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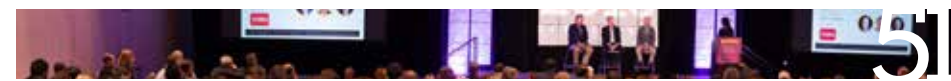


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Another case for moving to a new tee



Jay Karen
CEO
NGCOA

In last month's column, I opined that one of golf's "distance problems" is that many golfers are playing from tee boxes that are too difficult for them. Or maybe restated, if they played tees that offered, say, a 6,000-yard experience instead of a 6,600-yard experience, they might find it more enjoyable and the round a little speedier. And golf writer John Gaughan recently penned a wonderful piece about aging and moving up a set of tees, and the joys of discovering the golf course in a new way and the challenges it brings.

I think there are two factors that cause golfers to pause at the idea of (gasp) moving from one set of colored tees to another: One is ego, and the other is having to consider an equalizer in addition to giving or receiving strokes. Let's unpack this for a moment, and realize that you — the course operator — can help make this work.

Ego. No one likes admitting or realizing they aren't hitting the ball as far as they used to. But you can help ease the pain and encourage a more appropriate set of tee boxes by embracing the combination-tee movement. What was once a rare anomaly is now a bit more com-

mon — looking at the scorecard and seeing something like Blue/White or White/Yellow as one of the rows on the card. Going from

Blue to Blue/White is an easier jump than straight to White. Just getting golfers out of their ingrained behaviors of playing the SAME tee box, no matter where they play or the distance of the course, is a great first step. And of course, having more than three or four sets of tees helps

the cause even more. But if you don't think you can afford to build or maintain more tee boxes yet, updating the scorecard is a great first step.

Kudos to those who have been doing it!

Equalizer. You've been there. Standing on the first and everyone figures out who gets how many strokes from whom before play begins. In most cases, everyone is likely playing the same set of tees, so you're only dealing with one variable — differences in typical score levels. If the group starts splitting up what tee boxes they are all playing, you're introducing another variable. How does that impact the calculus of determining who gets how many strokes? The short-term head-scratching on that one will be temporary. Eventually, it will "all come out in the wash," as my mother used to say. If you move up a set of tees and you start scoring better, then eventually the spread of strokes will get smaller naturally, and everyone can carry on as before.

Why is this important? I look no further than my own father. He played golf weekly for decades, and then (for a variety of reasons) nearly stopped playing altogether. Upon returning to the game, he decided to play one set of tee boxes closer than he had all his life. And, man is he happier and back to playing a few times per month.

Happier golfers mean a higher chance of returning to the course. Returning to the course means recurring revenue from a reliable customer base. And what business owner doesn't love reliable, recurring revenue? **fb**

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What's in store moving forward?

The announcement of a new editor-in-chief for *Golf Business* is certain to have raised questions about the vision for the publication moving forward.

Here's a little bit about me: I was the print editor of the Denver Business Journal, one of 40 American City Business Journals publications across the country. I oversaw the weekly newspaper production, coordinated special publications and helped organize special events. Before my 16 years with ACBJ, I served as managing editor at two community newspapers in Colorado and Montana. I started my journalism career as a sports editor and photographer, covering prep and NIAA

Boots Gifford
Editor-In-Chief



collegiate sports for seven years.

Looking ahead, *Golf Business* will re-examine its editorial calendar and content offerings to coincide with our commitment to the core focuses of hospitality, workplace leadership, technology and marketing. In coming months, new columns will be developed addressing advocacy issues, golf course owners' philanthropic efforts, golf news briefs and new faces in the

industry. In addition, the magazine will connect with topics presented on the website, in podcasts and webinars, as well as the wealth of knowledge shared at NGCOA events.

I encourage readers to share their success stories with *Golf Business*. Tell us about recent programs you've instituted that have grown revenue and player participation. Share the results of a philanthropic partnership you supported. Tell us about the new faces added to your management teams. Describe what advocacy issues are most important to you or speak out about your point of view. Email me directly at bgifford@ngcoa.org.

The support I've received from the golf community has been exceptional. I hope you will continue to share your stories, suggestions and opinions as we venture forward.

A VIEW FROM THE INDUSTRY
MY TAKE

If we don't make time, why should they?



Glenn Gray
Vice President
Buffalo Agency

sounds to the person on the other end? It's probably perceived as you're not making time to play because you don't enjoy it or it's a task with insurmountable obstacles.

What would happen if a personal trainer stopped working out? Or an accountant decided not to do his or her own taxes? Would you trust them, respectively, with your physical well-being and money?

Let's challenge ourselves to play more golf this year. This shouldn't be another New Year's resolution to your lengthy list, but one that is met with unwavering determination and achievement. And when you head

out to enjoy the game and great outdoors, invite friends who've expressed interest in playing, but somehow only irregularly – and

under protest – find the time to do it.

According to the National Golf Foundation, latent demand continues to rise with 12.8 million non-golfers interested in playing right now. It's up from 11.9 million the previous year and double five years ago. Bet you have more than a few friends that fit into this category.

The topic of pace of play for a typical 18-hole round is discussed often in industry circles.

It directly relates to the time crunch people face when balancing real life with the option to tee it up. For the majority of non-golfers, the unfortunate opinion and oft-decision is that the game takes too long to play. A solution: Ease them into the game with a shorter experience at one of Topgolf's 50-plus entertainment centers across America or a local driving range. Eventually, upon helping peak their interests, graduation to a nine- or 18-hole course is inevitable.

Make a list of people who have told you they want to try to play golf, but fall short. Reach out to them, share the notion of "let's just have fun" and "scores don't matter," then set it up, no questions asked. You'll be surprised how open they'll be to the opportunity. No matter the fear factor or resistance level, a non-judgmental companion like you will create lifelong players and golf evangelists. One at a time, we can all make a difference.

Like most routines, inserting a regular golf experience into your calendar has to start somewhere.

Inviting novices is an extra layer, but goes a long way supporting the near- and long-term growth and vitality of a sport we love. Maybe it starts with nine holes every Friday morning? See you there! **TB**

Glenn Gray is vice president of Buffalo Agency, the fully integrated golf-marketing firm and a division of Billy Casper Golf.



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ONLINE

What's on GolfBusiness.com this month



WHAT'S HOT

CYBER CHECK

As more and more data breaches hit the headlines, business owners need to be aware of how they handle digital security. Don't think you're at risk? If you are not educating your employees on cybersecurity best practices, you are missing the biggest opportunity for improvement in your entire cybersecurity profile. Read more at golfbusiness.com.



SMARTEN UP!

This year's MCO Retreat for multi-course and resort operators will be held at Chicago's Union League Club on July 17-18. Registration is open, so sign up at ngcoa.org/mco2018.



GROWTH HACKING

If you missed this feature from the April issue of Golf Business magazine, check online at golfbusiness.com about why deferring capital improvements can be so dangerous.



TECH TALK

MEGAN WENZL

Associate Editor
Review Trackers

Google is Where Customers Live

It doesn't matter whether a golfer lives on a golf course, belongs to a country club or is loyal to one public course, they will always have an urge to explore other courses and vacation at different golf resorts.

When deciding where to explore, golfers turn to Google, looking at golf course and resort star ratings and reviews since the search engine is known as the main place to read and write reviews.

According to the 2018 ReviewTrackers Online Reviews Survey, 63.6 percent of consumers say they are likely to check Google online reviews before visiting a business – more than Yelp, TripAdvisor and Facebook. In addition, Google has grown to have the largest distribution of online reviews compared to other major review sites. Facebook is second.

The major focus on Google searches is why golf course owners and operators should manage their online reputation as part of their marketing strategy.

One way to manage a company's online reputation is to request reviews from satisfied guests. The request can be made in an email with a link to where the golfer can leave the review. The more positive reviews a golf course receives, the higher its star rating.

Most importantly, though, more reviews give consumers more resources when making a decision on where to golf. Golfers might read several reviews about the beautiful scenery at a golf course in Chicago, which will help them make a decision on where to play.

Golf course owners can also respond to reviews to show consumers they care. According to the survey, 53 percent of customers expect businesses to respond to negative reviews in seven days or less, but businesses are not meeting expectations, with 63 percent of consumers reporting that a business has never responded to their reviews.

Building and maintaining a positive online brand reputation is an important part of any owner's marketing strategy. Have you checked your reviews today?

Dan Murphy, Joe O'Brien and David Thompson (from left) at the Club at Wynstone.

THE START

NEWS & VIEWS WITH A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Club at Wynstone *Survived* Survival Mode

By Kyle Darbyson

You might not guess it by the packed dining room or robust tee sheet of today, but only a few years ago the Club at Wynstone (then known as the Wynstone Country Club) was plainly in survival mode.

Like many facilities in the early 2000s, this Illinois-based private equity club had financed major beautification projects through debt. Then, the tsunami of changing demographics and global recession decimated the club's membership roll.

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Long-time board member Dan Murphy remembers the dark days: “There was an impending sense of doom at the club, you could really feel it.”

Increasing attrition meant fewer members servicing the debt. It also left those remaining members exposed to potentially punishing year-end assessments. Thus began a spiral that put Wynstone at real risk of bankruptcy.

“We were net negative in our growth,” Murphy says. “There was a cloud over us, and we just couldn’t attract anyone.”

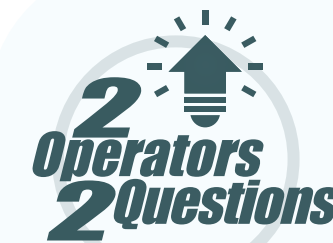
Desperate, the board engaged a broker to find a buyer. “We received two bona fide offers,” remembers Murphy. Unfortunately, both would have kept the debt on the books and members on the hook for all of it. That was a business model all stakeholders at Wynstone considered unsustainable.

Most members had a lot to lose, including Murphy. He and his wife had moved into the gated community that surrounded the golf course. “There is an obvious correlation between the success of a golf course and the value of a house on that golf course.”

So, nine families belonging to the club got together and put forth a proposal of their own; one that crucially retired all \$6 million in debt. Membership voted 87-0 to accept their bid.

Aside from removing the debt obligation, Murphy et al also articulated an ambitious vision — nothing short of establishing the Club at Wynstone as the most sought-after, full-service club in Illinois. “All the pieces were there, we just needed to put them together in the right way.”

Continued on page 16



It seems more golf facilities — private and public — are stepping up their games when it comes to sophisticated dining and drink menus. Here are a pair that have done just that.

Golf Business: Have you improved the food and/or beverage offerings at your facility recently?

Patterson III: We’re always working on creating new and innovative culinary experiences for our members and guests. It’s important in today’s ever-changing culinary scene that we keep abreast of our members’ interests and we share with them what we’re doing, and why. Between our wine lists and our seasonal menus, we experiment with new ideas and concepts. Challenging staff to help create and sell weekend specials keeps them captivated and feeling like they have some “skin in the game.” We instill in our staff that “we are a family... serving a family!”

