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## Golf

# MarkMender Ballmark Repair Tool



From [Brent Kelley](#),  
Your Guide to [Golf](#).  
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**Guide Rating** - ★★★★★

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The old saying about trying to build a better mousetrap stems from the notion that some products are so solid in form and function that they can't be improved upon.

Many might believe the ballmark repair tool in golf falls into that category. After all, it's existed as-is, essentially unchanged, for decades.

Roy Cranman, however, thinks he's built a better mousetrap. Cranman is CEO of Cranman Golf Products, which is producing a ballmark repair tool called the MarkMender that is unlike any you've seen before.

If it works - and early indications are that it does - it might just revolutionize the way golfers catch mice. Um, make that repair the greens.

Traditional repair tools are essentially just levers, usually made of metal, with two prongs. The prongs are inserted into the green around the ballmark, and the tool is pulled up and pressed forward, pushing the edges of the depression toward the center.

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The traditional tools, when used correctly, work well. The problem is that many golfers don't use them correctly. Many golfers believe they have to lift up the center of the depression. So they push down on the tool, creating a see-saw motion in which the prongs, inserted below the center of the depression, push up. This actually tears the roots of the turf, adding many days of healing time to the process.

Some golfers find the traditional tools unwieldy, even when used

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The MarkMender in its open position (left) and closed position (right).  
Cranman Golf Products

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correctly, and simply don't take the time to do a good job.

The MarkMender is different. It simply can't be used incorrectly. If you use the MarkMender, there is only one way to do it. Also, in many instances it takes only one pass with the MarkMender to repair the ballmark. No fuss required.

It might take a few attempts to get the hang of it, but once mastered, we discovered, the MarkMender makes repairing ballmarks a snap.

The MarkMender can be clipped to a golfer's belt loop, or to a golf bag.  
 Cranman Golf Products

Or a squeeze, to be more precise. The MarkMender, when closed, is about the size of a pocketknife. When opened for use, it forms an "X." The tops of the "X" are the handles; the bottoms of the "X" are two sets of prongs. The prongs are opened to the width of the ballmark and inserted, one set of prongs on either side of the ballmark. The golfer grasps the handles in his fingers and gives the MarkMender a squeeze. That's it. The prongs force the edges of the depression together, the golfer tamps down the area with his putter, and the ballmark is repaired.

On firmer greens, we discovered and Cranman himself points out, it may take two or more tries to completely repair the ballmark. In such instances, the golfer would simply turn the MarkMender 90 degrees, insert into the ground, and give another squeeze.

The squeezing motion of the MarkMender is one of those ideas that seems obvious ... once someone finally think of it. Cranman explained that he was inspired after seeing one of his daughter's hair clips.



The MarkMender can also be used to hold a cigar, or to keep club grips off wet grass.  
 Cranman Golf Products

"Back in May 2003, my club put stickers on the cart windshields describing the correct way to repair a ballmark," Cranman said. "When I read it, I discovered I had been doing it wrong for the past 35 years. I realized, with a single digit handicap, that if I did not know how to do it then this must really be a big problem."

Indeed, it is a big problem. A USGA-sponsored study at Rutgers University in 2003 concluded, "Poorly repaired, or not repaired at all, ballmarks are a major factor that limits the quality and playing conditions on putting greens."

Most golfers reached that conclusion a long time ago, even the ones who don't bother to repair their own marks.

"I had a flood of memories of the thousands of admonitions of rangers and memos on scorecards, etc., that asked me to repair my ballmarks," Cranman continued. "Then, as I actually was correctly repairing the very next mark, I thought, why doesn't someone invent a tool that can't be misused?"

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"It was a very simple thought and it stuck with me like a bad song that you keep singing. I spent a great deal of time thinking about it and finally, I saw one of my daughter's hair clips on my sink counter and it hit me. I spent several weeks playing in the basement making prototypes and the rest is history."

Cranman provided About.com Golf with several samples of the MarkMender, and we spent a month or so using the newfangled gadgets and showing them around to other golfers.

We found the MarkMender very easy to use, and effective at repairing ballmarks, even on the hard greens at some of the courses we play regularly.

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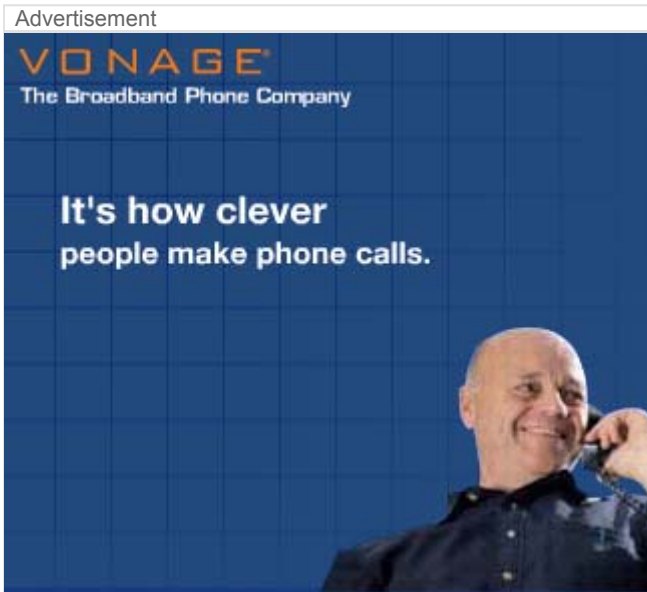


The MarkMender in its open position. Cranman Golf

Cranman said that a few customers have commented on what they felt was the bulky size of the MarkMender. We carried the MarkMender in our pocket at all times during multiple rounds, and not once did we feel it was cumbersome or bothersome. However, any golfer who does have that reaction can easily clip the MarkMender onto his belt loop or golf bag.

We also found the idea behind the MarkMender very easy to grasp, even for golfers seeing it the very first time. There's really only one way it can be used: stick it in the ground around the edges of the ballmark, and squeeze.

We had success on our very first try, as did most of the golfers to whom we showed it. A few needed a few tries with it to get the hang of it. The MarkMender is easier to use on softer greens, but it does work fine on firmer greens, too.



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The MarkMender in its closed position. Cranman Golf Products

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**Products** The only issue we discovered during use is that some golfers - usually older women or elderly men, or older golfers who have hand ailments or particularly weak hands - had some trouble squeezing the MarkMender on firm greens. We watched one older gentleman strain to use it on firm greens, although he finally managed to repair the ballmark.

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Of course, the real test of a new ballmark repair tool is this: Does it help the greens heal faster - or as quickly - as does a properly used traditional tool?

There is not an "official" answer to that question as of this writing. The MarkMender certainly, to the naked eye, repairs ballmarks just as well as the traditional tool, and (for most golfers) more easily and with much less chance for error.

Cranman is working on setting up some independent studies of the MarkMender's efficacy. He is in discussions with turfgrass studies departments at a couple universities. Once an independent study is set in motion, it will like take months - possibly more than a year, since the testers may want to include different seasons (and therefore different types of turfgrasses) in the study.

Ultimately, the results of such studies will show the future of the MarkMender. After using the MarkMender, it's my guess that if those studies show it to be more effective or as effective as the traditional tool, the MarkMender will become the *new* tradition in ballmark repair.

If you can find the MarkMender in your pro shop, it should carry a retail price of \$6.95. If not, it can be ordered from the company website at \$34.95 for a package of four. The MarkMender website is [www.markmender.com](http://www.markmender.com).

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