

# At Wentworth Club, RFID Tags Are Members-Only

To facilitate a policy that lets members just show up and play at designated courses, golf bags sport active RFID tags for tracking usage.

By Jonathan Collins

July 25, 2006—The Wentworth, located just outside London, is one of the most famous golf clubs in the world. Each year the Wentworth hosts the PGA's European Tour's BMW Championship and HSBC World Matchplay Championship, as well as a myriad of other events, but its 2,500 members also have to share the courses with many other visitors. To help it better serve those members, the prestigious U.K. club recently turned to RFID.

Though Wentworth has three 18-hole courses—the East, the West and the Edinburgh—only one is available on any give day for members to play on. Members are allowed to tee off without booking a starting time. Instead, they go to the first tee and start as soon as the players in front have moved on.

While that can be more convenient for members, the club had no way of monitoring the usage of the members-only course, which changes daily. Visiting golfers, on the other hand, can be tracked through their designated tee times. Wentworth wanted a nonintrusive way to track member usage of its courses without having to change its show-up-and-play member policy.

Last September, the club called on U.K. RFID systems integrator Tanto Systems to develop an RFID solution to its problem. An initial trial, carried out in October, led to the selection of equipment Wavetrend Technologies' LRX 201 interrogators (readers) and LPG 501 active tags, which operate at 433 MHz. Initial tests proved the equipment would deliver the required read range of up to 40 meters.

"The club had already looked at passive RFID systems from other vendors but decided it didn't want the additional and more visible antennas that passive would have required [to deliver the same read range]," says Robert Dunleavy, business development manager at Tanto Systems.

After a decision by the club to deploy the system in March, Tanto deployed an interrogator inside the starter's hut at each course's first tee, with the single interrogator antenna mounted on the outside of the hut. The firm linked the three interrogators to Wentworth's existing access control system. All work was completed in less than a month, says Tanto. Wentworth had already been using the access control system to monitor and control usage of other facilities, including its health spa and tennis courts. That system also connects to the clubs membership management software.

Interrogators detect RFID tags that have been embedded in a newly designed membership-card holder, which members hang from the side of their golf bags. Members have always had to display their membership cards on the outside of their golf bags so that the club could easily identify golfers with current membership.

The tags are powered by a battery that operates for up to seven years. Because the club issues new membership cards each year when members renew their membership, the holders have been designed to enable the membership card to be swapped in and out of the holder.

According to Wentworth's IT manager, Karen Dredge, the club had long wanted to gather members' course usage, but solutions from other vendors clashed with the club's aesthetic or proved too complicated to integrate into its existing systems.

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