Neal: With our recent renovations, mainly with our fitness facility, we have taken a new approach to our member dining experience,



James R. Patterson III
EXECUTIVE CHEF
SEDFIELD COUNTRY CLUB
GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

Jason Neal
EXECUTIVE CHEF
PROVIDENCE COUNTRY CLUB
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

MEMBER FEEDBACK LED US TO BEGIN OFFERING HALF PORTIONS ON OUR LIST OF ENTRÉES.

- JASON NEAL

especially at the bar. We’ve implemented \$5 Friday Small Plates and Infused Cocktail menus that have played an integral role in generating new popularity, as well as a new F&B revenue stream. I’m constantly looking for new ways to excite members and entice them to dine here. In such a competitive market, we must keep them at their club, enjoying the “at-home” atmosphere we create.

GB: How have the members responded?

Patterson III: Many members follow us on social media and are excited to be a part of our constantly changing food and beverage scene. Whether it’s club buzz about upcoming events, a food truck rodeo hosted by the F&B team, our monthly GrapeNuts wine series or hosting a farm-to-table tasting with local farmers and vendors on hand, our members quickly sign up because they know events sell out. We’ve recently made “eating local” part of our club’s culture by sharing where

our food comes from. We also feel it’s imperative that we capitalize on the entire family. When children are involved at the club, parents are too!

Neal: Within our culinary staff we have many varying backgrounds and comfort levels. We use our Friday Night Small Plates as a competition among staff members to create appetizer portions utilizing certain ingredients, resulting in more creative appetizers, hence benefitting the members’ experience. Member feedback led us to begin offering half portions on our list of entrées. We also allow members to create their own dishes, including protein, starch, vegetable and sauce. Allowing our Beverage and Service team the opportunity to utilize its knowledge and assist in deciding how we can best utilize products and flavors for our infused cocktail menu has also benefitted members, who provide very positive, frank feedback.

—Steve Donahue

VIEWPOINTS

How do demo days help your bottom line?

Demo days are a great way to show golfers a staff's equipment expertise, gain new customers and earn revenue. Red Ledges' Jon Paupore — the Heber City, Utah, club's director of golf and its Jim McLean Golf School's director of instruction — and Derek Butts, head golf professional and the golf school's lead master instructor, explain how demo days help their equipment business.

Jon Paupore: We hold about two demo days monthly for the first few months of the season as our members are excited to see and experience all the major manufacturers' new equipment. We only have one manufacturer each Demo Day, so each company can truly showcase its equipment line. It's very beneficial for our members and it prevents being overwhelmed with a ton of equipment at once. Our Trackman Launch Monitor allows us to do private golf ball fittings separate from our Demo Days. Members receive discounted prices on all equipment purchased at Demo Days. Our equipment price points are very competitive so this is added incentive to purchase that day. Each demo day's total sales range from approximately \$5,000 to \$10,000. Costs are very low as each manufacturer sends a representative to assist in the fittings with all the necessary equipment and shaft offerings, and additional product information.

Derek Butts: We do an average of 10 fittings for each demo day we host. During most of our demo days we mainly fit clubs. We have the ability with our own Trackman launch monitor to do ball fittings throughout the year. Golfers are continually surprised when they see the difference from old clubs bought off the shelf compared to new clubs that have been custom fit with the right length, lie and shaft. We have done some kids fittings at our demo days, but it tends to be older junior high- or high school-age kids because of the manufacturers we have at our demo days. We fit many juniors during our junior golf camps with clubs geared to their height, swing speed and ability. — Steve Donahue



Continued from page 15

Their first move was an important one. "We all do something well in our professional lives, but it's not running a private golf club," Murphy admits. So, they tasked Arnold Palmer Golf Management with overseeing the day-to-day operation.

They worked together to achieve their next goal — growing membership.

"Call it audacious if you will, but we wanted to grow to the point we need a waiting list," he said. To this end, initiation fees were eliminated and dues restructured. "As they stood, both were roadblocks to us getting back on track"

Cognizant of the investments made by existing members, the plan also called for equity redemption tied to the club's performance.

The new investor group poured considerable resources into modernizing the club. Deferred maintenance was addressed, dining areas expanded and enhanced, and a renewed focus placed on the social aspect of the Wynstone experience.

"Our geographic area says we only get about five months of golf a year," Murphy explains. "If that's the case, you'd better have a lot to do the other seven months."

Their efforts have paid off. In only a few months, dozens of new members have signed on and that "pie-in-the-sky" waiting list is already in place. "We achieved it a lot sooner than anyone thought."

With more stable financial footing, the Club at Wynstone is finally free to focus on the future.

"It's like that cloud has been lifted," says Murphy. "Instead of worrying about where the next payment is coming from, we can look five, or 10 years down the road and start planning for what's next." 📱

Kyle Darbyson is a Vancouver-based freelance writer.



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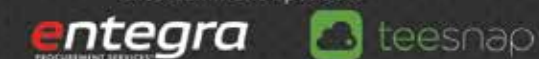


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SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

With a redesigned course and a new golf director, Rosen Shingle Creek is positioned to appeal to various segments of the Orlando market

When Harris Rosen, an influential yet fiercely independent figure in the Orlando hotel scene, decided three years ago that his 1,501-room Rosen Shingle Creek Resort should add more guest rooms and amenities in the near future, something had to give. Specifically: a sizable chunk of the 18-hole David Harman layout that wrapped around the multi-wing building.

Fortunately, Rosen was able to purchase 25 acres of adjacent land to build three new holes on the far end of the course. But he also used the opportunity to redesign the 15 remaining holes so that the layout would be more memorable versus other upscale courses in Orlando. Closed for seven months in 2016, Rosen Shingle Creek reopened that December with all new bunkers (though fewer of them) plus greater undulation

By Rob Carey

Ryan Hosford, director of golf for Rosen Shingle Creek Resort, says they wanted to stand out from other courses in the area.

© 2018 Photo by Darrin Back

inside 150 yards on every hole. Most greens were rebuilt too; they now range from 3,500 square feet to 9,500 square feet to bring even more variety.

“We wanted to stand out in this market,” says Ryan Hosford, director of golf. “Every course in Orlando has sand and water and a few gators, but we want players to remember us for the specific challenge our course presents. Some folks have told us the new aprons and greens remind them of Streamsong, with the varying sizes and undulations.”

That’s high praise for a resort course that caters heavily to business travelers in town to attend events at nearby Orange County Convention Center or at the resort’s own 524,000 square feet of meeting space.

With those accolades, though, comes a new challenge for the Rosen’s golf operation: Pace of play.

“Our starters are critical to the quality of the new experience,” Hosford notes. “They have to explain to every foursome what the layout is like and make sure that each guest – especially if they don’t play much or haven’t played in a while – is using the correct tee boxes, even if it’s not their typical yardage back home. We need guests to know that the test lies in their approaches and short game, so playing a bit less yardage from the tees will give them the best experience.”

continued from page 19

This is especially important given that 30 percent of the course's rounds come from business events and charity tournaments.

Another element that's been tweaked to better suit all types of resort guests is the practice area. The course redesign included a refurbished practice range and expanded practice green, plus a 1,850-square-foot open-air pavilion set on a raised area between the two. The three features work well together for tournament needs as well as for in-house business groups looking to have a luncheon or recep-

“Our first goal is to make everyone a repeat customer. So we've gotten a bit more flexible with some offerings.”

tion that includes a fun activity.

But to further boost revenue from these features, one of the first moves Hosford made after arriving on property in September 2017 was to roll out an unlimited-practice day rate.

“The practice areas are there equally for non-playing guests who just want to get out for some sun and a taste of our golf environment,” Hosford says. “Many business travelers or parents taking the kids to the theme parks don't have time to play the course, but spending an hour on our practice grounds is very satisfying.”

As a result, what used to be an offering of 35 practice balls at a time is now bottomless, at a notably higher price that includes club rental.

“The volume we're getting from that is pretty strong,” Hosford notes.

BRINGING THEM BACK

Among dedicated players, Hosford is focused on maintaining a higher

average daily rate that the facility has enjoyed since the redesign debuted in December 2016. On the other hand, one thing he's learned since coming to Rosen Shingle Creek from an Orlando destination course with no guest accommodations is this: “I have to think about the fortunes of the entire resort, not just maximizing the golf shop's revenue every day. We get the same type of player here as I did at the stand-alone course, but they often have different expectations here because we have more to offer. Being part of the bigger picture and

keeping that top of mind has been an adjustment for me.”

Part of the adjustment has come in the form of creating a few more rate tiers based on the resort's needs.

“Every type of golfer can fit in here – but at the right times,” he notes. “I'm trying to preserve ADR as much as possible, but our first goal is to make everyone a repeat customer. So we've gotten a bit more flexible with some offerings.”

Even with no Florida-resident playing rate, the resort sees good performance from the drive-in stay-and-play segment; the offering is two rounds and one night accommodation at a discount versus a la carte. What's more, an “I Love Rosen” card, available after the first visit at no cost besides providing contact information, delivers 25-percent discounts on accommodations, golf, spa, dining and other resort amenities, prompts longer subsequent stays

with spouse or family.

“Between the new course experience and the card offering, a lot of these players are booking their next trip here even before they leave,” Hosford says. For the multi-day, multi-course player, the resort relies on local package companies targeting the Northeastern U.S. and eastern Canada, with more traffic from this segment coming through thanks to the redesign.

For the most frequent local and regional players, the facility offers Drivers Club for \$99 per year. “It's a formal loyalty membership that pays for itself right away with a free round on sign-up day, plus another on your birthday,” Hosford says. “They get the lowest rate at all times of year – in high season that's a nice discount. Their guests get reduced rates too.”

Other discounts apply to practice-range use, instruction, merchandise and golf-grill dining.

“There are a lot of big hospitality brands in Orlando with strong loyalty programs, so ours has to be competitive,” Hosford says.

In 2017, Drivers Club had nearly 600 members.

The element that completes the experience at Rosen Shingle Creek is a service culture that comes straight from owner Harris Rosen. Consider this: The University of Central Florida in Orlando is home to the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, and hundreds of those students intern across Rosen's four hotel properties each year.

“When you see him interact with guests, it is exactly as he wants us to act,” Hosford says. “Mr. Rosen also sets the example by taking a strong personal interest in his employees.”

Rob Carey is a freelance writer and principal of Meetings & Hospitality Insight.



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Tech Brings Hole-In-One Contest, Training Mechanics to Everyday Play

Founded in 2014 by two former executives for Redbox, technology firm Swing King has forged agreements with more than 175 courses nationwide to provide camera technology that allows for a hole-in-one contest during everyday play, generating additional revenue for the facility with little additional effort.

