hall of Fame of golf and basketball at Appalachian State University, played on the LPGA Tour 12 years before retiring from it five years ago.

She also played several years on the mini-tour prior to becoming a full-time LPGA competitor. But in 1990, while in the middle of her touring years, she moved to Carteret County and began thinking about what she wanted



to do with her life after the tour. "I always wanted to live at the coast, but I didn't want to be at Myrtle Beach or any where like that," she said. "My last few years on tour, I really had this vision I wanted to do something nice because I feel like this area doesn't have anything like this."

The one possible drawback at the outset of her new business might be location.

Whereas many driving ranges are located along major highways and are easy to advertise, Foust is depending mostly on word of mouth. She's already made a name for herself in Carteret County as a teacher and through clinics. She plans to continue that and employ video lessons, as well. "It may take awhile for people," she said. "It's not like it's way off the highway. One of my mentors growing up, that's where I got part of the name because she had a place called The Farm in Randleman.

"She just taught there, but she lived there and it was actually a farm. She had peacocks and guineas and all that."

"She passed away several years ago. That's where I really got interested in teaching. Her name was Ellen Griffin, and she always said the best method of advertising was word of mouth."

Construction on The Golf Farm began in December, and Foust, who has made a living only through golf, suddenly found herself becoming a "real" farm girl of sorts.

"I've done a little bit of everything," she said. "I've ridden tractors and back hoes, stuff that I'd never done before." In addition to having a

range that extends 300 yards to the final target, there is a 2,500 square foot building that will eventually house a full pro shop and indoors practice facility. "Obviously, with a new business starting out, we don't have that much yet, because we've concentrated on having top quality golf balls and good grass," she said.

"Eventually, here again, I want to have like an indoor hitting area, so if it is raining or cold I can teach inside and have a little putting area inside too."

"A small pond lays 365 yards from the tea area, out of sight. Foust jokingly said, "If they hit the pond and I'm standing back there, I'll give them a free bucket (of balls) or something."

Then, as an afterthought, added, "I shouldn't say that because some of these guys will be trying to do it."

One of the most unique aspects of the range is that hitters can choose between real grass or fake.

"That was more my decision," said Foust. "Because down here with our soil, this recovers rather quickly, unless we have a (Hurricane) Floyd come through. "Personally, I think you improve your golf game actually hitting on grass as opposed to mats. That's why I elected to have a bigger grass area than mats."

Foust has two partners in the new business: Joy Bell, an accountant, and Jill Whatley, who works in insurance. And there are numerous other people who have helped her along the way, she said.

Like most farms in a more traditional sense, The Golf Farm, Inc., will be open seven days a week: 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1 to 6 on Sunday.

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