For participating courses, Swing King installs either two or three cameras inconspicuously on a 12-foot pole along the treeline behind a par-3 green, with at least one camera focused on the tee boxes and another focused on the green. In return for absorbing the \$15,000 installation cost, Swing King negotiates a revenue share of the per-player fee. Swing King CEO Mike Jakob notes that at resort and destination courses that use the system, it's been most effective to add the player cost in the form of a resort fee or amenity fee charged along with the greens fee and cart fee.

To make that mandatory fee palatable to all players, some courses provide other benefits. For instance, at Diplo-

mat Golf and Tennis Club in Hollywood, Florida, general manager Lewis Rissman added in early 2017 a \$2.50 resort fee to the total playing charge. This not only entered players into the contest but also provided them with a cooling towel for use that day plus bottled water. And to generate excitement for the reward that awaits the ace maker – which can range for \$2,500 to \$25,000 based on the fee – Swing King provides on-property marketing materials and signage.

In the Diplomat's case, \$1 of the resort fee went to Swing King and \$1.50 went to the golf shop.

"We had exactly one player complain about the fee in the several months we've had it," Rissman notes. And in a stroke of good fortune, Rissman had five holes-in-one paying out \$2,500 each over the course of just two months in 2017, which garnered plenty of local media attention for his facility. Not only is that reward paid out by an insurance firm contracted by Swing King, but each player who makes an ace receives from Swing King an HD video of the entire shot from tee

to cup, accompanied by professional production values and music.

"These short videos are easily shareable on social media, so the players and the courses are pushing them out there and generating a lot of awareness for the facility," Jakob says.

At the other end of the cost spectrum is another recent product development for generating more golf business. RoboGolfPro is a \$150,000 robotic swing trainer that allows golfers to feel the ideal swing for their athletic ability and physique. The robot "builds your swing in a way that resists mistakes and bad habits" while making corrections on the spot in a way where players actually feel the perfect swing and therefore create correct muscle memory.

As of March, only 30 RoboGolfPro units were in existence, including one at One and Only Palmilla Resort in Los Cabos, Mexico, where members and guests are able to partake in lessons using the robot. The company would not comment on how many more units are scheduled to be built in 2018. -RC

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TURN ON THE LIGHTS

Bringing more players — and more money — to the course can be as simple as opening the course when people have the free time to join in the fun

You don't have to stop working on your golf game just because the sun's gone down. For some, the best time to practice can be after dark.

A case in point is Alico Family Golf Center in Fort Meyers, Florida. The lighted, nine-hole short course's holes range from 33 to 80 yards long. The company strove to build a golf community focused on improving games over short periods of time, especially at night — a more convenient time for many.

Since competition and fun go hand-in-hand, Alico created a night league held on its short course. This is the league's third year, with each session lasting eight weeks.

By Steve Donahue



Kraig Feighery, Alico Family Golf Center general manager (with club), says the short-course leagues have had a significant impact.

Alico also is holding two-person women's and youth leagues using the Stableford format, both focusing on the short game. The events, which cost \$15 per round, fit the facility's culture and motto of Learn-Practice-Play.

"There have been multiple bottom-line impacts, including an overall increase in business of 20 percent," says General Manager Kraig Feighery. "Additionally, Alico has had an increase of 50 percent in short-course business during league play, totaling about 1,200 rounds among 200 people. Secondly, the facility has seen a 10-percent increase in lessons for league participants, along with a small increase in sales of wedges, putters and golf balls. We've also had a surge in night business. I also sell 50 percent more food and beverage on a league night, with high energy and a fun atmosphere. I cannot emphasize enough that our short-course league has played a significant role in lowering scores and increasing the fun in the game for many in our community. What else could you ask for?"

For the \$15, league participants get a drink and round of golf; also a portion of the fee goes to prize money.

"On an eight-week league the net profit alone was over \$1,000 and that was modest," says Feighery. "After they play, they buy a Gatorade, draft beer or glass of wine. The expense goes right to your winnings, the pot. The \$25 per person (two-

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continued from page 19

man teams) buy-in is affordable. If you're running a league like that you take a piece off that for prizes, awards and for the facility. Now you just work for numbers. It can be very profitable. We keep trying to get more leagues going. We've been asked by a country club and a women's association to do a league on Tuesday mornings ... There's another night league that wants to play here, so if you take that formula on a couple of nights it's not difficult to make a nice profit once things are up and running."

Since the beginning of 2016, Feighery has created eight leagues.

"It has been awesome. Down here there's not a lot of night golf, so to claim we're the only ones, at least in the county, to have night golf is pretty cool. Women are playing in it, too, so we handicapped it. In one league, two ladies who were at least 22 handicaps won the league going up against plus handicaps. Some of the better handicaps finished second and third, but we made sure that wasn't going to happen every week, so we did a hole-in-one contest and it ended up being really cool."

While Fort Myers-area courses are basically accessible for many, golf has become less accessible for juniors, says Feighery.

"I don't know why there aren't courses with three-, six- and nine-hole rates for juniors," he adds. "I have juniors who want to play 18 or nine, but the course is making them pay a full rate so we made our course accessible to juniors all year. So we have a built-in feeder system to that junior league that's Monday through Friday, where juniors can play for \$1 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., or hit a bucket of balls and parents can pay \$5"

Since introducing night leagues, Alico's sales have increased.



"Anytime you can keep anyone longer or bring them back you've got a shot. That's what we're all looking for."

"Golfers eat, drink and hang around the facility," says Feighery. "Anytime you can keep anyone longer or bring them back you've got a shot. That's what we're all looking for."

"Food and beverage sales are also up 50 percent on league nights," says Feighery. "We're growing and the word keeps getting out. People know they can eat here, where there's high energy and a fun atmosphere. The price is good and there's a lot of value. You get really creative, too. We've got a local

sponsor. We have a contract with some of the food chains where they supply food for us and bring it here. You have to be creative."

Alico's food menu is "pretty rudimentary, nothing really crazy," Feighery says. "Grilled food, adult beverages, finger food, snacks. Nothing like a full menu yet. We've been solicited on several attempts but we're content right now what we're doing."

Steve Donahue is a Connecticut-based freelance writer.



Business Golf Days Can Entice Novice Players to Get in the Game

Most Jack Nicklaus-designed golf courses are private. That's not the case with the Golf Club of Mansion Ridge, a Nicklaus signature design in Monroe, New York, that attracts players from miles around.

To bring in local daily golfers and increase rounds during off-peak times, in 2015 Mansion Ridge began inviting local business employees for a day of golf instruction and play.

Most of these participants are novice golfers so, the goal is to encourage them to play, says Director of Golf Nick Schremser.

"We try to make it fun and affordable," says Schremser. "The company always pays for it, hands down. We do it locally because the sizes of businesses are smaller. We

usually charge \$35 for the clinic and \$50 for the on-course play. Players are given a dozen Titleist logoed golf balls and provided two hours of instruction on everything from set up and full swing to short game and putting. The golfers then hit the links for nine holes of golf. We set up tee markers in the middle of the fairways, maybe 150 yards away, on some of the par 4s, and use oversized cups. The golf is followed by food, drink and stories of the day."

There was one program in 2015 with 16 players, two programs in 2016, averaging 24 per session, and two more with a total 34 players in 2017.

"This program has brought dozens of new golfers to our course," says Schremser. "It has proven a successful method of growing the game at Mansion Ridge."

The facility derives revenue from attendees' rental clubs (usually priced at \$50 per bag) and other miscellaneous sales before and after the participants play. Pro-shop credit is awarded as prizes. Mansion Ridge's group food-and-beverage packages range from \$15 to \$40.

"Golf instruction has increased, as nearly 30 percent of the participants have returned for further lessons," says Schremser. "Even with the cost being less than the normal \$70, two-hour clinic rate and the \$30, nine-hole twilight rate, this program has room to grow even more." -SD



Bee Barometer Project a Sweet Opportunity for Environmental Initiative

There has been quite the buzz since 2010 at Cantigny Golf Club. That's because the Wheaton, Illinois, daily fee's Director of Horticulture Scott Witte's Bee Barometer Project has provided an important habitat for honeybees and other pollinators. The project has shown golf can help sustain pollinator health while Witte promotes bee health to golf courses and organizations.

"I've always been an ambassador for golf's environment," says Witte, in his 23rd year at Cantigny, where he maintains six domesticated hives and introduced several acres of native prairie areas to attract honeybees and other pollinating insects. "When I started the Bee Barometer Project in 2010, it kind of emanated from

the concept of since honeybees provide the barometer for environmental health, I always knew we were maintaining a healthy golf environment that would foster healthy honeybees and colonies and I wanted to prove it."

Witte has also turned his honeybee crusade into a cash cow of sorts to fund his environmental programs, including the operation's status as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. Bottled raw honey and lip balm from Witte's hives are sold in Cantigny's pro shop. At Cantigny's restaurant, Le Jardin, Executive Chef Frank Bellino uses Witte's honey in various recipes, including the lamb chops' marinade.

"Funds I earn from the sale of Cantigny honey I apply towards my Pro Pollinator

Fund," says Witte, who also delivers speeches throughout the Chicago area. "In 2016, when I won the Bayer Bee Care Community Leadership Award, I was awarded a \$6,000 grant and through the assistance of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation. I was able to increase that Pro Pollinator Fund to \$18,000 due to some matching to the foundation. Now my goal for 2018 is to find a couple of select golf courses in the Chicago area to work with those grant monies to implement pollinator projects on their golf courses where this can work in perpetuity. That's why most of the honey and lip balm is sold to raise funds for the Pollinator Fund, but I also have future plans for the Bee Barometer Project, but that's to come." -SD

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“I put together a little commercial they played on local TV. It didn’t work.”

— ALLEN SELF

By Kyle Darbyson

SPRING INTO ACTION

Board members at Indian Spring could see the writing on the wall and decided to put their club up for sale while they still had some leverage.

It’s understandable that newly minted stakeholders at struggling clubs would want the chance to turn things around during their tenure. No one wants to be the person to admit defeat and throw in the towel. Despite best intentions, a pattern can repeat for years without the systemic problems being addressed, leading to catastrophic results.

This was nearly the fate of Indian Spring Country Club in Boynton Beach, Florida. Former club president Bill Aronson says he fell into this trap himself. With membership aging and numbers stagnating, the former advertising executive fell back on his well-honed craft.

“I put together a little commercial they played on local TV,” he says, adding dryly, “It didn’t work.”

President Ron Schulman (left) and General Manager Bill Aronson of Indian Spring Country Club in Boynton Beach, Florida.

© 2018 Photo Jennifer Koczor

Even then, nine years ago, Aronson saw the writing on the wall. “We’re an older club and we just weren’t attracting younger members to replace anyone that left.”

On his last day as president, a local realtor approached him and planted the seed. “She asked if we were interested in selling the club.”

The timing didn’t work then, but the seed was planted. Successive presidents tried their own approaches to avoid selling, but the downward trend continued. With the ticking demographic time bomb only getting worse, pragmatic board members finally decided to act while they still had some leverage. They let it be known the property was for sale, and began approaching potential partners.

“One faction wanted to sell nine holes to a developer and build more units there,” Aronson says. Other members feared any buyer would go much further than nine holes, perhaps even developing real estate across the entire property.

Enter Concert Golf Partners, a private equity firm that has been recapitalizing distressed private clubs since 2011, and viewed Indian Spring as an extremely attractive asset. “We saw a lot of issues we thought we could solve,” explains Concert CEO Peter Nanula. “We could pay the debt off, fund some capital projects and eliminate the ‘management by committee’ that holds back a lot of places like this.”



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Perhaps more important to the members at Indian Spring, Concert committed to keeping both 18-hole courses open for at least 10 years.

Town halls kept the members abreast to negotiations. Nanula says his message to members was simple. "We will fix the balance sheet and we will preserve your traditions, culture and identity. And all the risk is on us, not on you."

The message was well received, with over 90 percent of voting equity members approving the sale.

A full-time marketing and sales director was brought in, who set out to attract younger members to the club. "We are looking heavily outside the development, trying to lower the average age of our golfers," Nanula says.

Concert's plan includes visiting nearby communities that lack golf amenities and enticing those residents with significantly discounted membership opportunities.

The deep pockets of Concert allow for aggressive plays like this, and they also put a lot of prospects at ease. "I think knowing you aren't going to get dinged for assessments every year is important to a lot of people," says Aronson.

So far, close to 30 members from outside the Indian Spring community have taken up membership. What's more, they're considerably younger than most current members, building a foundation for long-term stability that's been missing for years.

Existing members have already seen what Aronson calls "immense improvements" to the golf courses. And, he says, they have bigger investments in the social aspect of their member experience to look forward to (see sidebar, at right).

"Some won't be done by the time a lot of us are gone, but we're all feeling a lot better about the future of our club."

Kyle Darbyson is a Vancouver-based freelance writer.



Indian Spring Goes Social to Retain it's Core Membership

Bill Aronson has lived in Indian Spring for 28 years, and he's not alone in that impressive tenure. "The average age of a golfer here is 80," he says. It's a problem faced by a lot of communities in Florida. Retirees that moved in during their late 50s or 60s are now aging out of golf, leaving clubs scrambling for revenue and members increasingly frustrated with the perceived value of their memberships.

Staff at Indian Spring are meeting the challenge head on.

"The idea is to build a great social program," says past club president Aronson. Members now have access to guest speakers, themed dinners, even wine mixers. "We had nothing like this when I first got here."

Concert Golf Partners also sees the value in retaining these older members. They're investing in a stage for the main dining area to allow dinner theaters and plan to upgrade the lounging deck around the pool. The golf department also has developed 9-hole golf programs aimed squarely at players in their twilight years.

Programming like this is only possible with a solid base of young, dues-paying golf members. Which is why Concert is going so hard after younger players from outside the gates of Indian Spring.

"Sometimes a member-owned club is less willing or successful at doing this themselves," admits Concert CEO Peter Nanula. The early numbers suggest Concert is both willing, and capable. -KB



Oakbourne Teams Up With University for New Facility

By Kyle Darbyson

Members at Oakbourne Country Club in Lafayette, Louisiana, have long enjoyed sharing their course with the student athletes from nearby University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

General Manager Greg Klemp says the club has provided access to both the practice area and championship golf course since the '80s. "It's always been part of our commitment to the community."

Now that long-term relationship has reached grand new heights with the opening of a 5,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art practice facility.

"It's really the pinnacle of a 20-year relationship," Klemp says.

The facility is comprised of two separate buildings – one housing coaches' offices and locker rooms, the other a high-tech indoor hitting area packed with swing analysis equipment, video cameras and more.

It's a huge boon for the university's Ragin' Cajuns. Previously, they had no training facility of any kind, or even locker rooms. It made it difficult for coach Theo Sliman to attract top talent. "This will definitely enhance our recruiting."

At Oakbourne, members lost a portion of their driving range tee, but gained full-time access to one of three bays inside the hitting range. If that weren't enough, they also secured use

of all the gadgets the elite collegiate golfers use to hone their skills.

Head golf professional Cliff Wagner says the trade-off has been a great one for his members. "The feedback has been awesome," he says.

The \$800,000 facility was paid for entirely by donations from boosters of the Ragin' Cajuns. Klemp says the buildings require minimal time for upkeep, but considers that a tiny investment.

"This facility has become one of our core assets," he explains. Prospective members are being enticed by an outstanding golf course, pool, tennis courts and now, this unrivalled teaching facility. "That's a pretty good mix, if you ask me."

TPC Network Sets Capital-Expenditure Trend

A good economy helps. Rising tides raise all ships and as golf operators will attest, when people have extra income and feel optimistic about the future, they play more golf, buy more equipment, take more lessons and generally engage more with the game.

But that optimism and increase in business doesn't always lead owners to make much-needed capital improvements. Some operators use the extra cash to catch up on past-due bills. Others use it to beat back the banker or placate anxious investors. Too many fail to do things like repave cart-paths, renovate bunkers, convert greens to more updated and tolerant grasses, replace carpet, add a gym or invest in a myriad of other capital improvements that would keep the product current and your business competitive.

The PGA Tour is most certainly not among those owners. In April, the TPC Network, which is owned by the PGA Tour and was originally established as a funding mechanism for the tour's retirement plan, announced the acquisition of TPC Danzante Bay in Baja, Mexico, the fourth international facility own by PGA Tour Golf Course Properties. The Rees Jones course, 11 oceanfront holes that opened in 2016 with the remaining seven holes coming online in December 2017, became a TPC club three months after all 18 holes opened for play.

But that acquisition is a small part of what the tour has done to keep golfers engaged with the brand. In recent months, a deal was struck with Parsons Extreme Golf (PXG), designating 12 TPC facilities as master fitting hubs. Also, TPC Sugarloaf in Atlanta just wrapped up phase two of a \$20 million renovation project. TPC Colorado in Berthoud is slated to open this summer (the first ground-up golf course development in the state in a decade); TPC River Highlands in Cromwell, Connecticut, is getting a new clubhouse; TPC Summerlin in Las Vegas just completed an extensive bunker renovation project; and TPC Deere Run in Silvis, Illinois, and TPC Southwind in Memphis, Tennessee, have both undergone capital renovations that will be displayed at their respective tour events (the John Deere Classic and FedEx St. Jude Classic).

"Providing exceptional golf experiences for our members, guests and pros is always a top priority," said Jim Triola, PGA Tour Golf Course Properties chief operating officer. "However, in a time where options are abundant and families' interests are constantly evolving, we recognize the importance of a well-rounded club. Capital improvement projects are designed to enhance the overall TPC experience, providing all levels of membership with the tools to create lasting memories with friends and loved ones."

Mom and pop owners might have trouble relating to the resources of the PGA Tour, but the commitment to acquisition and capital improvement – pouring money back into the business while you can – is a universal must no matter the size of your business.

Steve Eubanks is an Atlanta-based freelance writer and New York Times bestselling author.



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REVERSAL OF FORTUNES

BY STEVE EUBANKS

FOREST DUNES RESORT GM CHAD MAVEUS KNOWS THE GROWING
REVERSIBLE COURSE TREND MAKES BIG USE OF SMALL SPACES

The idea is as old as the game itself, part of golf's fabric dating back to the days of flasks and Featheries. Yet, it somehow slipped away, a fading memory in a distant mist. The fact is, the first reversible golf course – a course that could be played in a traditional sense from No.1 tee to No.1 green and onward in sequential order, and then reversed so that the last (or often the penultimate) green became the first – was also the first golf course.

continued on page 38

Forest Dunes Resort General Manager Chad Maveus says construction and land costs make reversible golf courses attractive.

© 2018 Photo by Jeffrey White

"NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE COMMUNICATE THE CONCEPT, UNTIL PEOPLE SEE THE LOOP, THEY CAN'T UNDERSTAND OR APPRECIATE IT."

The Old Course at St. Andrews, Scotland, founded in the year 1413, was for centuries played in both directions depending on the day, the time of year, the wind and the conditions. Sometimes locals would grab a handful of hickory niblicks, mashies, cleeks and spoons and play the course as it is seen today,

in a counterclockwise loop from the current first tee behind the Royal & Ancient clubhouse, across the Swilken Burn to the first green and on from there. But other days and times, golfers wearing woolen coats and high collars would tee off from the current first tee and play to the 17th green. Then they would play to the 16th green; then tee off from the 16th tee and play to the 15th green, and on in that fashion (a clockwise loop around the links) until they reached the second tee, where they would play to the current 18th green. Reversing the links was as common in St. Andrews as a cold summer rain.

Today, The Old Course is too popular and busy to flip the routing, although the St. Andrews Links Trust (which owns the course) does host "the left-hand loop" every April where the course is played backward for nostalgia's sake.

But the reversible routing idea is far from dead. In fact, it seems to be making a come-

back, this time (for the first time) in America. "Part of the resurgence of reversible golf courses is based on the cost of land and cost of construction," said Chad Maveus, general manager at Forest Dunes Resort in Roscommon, Michigan.

Forest Dunes was once a ranch abutting the Huron National Forest owned by William Durant, the founder of General Motors. Later, part of the land became a hunting and camping retreat for Michigan's gangland bootleggers. Then, in 2002, new owners introduced golf to the area with the Tom Weiskopf-designed Forest Dunes Golf Club. After one bankruptcy and the angst that every golf owner went through during the Great Recession, trucking magnet Lew Thompson bought the resort, built a lodge and began looking to add more golf. That's when one of America's most noted architects came in with a novel idea.

"Tom Doak had read a lot about reversible golf," Maveus said. In fact, Doak had done more than read about it. Reversible courses had been his obsession for more than 30 years.

"There have been reversible courses at private estates throughout this country and there were once a number of reversible courses in parts of Europe," Maveus said. "Obviously, Tom knew about The Old Course and some others."

In America, the number of reversible courses was sparse. John D. Rockefeller, who did not play golf, built a couple of reversible nines on two of his estates. Robert Trent Jones added a nine-hole reversible par-three course to the 36-holes at Cragun's Resort in Minnesota. And Tripp Davis had built a nine-hole reversible course called



Pictured left: Course architect Tom Doak was obsessed with the reversible concept for 30 years. Pictured right: Owner Lew Thompson bought Forest Dunes after the Great Recession.

SILVIAS VALLEY RANCH JOINS THE Reversible Party

American golf existed for more than a century without a full-sized reversible golf course.

Within a year, it had two. Not long after The Loop opened in Michigan, Silvias Valley Ranch in eastern Oregon premiered its reversible course.

Dr. Scott Campbell, a veterinarian who owns the Banfield Pet Clinics that operate out of PetSmart stores, owns Silvias Valley, which is

1,400 acres, so land was not the reason for making the course reversible. The idea came about because, like Doak at Forest Dunes, architect Dan Hixson had been thinking about reversible golf since he was seven years old and saw Robert Trent Jones reverse Chandler Egan's original routing of Eugene Country Club in 1968.

When Dr. Campbell flew Hixson out to Oregon to walk the property, the architect asked about the idea of making six interior holes reversible. Campbell looked at Hixson like the RCA dog look-

ing into the Victrola. But after Hixson told Campbell the story of St. Andrews and the history of reversible golf, the doctor said, "Let's make the whole thing reversible."

Today, Silvias Valley Ranch has 27 greens (nine are closed each day) representing six different routings.

So, while it took more than a century for reversible golf to reach the states, with the success of Silvias Valley Ranch, The Loop at Forest Dunes and the Bobby Jones Golf Course in Atlanta, it appears that reversibility is here to stay. -SE

continued on page 40

“Proving Grounds” in Malakoff, Texas.

The most famous reversible course in the states also is the most exclusive. Sunnylands, the estate of the late Walter Annenberg, sits at the corner of Frank Sinatra and Bob Hope drives in Palm Springs, California. Behind the coral-colored walls and tropical plants that buffer the compound from the bustling desert streets lies a beautiful botanical garden (open to the public); a main house, along with a number of guest quarters, where world leaders meet to discuss weighty matters of state; and a nine-hole reversible golf course that Gary Player once called “perhaps the best little golf course in the world.” President Ronald Reagan used to play the reversible course with Annenberg every Christmas and prominent political and business figures still swat a few around the Dick Wilson-designed masterpiece.

“It’s fantastic, some of Dick Wilson’s best work,” said Drew Kerr, the current superintendent at Sunnylands. “There was originally a design for 18 holes but, of course, it was Mr. Annenberg’s backyard so he could do what he wanted with it. Nine and a driving range made more sense. So, Dick put tee boxes at different angles and from different lengths. That really gives you the feeling that it is 18 different holes. Couple that with the fact that we go behind every group, rake bunkers and change cups for our guests, and when they play (the same greens a second time) they don’t get the feeling that they’re playing the same hole.”

From its championship routing, Sunnylands can stretch to 7,200 yards, but few people play it from there. In fact, few people play it at all.

“We’re not a golf course first,” Kerr said. “First and foremost, we’re a Camp David of the West, a retreat for world leaders to come and meet and think in a relaxed setting. Golf is a bi-product. We play less than 100 rounds every year. I talk to the superintendents at conferences and they’ll ask me, ‘How many rounds did you play last year?’ and I say,



‘50.’ They look at me and say, ‘50,000?’ and I say, ‘Uh, no, 50. Five-oh.’”

They play a few more than that these days. Sunnylands now partners with the First Tee of the Desert, allowing kids in the program to come out in the spring, use the range and play the course on occasion. While they are there, the kids learn about the history of the estate and its mission.

“They’ll also get a tour of the gardens and go out with me so I can explain to them about being a superintendent,” Kerr said.

MAKING BUSINESS SENSE

Most course owners are not Walter Annenberg or J.D. Rockefeller. Golf in the 21st century has to make a modicum of business sense. Doak knew that when he looked at Lew Thompson’s place in northern Michigan. The architect also knew the market. Doak understood that if you wanted to separate yourself in a saturated industry, you had to do something radically different; something that raised

eyebrows and made people talk; something that kept pass-through golfers on the property an extra night, maybe two.

The result was The Loop, the first fully reversible course in America.

“No matter how much we communicate the concept, until people see The Loop, they can’t understand or appreciate it,” Maveus said. “If you were to come out and play The Loop and you didn’t know it was a reversible golf course, and then you came out the next morning and played again, you would have no idea. It is truly a mind-blowing experience. The two directions really look nothing like each other. We’re on the same land but it’s a totally different routing, a totally different look and feel.

“The only way I’ve been able to express it to people is to tell them to take their favorite hole at their home club and if you could play it backward, what would it look like? You would change the scenery; you’d change the backdrop; you’d change the landing areas and the bunkering; you’d change

“WE LOVED THE CONCEPT OF GETTING TWO COURSES FOR THE PRICE OF ONE.”

ness reason for building a reversible golf course. In the case of the Bobby Jones Golf Course in Atlanta, the reason was simple: there wasn’t enough room to do anything else.

An old 18-hole municipal facility in the heart of North Atlanta, the game and the area had outgrown Bobby Jones GC. “It had become dangerous,” said Dr. Bob Jones IV, the grandson of the great Bobby Jones and one of the men most instrumental in the course’s current redesign. “The course was too short and too compact for today’s technology and the number of rounds being played there,” Jones said. “Unfortunately, Atlanta hasn’t stopped growing. So, there was no room to expand the golf course.”

The answer was to have noted architect Bob Cupp (who passed away in 2017) convert the 18-hole facility into a reversible 9-hole course with a world-class practice facility, a short course for beginners, and a clubhouse that will become Golf House Georgia, the home of the Georgia State Golf Association, the Georgia Section PGA and the Georgia Golf Hall of Fame.

“We’ll have 18 sets of tees and nine greens,” said Whitney Crouse, CEO of Mosaic Clubs and Resorts, which is managing the construction. “Nine holes present a number of challenges. You have to get everybody off the first wave before you start the second wave going the other direction, but it’s a really neat concept, one that’s going to attract a lot of attention and a lot of outing business.”

The Georgia State University golf teams will use Bobby Jones GC as their home practice facilities and the foundation that is funding the renovation has raised \$20 million of the projected \$24

million needed to complete the project.

“Bob Cupp did a great job,” Crouse said. “When you’re in a land-locked setting like this, reversible is a viable option.”

But that recommendation came with a note of caution. “This isn’t as simple as building a few new tees and saying, ‘Okay, now play the course the other direction,’” Crouse said. “You have to have greens that receive shots from totally different directions. Your bunkering has to be very strategic. You’re basically building one green for two completely different holes. So, while the idea is great, it’s not a tweak here or there: this is a total rebuild, an entirely new facility, a new concept.”

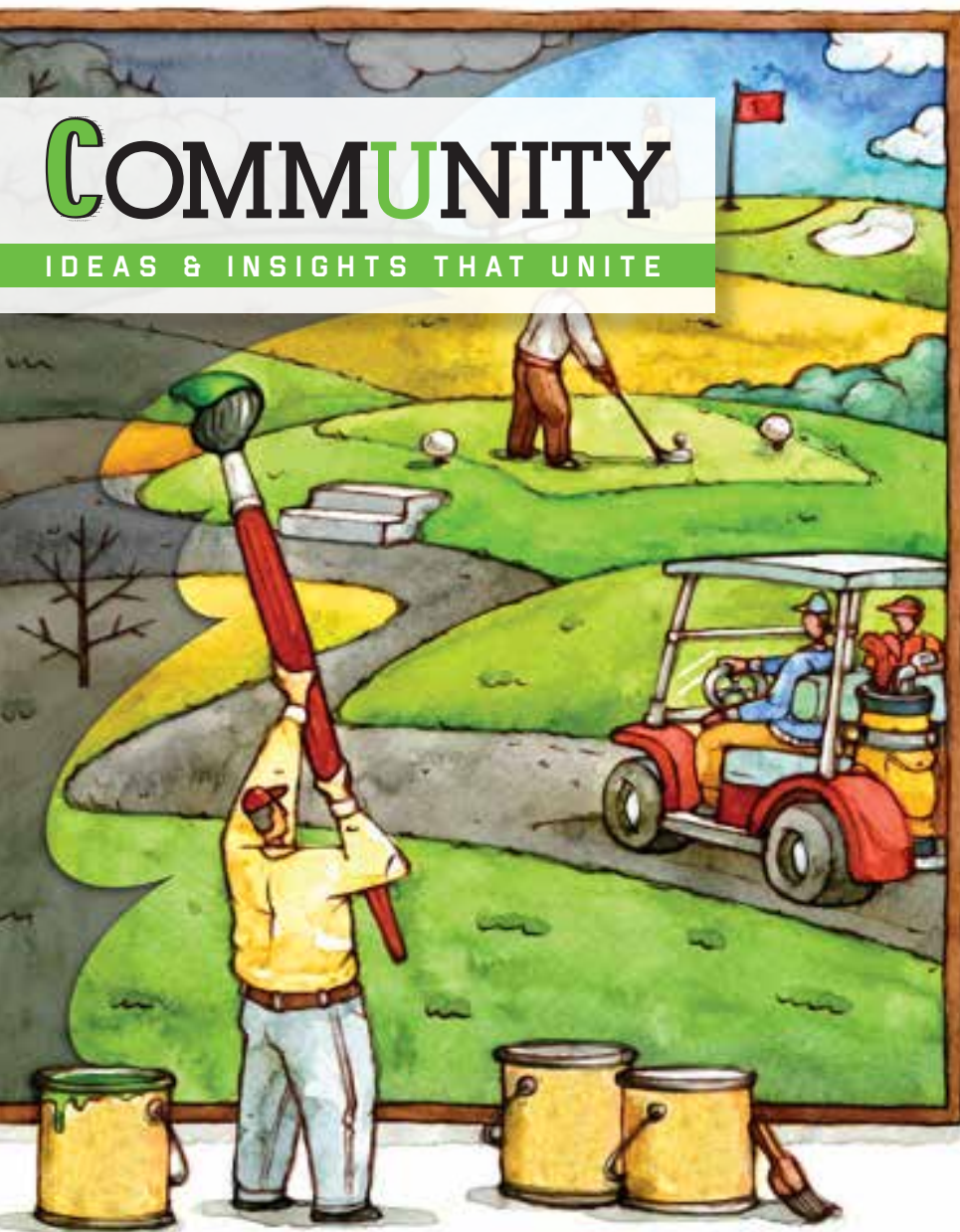
Maveus agreed with that insight. “It’s a lot more subtly invasive than I first imagined,” he said. “Bunkers that are in play one day, you don’t even see them the next. The greens complexes could not be traditionally sloped from front to back. On one hole, we have a huge greenside waste bunker, but when you flip the golf course, you don’t even see it. So, there are a lot of intricacies involved.”

There are also a lot of benefits from a business standpoint.

“We loved the concept of getting two courses for the price of one,” Maveus said. “Water, pesticides, fertilizer, equipment: we have the benefits of three golf courses but the operating expenses of two. People can stay here three days, play golf every day without playing the same hole twice and yet we’re maintaining two courses.

“Those things have opened people’s eyes. In terms of resource management and conservation, the reversible concept really makes a lot of sense.”

Steve Eubanks is an Atlanta-based freelance writer and New York Times bestselling author.



COMMUNITY

IDEAS & INSIGHTS THAT UNITE

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- > Build retention by proving that your company is a great place to work
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Those are only a few of the opportunities you have during employees' first weeks at your company. But how can you take advantage of them? Here are eight approaches that work.

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Many companies just wing it, with negative results. Still other companies see onboarding as little more than filling out forms, setting up company email accounts and showing new employees to their desks. Because new hires start their jobs without a deeper understanding of what is expected of them, they make mistakes that quickly become costly habits that must be corrected later on.

Many problems can be avoided if you set up a structured onboarding system that functions as high-level training. On their start days, new hires can meet individually with HR representatives to fill out forms, for example, and then meet as a group to watch videos and learn about your company, its brand and its values. After lunch, they can be trained in the basic skills their jobs demand; watching training videos, engaging in work simulations and working alongside current employees can help to reach those goals. And after day one, they should attend regular follow-ups to address problems and reinforce basic concepts and skills.

The operative strategy is to clearly define ahead of time exactly the skills and behaviors you need, and to create a concise mini-curriculum that tracks to them.

2 Set up genuine mentoring relationships between new hires and successful current employees.

Remember, mentors' goals should not be to get new hires to imitate what they do, or even to adhere to company systems. Their purpose is to discover what new employees would like to accomplish at your company, and to help them reach those goals. In short, mentoring is not about the mentors or strictly about your company, but about the employees who are being coached.

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mediate managers, you have created a communication structure that carries a risk of de-motivating front-line and entry-level personnel; just one supervisor who stifles new ideas can do great damage to your company.

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One thing is for certain: if you are only handing out employee handbooks and having new employees fill out withholding forms, you are missing out on some great opportunities. If you can train every new retail salesperson to sell just 10 percent more on every order, for example, that could result in hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of new business company-wide, maybe even more. Or if you can set up mobile training that sends out pings to remind employees to use specific skills they learned in training, you could increase your training ROI dramatically. The lesson? Spending a little more to deliver great training is a moneymaker, not a cost.

5 Within your budget, customize training for each employee.

Creating individualized training elements for each new employee can enrich even "standardized" training. You can evaluate the skills of your new hires during training and address them directly, for example, or help employees overcome anxiety about performing certain parts of their new jobs. Investing just a little time to give training extra value can go a long way toward getting new employees up to speed faster.

6 Stress and reinforce your mission statement, vision statement and strategic company plan.

The onboarding period is a highly effective time to share the big picture about your company and to get employees to buy into your most important goals and priorities. Instead of waiting for employees to discover

these critical priorities, start talking about them soon after new hires come on board.

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You won't want to do this for seasonal or short-term employees. But for employees, whom you would like to stay with you for the long term, consider sitting down with each of them to create individual career-development plans that spell out what they need to do to be promoted within your organization. You could say, for example, that all retail salespeople can apply for management training after six months of employment, or that your company will provide technical training to help them move into their desired career path at your company.

Millennials, especially, are more likely to stay with your company for the long term if they know the ropes and understand what it takes to build a long-term relationship with your organization.

8 Evaluate whether you are acting like a great employer.

This is something you should always do, not only when you are training a new class of employees. So take the time now to benchmark your company climate, benefits, quality of work/life balance and other factors against other companies. Unless you have the best of everything, you cannot expect your employees to commit their hearts and minds to working with you for the long term.

You see, retention starts with you, not with your employees. Unless you commit your efforts to becoming an "employer of choice" — a company that people talk about and would love to work for — you are damaging your profits, operations and ultimately, your success.

Cordell Riley is a keynote speaker, and the owner and president of Tortal Training, a training development company.



Merchandise Swap Generates Extra Gift Certificate Sales

By Steve Donahue

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Members bring in their merchandise with their names and on them, and receive a golf shop gift certificate for the value. To purchase items from the swap room, members and resort guests must also use gift certificates. Resort guests can buy, but not sell. About 20 percent of 2014 purchasers were resort guests.

“We run everything through point of sale so the club receives all the revenue,” Polk says. “If we’re putting all the effort and responsibility for the members’ old equipment, then this was how we were going to have a vested interest in it, and help promote and push it.”

Polk promotes the swap with clubhouse signage, e-blasts and word of mouth.

In the first year, the sale generated \$4,500 worth of gift certificates and almost \$6,000 in 2015. Polk doesn’t have 2016 figures, but says 2017 sales were up 10 percent to 15 percent over 2015.

More items were brought in to sell in 2017 than in 2016 says Polk, who doesn’t have an exact number, although he estimates about 70 percent of items brought in are sold and that about 85 percent of members who receive gift certificates for used equipment end up purchasing items in the golf shop worth more than the value of their certificates.

“If you’re a club, you’re looking to make more money. Make it easy and convenient for the members who have stuff in the corner of their garage,” Polk says. “It’s not doing them any good having an old set of clubs from the ’90s sitting there. Throw a sticker on them for \$25 and somebody new to golf can get a new set of golf clubs for a great price and enjoy the game.”

Steve Donahue is a Connecticut-based freelance writer.

Golf for Life Program Gets Golfers Off on Right Foot

By Steve Donahue

Go low.
Play faster.
Have more fun.

These are the goals upon which Medinah Country Club Director of Golf Marty DeAngelo has built his “Golf for Life” system, designed to help golfers make the best of their game now, while making improvements for the future.

DeAngelo became invested in the idea after watching so many of Medinah’s foursomes, regardless of vast ability differences, all playing from the same set of tee markers.

“That makes for a long day waiting on other foursomes doing the same thing and guaranteeing lots of golfers having zero fun,” says DeAngelo, whose system aims to bring golfers back to the course without using handicaps.

Using Golf for Life, DeAngelo often plays with the members, both aiming to shoot 72. He sells them with science and a venue — Medinah’s No. 2 course — that promotes low scores. No. 2 reopened last June after Rees Jones’ restoration included removing 600 trees and adding 50 percent more fairway acreage and seven different tees on each hole, measuring from 1,978 to 6,408 yards. It’s Medinah’s only course with wall-to-wall cart paths, lipless bunkers and some fairway push-up tees.

With the Golf for Life system, each member starts by visiting with DeAngelo’s staff for a tee-box assignment



evaluation. Improvement recommendations are provided with a goal of reaching the next set of tee. Beginners start with three holes and progress to six, nine and eventually 18. Regardless of skill level, scorecards are turned in after each round so the evaluation continues. This allows golfers to understand which tees are appropriate for them.

Members definitely pushed back initially, particularly those playing from yardages too long, says DeAngelo.

“That’s the biggest challenge we have in these types of programs,” he says. “It’s an extension of the Tee It Forward campaign, but also a sys-

tem that incentivizes improving and spending more time on the course. All that is included to sell the program to the members because you can’t argue with facts. When they’re forced to play further up in an event, it’s amazing afterwards when they’re saying things like, ‘That’s my best round ever.’ It’s the excitement of making pars and birdies and challenging yourself to shoot par instead of challenging yourself to win a hole. This initiative will bring new people to the game.”

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3 FINAL THOUGHTS

Mark Luthman
Executive vice president & COO
Touchstone Golf
San Jose, California

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE OWNERS
FACE IN RETAINING TOP-NOTCH STAFF?

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It's key to provide mem-
bers of your team with
opportunities for devel-
opment, education and
career growth.

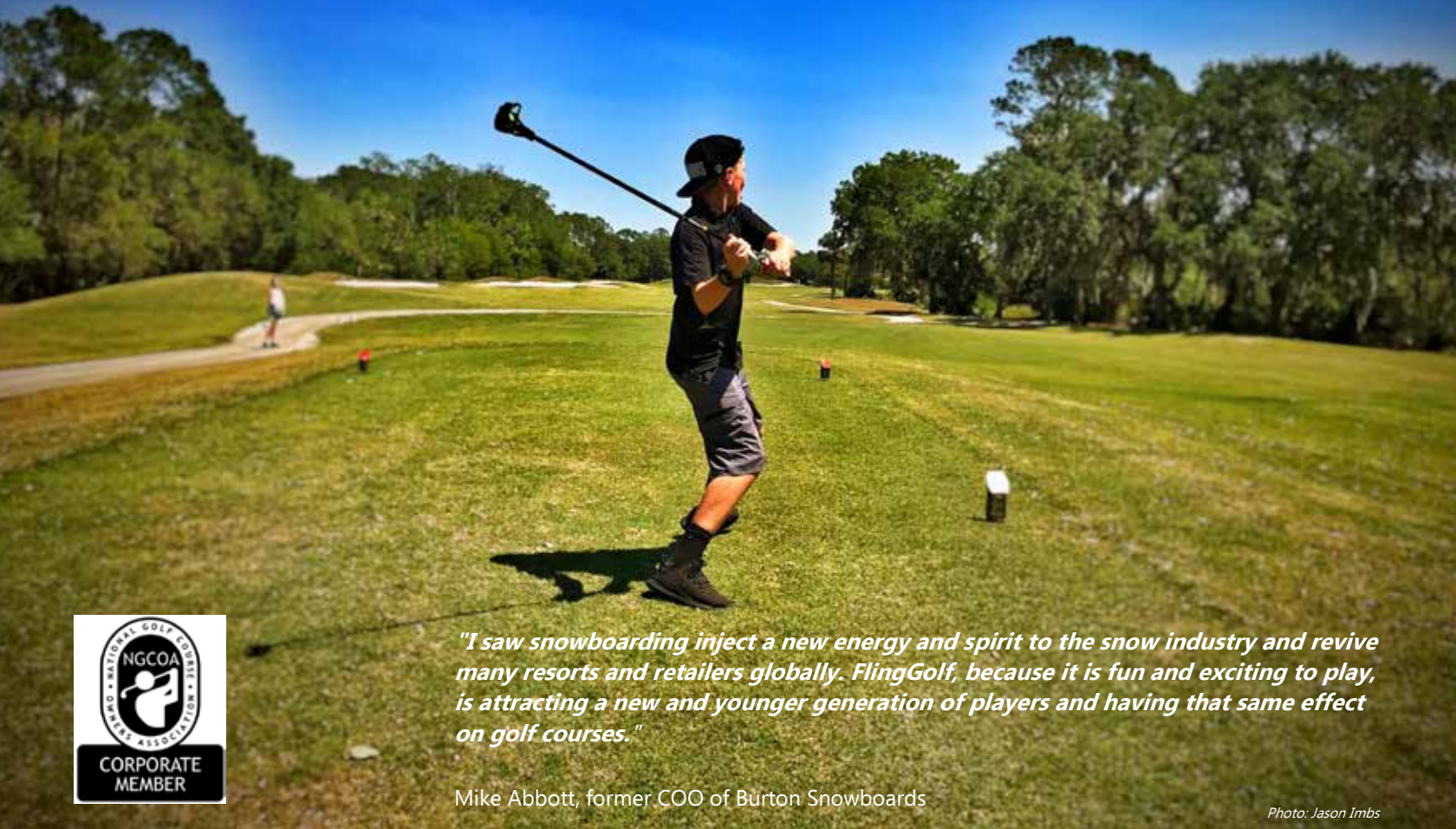
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS A KEY
MARKETING ELEMENT GOLF COURSE
OWNERS NEED TO INCORPORATE?

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Determining who
your guest is and tai-
loring your approach
and programming to
meet their needs.

WHAT'S ONE WAY FOR OWNERS
TO ADDRESS PLAYERS' TIME-
CRUNCH CONCERNS?

.....
Keep it moving on
your golf course.
An 18-hole round
should take four
hours, two for
nine. Commit to
those expectations.





"I saw snowboarding inject a new energy and spirit to the snow industry and revive many resorts and retailers globally. FlingGolf, because it is fun and exciting to play, is attracting a new and younger generation of players and having that same effect on golf courses."

Mike Abbott, former COO of Burton Snowboards

Photo: Jason Imbs

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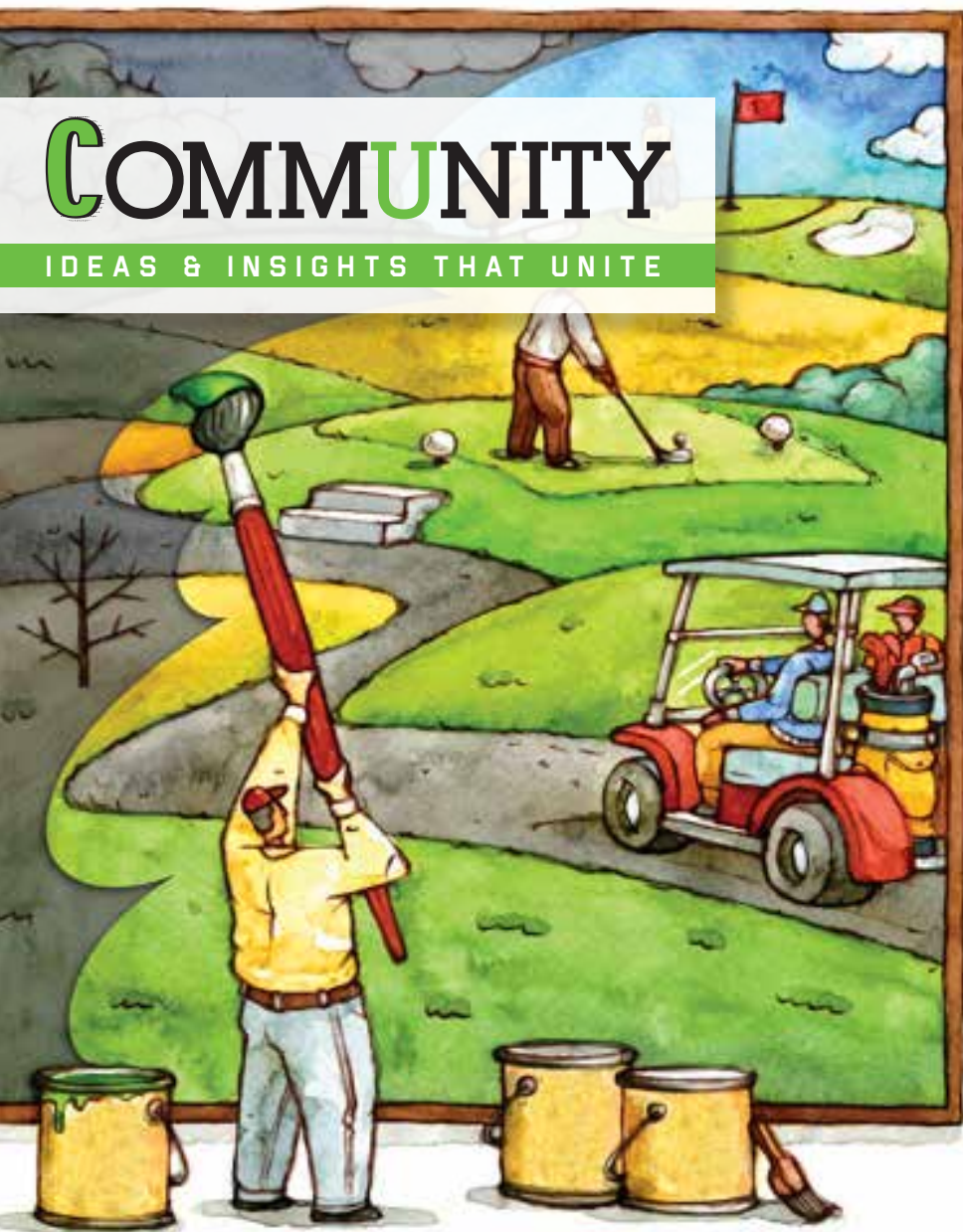
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These are the goals upon which Medinah Country Club Director of Golf Marty DeAngelo has built his “Golf for Life” system, designed to help golfers make the best of their game now, while making improvements for the future.

DeAngelo became invested in the idea after watching so many of Medinah’s foursomes, regardless of vast ability differences, all playing from the same set of tee markers.

“That makes for a long day waiting on other foursomes doing the same thing and guaranteeing lots of golfers having zero fun,” says DeAngelo, whose system aims to bring golfers back to the course without using handicaps.

Using Golf for Life, DeAngelo often plays with the members, both aiming to shoot 72. He sells them with science and a venue — Medinah’s No. 2 course — that promotes low scores. No. 2 reopened last June after Rees Jones’ restoration included removing 600 trees and adding 50 percent more fairway acreage and seven different tees on each hole, measuring from 1,978 to 6,408 yards. It’s Medinah’s only course with wall-to-wall cart paths, lipless bunkers and some fairway push-up tees.

With the Golf for Life system, each member starts by visiting with DeAngelo’s staff for a tee-box assignment



evaluation. Improvement recommendations are provided with a goal of reaching the next set of tee. Beginners start with three holes and progress to six, nine and eventually 18. Regardless of skill level, scorecards are turned in after each round so the evaluation continues. This allows golfers to understand which tees are appropriate for them.

Members definitely pushed back initially, particularly those playing from yardages too long, says DeAngelo.

“That’s the biggest challenge we have in these types of programs,” he says. “It’s an extension of the Tee It Forward campaign, but also a sys-

tem that incentivizes improving and spending more time on the course. All that is included to sell the program to the members because you can’t argue with facts. When they’re forced to play further up in an event, it’s amazing afterwards when they’re saying things like, ‘That’s my best round ever.’ It’s the excitement of making pars and birdies and challenging yourself to shoot par instead of challenging yourself to win a hole. This initiative will bring new people to the game.”

Steve Donahue is a Connecticut-based freelance writer.



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3

FINAL THOUGHTS

Mark Luthman
Executive vice president & COO
Touchstone Golf
San Jose, California

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career growth.

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your guest is and tai-
loring your approach
and programming to
meet their needs.

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3) What one option most closely matches your job function/title? (select one only)
01 President/CEO
02 Owner/Operator
03 Chairman of the Board
04 CFO/Financial Manager
05 General Manager
06 Club Manager
07 Director of Golf
08 Executive/National/Regional Director/Manager
09 Purchasing Manager/Buyer
10 Golf Professional
11 Golf Superintendent
12 Member, Board of Directors
13 Marketing/Sales Manager/Director
15 Other (please specify) _____

4) Which one best describes the nature of your organization? (select one only)
10 Private
11 Privately-Owned Daily Fee
12 Semi-Private
13 Resort
14 Municipal/State/County
16 Military
17 University/College
18 Driving Range/Practice Facility
20 Development Company
28 Golf Course Builder
21 Other (please specify) _____
21 Not Applicable

5) Are you affiliated with a golf course management company?
01 yes 02 no

6) How many facilities, in total, are you personally responsible for?
80 less than 2 83 10 or more
81 2 - 4 82 5 - 9
89 Not applicable

7) What is the average greens fee for a typical round of golf at your facility? If you work at multiple facilities, please indicate the average greens fee across all facilities.
01 nothing/private 05 \$75 - \$99
02 o less than \$25 06 \$100 - \$149
03 \$25 - \$49 07 \$150 or more
04 \$50 - \$74 08 not applicable

8) What is the total annual budget or expenditures for which you are responsible?
50 less than \$99,000 53 \$500,000 - \$999,000
51 \$100,000 - \$249,000 54 \$1,000,000 - \$2,499,000
52 \$250,000 - \$499,000 55 \$2,500,000 or more

9) In which ways are you personally involved in your organization's purchasing decisions?
60 Determine annual budget expenditures
61 Authorize final purchases
62 Determine needs of the operation
63 Specify/recommend vendors or suppliers
64 Specify/recommend specific brands
65 Evaluate brands for purchase

10) Which products/services listed below do you specify, recommend, buy or approve the purchase? (select all that apply)
A Golf Cars
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C Course Design/Construction/Renovation
D Irrigation & Drainage
E Chemicals, Fertilizer & Seed
G Clubhouse Design/Construction/Renovation
H Financial Services
I Legal Services
F Course Accessories
J Insurance
U Marketing Services
L Pro Shop Apparel
M Pro Shop Equipment
P Food & Beverage
R Computers/Technology
V Furniture/Fixtures
W Human Resources/Staffing
K Consulting

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Cleveland Country Club Shelby, NC

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Fort Smith Country Club Fort Smith, Arkansas

HISTORIC 9 HOLE COURSE. GREEN. On historic register of U.S as one of the first

golf courses located west of the Mississippi River. Call Brett at Miller Management Associates for more information. 828-775-7765, brett@mmagolf.com.

Linville Falls Golf Club Linville, NC

Championship 18 hole layout designed by Lee Trevino with functional pro shop, grill, attached cart shed, driving range. Bent greens, bermuda fairways, with highway frontage on 221 to the tourist destinations of Boone, Banner Elk and Blowing Rock. Owner financing with PREFERRED with solid down payment. Contact Brett at Miller Management Associates, brett@mmagolf.com 828-775-7765

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The Wolf at Tenkiller Golf Club Vian, OK

Recent restoration of bunkers, greens and new maintenance building for this beautiful, 18 hole championship design in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains, near recreational Lake Tenkiller. Rolling 145 acre parcel that includes 20 acres of development potential. Clubhouse includes bar, grill, pro shop and duck pen bowling alley. Call Brett at Miller Management Associates 828-775-7765 or brett@mmagolf.com for more information.

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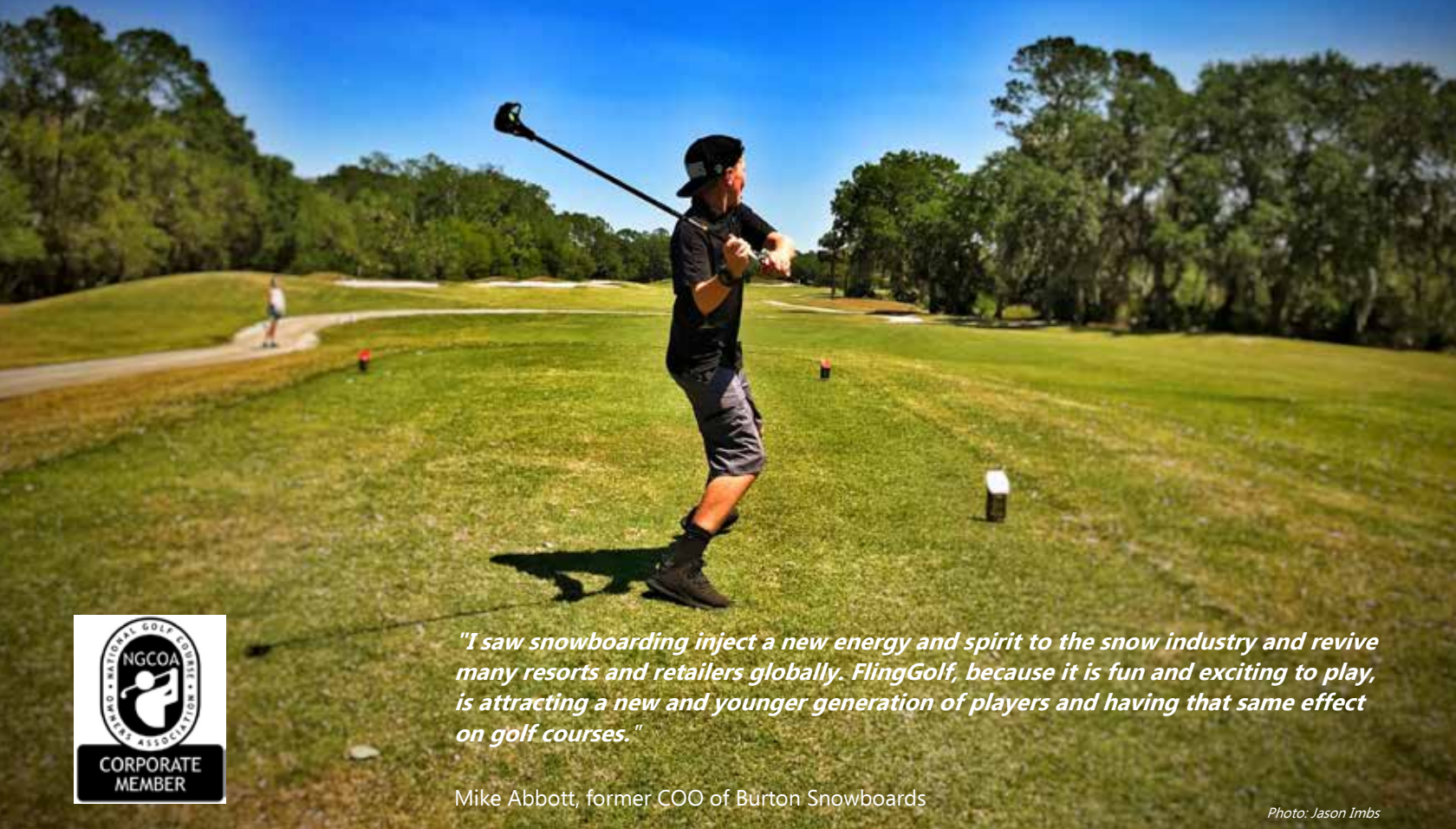
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NGCOA



In Action

A look inside the world of the National Golf Course Owners Association



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Inside Golf Business: Master the business of golf with insights from leading golf course owners, operators and other business leaders. From the most critical, fascinating operational issues, to the continuation of compelling ideas first introduced by Golf Business magazine, to the latest in golf business industry.

Owner to Owner: Your fellow golf course owners and operators discuss day-to-day management issues.

House Chat: Pull up a chair at the NGCOA conference room table and listen as CEO Jay Karen and the NGCOA staff, along with other guests, put the spotlight on upcoming events, corporate partnerships, educational programming, advocacy issues and more.

NGCOA also is pleased to announce its agreement with Rain Bird Corp.,

a leading global manufacturer and provider of irrigation products and services. Through this new partnership, NGCOA members will receive 1.5 percent rebate on purchases of Rain Bird Golf Products during contract terms. Rain Bird's end-to-end systems provide complete integration of components, making them easier to manage and more efficient to operate than mix-and-match solutions, resulting in water and labor expense savings. More information on this and other Smart Buy partnerships can be found at ngcoa.org/SmartBuy

Additionally, NGCOA has renewed its long-term partnership with The Toro Co.

Toro began its support of NGCOA in 2002 and continues its involvement as a corporate partner through 2020. Through this sponsorship agreement, Toro is actively supporting the education and advocacy priorities of NGCOA, as well as offering members an exclusive rebate on new and used turf maintenance equipment.



Pineview Country Club Purchases a New Yamaha Fleet

“Our NGCOA membership just keeps paying off!” says Dick Stuntz, NGCOA board president and president/owner, Oak Golf Inc. Pineview Country Club in Atchison, Kansas, took advantage of its NGCOA membership and the Smart Buy Marketplace to replace its fleet of golf cars with Yamaha.

Want to replace your current fleet? NGCOA members receive a \$50 rebate per golf car when they convert their fleet to Yamaha golf cars; current Yamaha customers receive one free registration to NGCOA's Golf Business Conference or Golf Business TechCon when they renew their current Yamaha contract.

Not yet a NGCOA member? Current Yamaha customers receive one year of NGCOA membership for free; non-NGCOA members who convert their fleet to Yamaha receive one year of NGCOA membership for free plus one free registration to NGCOA's Golf Business Conference or Golf Business TechCon when they renew their current Yamaha contract.



“NGCOA's Smart Buy program saves the Daniel Island Club over \$23,000 on our fixed costs with SIB, and around \$100 per month on our base fees with DirecTV.

When NFL season rolls around, we should see an additional savings of \$600 on our NFL Sunday Ticket!”

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Greg Keating

Vice President of Club Operations
Daniel Island, SC

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AN NGCOA MEMBER PURCHASING PROGRAM

What's Happening on Accelerate:



The NGCOA Listserv has been active this month, with members discussing operational tactics both on the course and off. If you have feedback to any issues on the Listserv, or have a question you'd like to ask, just log into Accelerate at accelerate.ngcoa.org and go to your General Community to post your question.

"PGA Pro Discounts"

Do you give discounts to PGA pro apprentices?

"Groupon"

Has anyone had experiences with Groupon, either good or bad?

"Restaurant Gratuity"

Would love to hear how other golf courses handle gratuity in their restaurant.



PROMOTING BUSINESS INITIATIVES

Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker, right, talks with New England Golf Course Owners Association member Dudley Darling (Juniper Hill Golf Course, Northboro) at Small Business Day at the State House on April 10. The event was spearheaded by a number of allied associations including the Massachusetts Restaurant Association, Mass Taxpayers Foundation and Associated Industries of Massachusetts.

Advocacy Issues & Alerts

COMMUNITY POSTS FOR DISCUSSION:

- > Marijuana Laws Impacting Golf Business
- > IRS Issues New Guidance on Form W-4
- > Tax Reform Creates Opportunity Zones, But Not For Golf Syndicated Conservation Easements
- > Americans with Disabilities and Single-Rider Golf Carts
- > ASCAP, BMI and SESAC Music Licensing
- > Overtime Rules Regulation Update

Active Members on Accelerate:



The most active NGCOA Members this month are:



Gregg Lown

Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge
Jasper, AB



Randy Ballinger

Walnut Creek Golf Course Inc.
Marion, IN



Want to see your picture here?

Log in and participate

As a reminder, Accelerate includes your Listserv and golf course education all at your fingertips. Ask the questions that are keeping you up at night and search the education archives for the answers you need. **Log into Accelerate at accelerate.ngcoa.org today!**

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	Cost Reduction Services	Save up to 40% on recurring operating costs (i.e. cable, internet, pest control, etc.) without affecting your day-to-day operations	Daniel Kaufman (843) 576-3645 www.aboutsid.com
	Hourly Employment Job Board and Hiring Solutions	10% savings	Autumn Grigg (703) 651-5206 autumn.grigg@snagajob.com
	Volunteer Bene ts Services	45% - 65% savings	Matt Arnold (844) 544-8120 ngcoa@steelebene-ts.com
	Propane	Up to \$1.00 rebate for each gallon of propane purchased	Scott McLean (843) 873-1743 www.suburbanpropane.com
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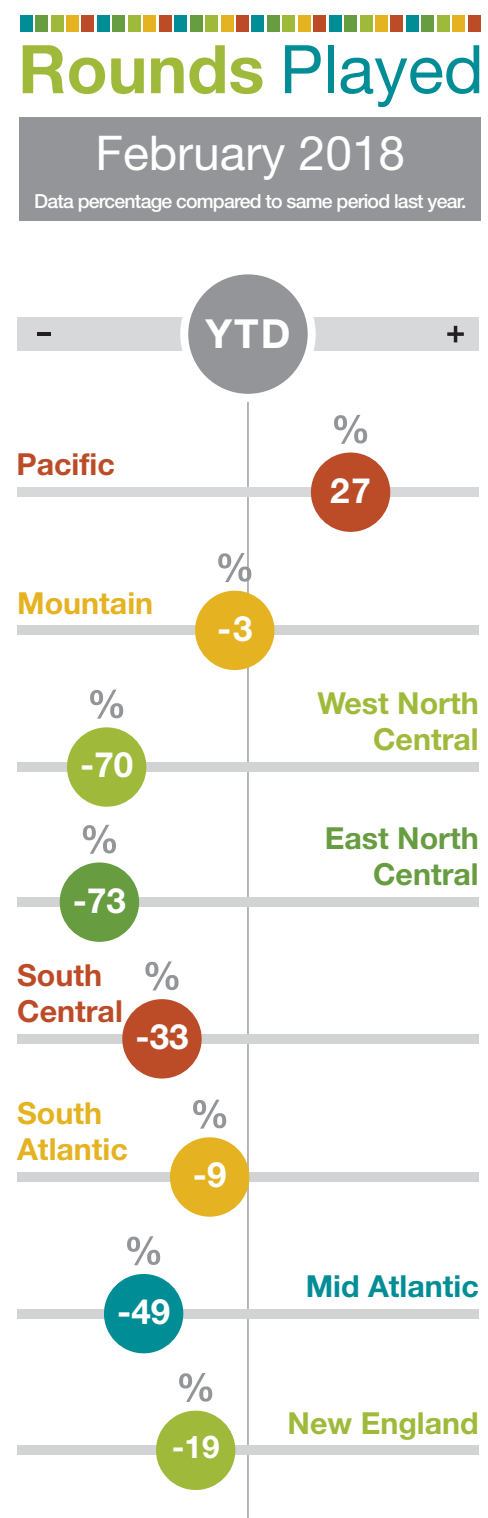


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Women's Golf Day is quickly approaching, so sign your course up as an official WGD location. Here are some key advantages to being an official WGD location for the June 5 event:

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