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A WORD FROM
LEADERS AND PEERS
AROUND THE
GOLF INDUSTRY

BEST ADVICE



DAVID POLLARD

President and Owner
Spring Meadows Golf Course, Gray, Maine

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

"My parents were hard workers – they taught me to have respect and compassion for others, they taught me responsibility. They were understanding and fair to me and my siblings. My parents modeled these values day in and day out. Projecting these values as I manage our family golf business goes a long way with our employees and customers as well!"

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB IN GOLF?

My first job in golf was as owner/operator. After retiring from teaching 28 years ago, my brothers and I made the decision to transform our once-working family dairy farm into an 18-hole championship golf course. We broke ground in '98 and opened for business in 2000.

WHAT'S THE BEST ADVICE YOU COULD GIVE?

Don't be afraid to be the face of your operation/business. In fact, I look forward to the few hours away from the desk each week, where I personally can check in on my golfers and engage. Asking them where they're from, if it's their first time here, be sure to check out our lounge, and saying thanks for coming in. A little bit goes a long way.

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021

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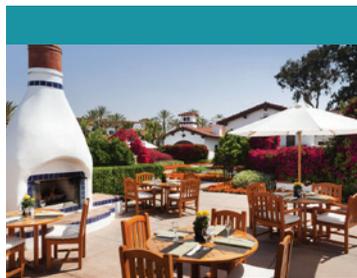


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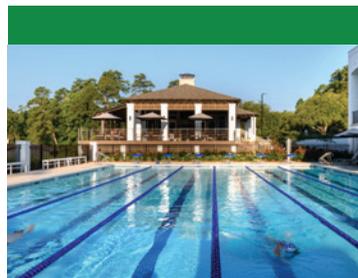


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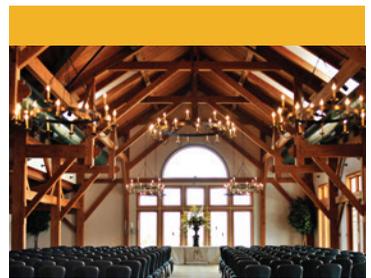


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FROM THE CEO **VANTAGE POINT**

By Jay Karen, CEO, NGCOA | jay@ngcoa.org

New Year's Resolutions

There are many cynics out there who like to scoff at New Year's resolutions. I don't count myself among them. I love this time of year. New beginnings. Level-setting what's important. Resolutions come with a strong sense of optimism and aspiration. What's wrong with that? Do some or most go unrealized or unfulfilled? Sure. At least until next year. But if we are disciplined and focused on our resolutions, we may indeed realize some achievement.

As we leave behind perhaps the most bipolar year in golf history, I offer a few New Year's wishes for the golf industry.

I wish for continued, tight collaboration among the governing bodies and allied associations in golf. We were a great team working to keep our industry open and safe when COVID wreaked havoc. Let's continue that spirit as we show how good and important our industry is to public policy makers, the media and beginners to our game.

I wish for all of us to not lose sight of the importance of achieving greater diversity in the game, workplace and leadership table through new practices of inclusion and equity.

We have catch up work to do.

I wish for more course owners

and operators to take control of their marketing and customer relationships, and to be ever-vigilant about those who are leveraging your hard-earned brand and inventory for their benefit. It's time to strengthen your center of gravity in all this.

I wish for golf courses to shed out-dated conventions (like tee boxes labeled by gender) for progressive business practices.

I wish for golf course operators to emulate big technology companies, rather than watch them outpace you. Build a golf entertainment/simulator business at your course and create your own subscription programs.

I wish for the professional game to see the return of crowds witnessing our game's best men and women up close.

I wish for the perpetual return of all those people who discovered the goodness of golf this past year.

Most importantly, I wish for COVID to leave our society and for the good health of our members, allies and friends.

We all know Ben Hogan's famous quote, "The most important shot in golf is the next one." Likewise, the most important year for our industry is the next one. Let's make it a good one, friends. **FB**



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VIEWPOINT ADVOCACY

By Ronnie Miles
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Welcome to 2021!

Looking to the future

This was a year that none of us will forget. For many in our industry, it was a year of tremendous growth in individuals playing the game of golf. Our clubs found their place as being a haven for family-based activities. However, we were not without challenges. Our food and beverage business was the victim of the state and local executive orders that prohibited indoor activities and minimal group gatherings. So what might 2021 have in store for our industry?

Washington, D.C., will look different. As I write this, the runoff in the Georgia Senate race remains undecided. Should the Republicans lose both races, the Democrats will control the Senate, as they won the White House. So this would provide the Democrats with a much easier path to redress many of the legislative initiatives passed in the House in 2020 that failed to receive a hearing in the Senate.

The incoming Congress will include at least six new U.S. Senators and 60 U.S. Representatives. This small number of fresh faces provides us both opportunities and challenges. Will these members know how the golf industry affects their state, and districts? Educating these new members will be a priority for our We Are Golf coalition. We encourage members to invite your new Representatives or Senators to visit your property and share how their decisions affect your business.

While the coronavirus vaccine rollout will be well underway, an economic stimulus package will remain a front-burner issue. If the 116th Congress fails to correct the Paycheck Protection Loans' tax liability, we will be encouraging the 117th Congress to make the fix retroactive for the 2020 business tax year.

The new Biden administra-

tion will set the Democratic plan for the next four years. So what can we expect? Based on his campaign promises, we can see greater participation in his tax and labor policies drafted with union influence. Will the Green Party impact his environmental policies? Will he overturn Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) Rule? What level of additional Coronavirus help will he propose?

While the Georgia Senate race will decide the majority in the U.S. Senate, in the U.S. House, Democrats retained a 219 to 203 seat majority with a few district races still undecided. Hopefully this slim margin will cause more bipartisan legislation than we have seen in the past.

President-elect Biden has publicly endorsed a national \$15 minimum wage increase. NGCOA does not support a 48% increase in the mini-

mum wage. As we learned from the last wage and benefit study, most industry pay positions exceed \$15—higher wages varied by region and state—two concerns of a mandated increase to owners and operators. One is will workers in high-cost areas demand a higher minimum? The other is how to migrate the existing workforce into a new pay scale? NGCOA supports state and local communities in setting the pay level for their workforce.

NGCOA will continue to monitor the new administration and Congress's agendas to set our plan for education and advocacy, ensuring we represent our industry's position in their policy development. **RB**



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THE START

NEWS & VIEWS TO PROPEL YOUR BUSINESS



Photo: Jack Nicklaus, American Dunes

American Dunes

The Tradition of Honoring Our Service Members

By David Gould

Near the eastern shore of Lake Michigan there's a point on the map where golf's tradition of giving back intersects with America's reverence for military service—especially when that service exacts a steep personal cost. The crossroads is called American Dunes Golf Club, a newly completed Jack Nicklaus Signature design in the town of Grand Haven, Mich.

It's the inspiration of a PGA golf professional who is also a U.S. Air Force F-16 fighter pilot, the inimitable Lt. Col. Dan Rooney. Known in golf and military circles as the founder and tireless champion of the Folds of Honor Foundation, Rooney grew up on this acreage as the son of course-owning parents. Their family business was called Grand Haven Golf Club and its bones lie beneath the visually stunning new layout, designed by Nicklaus at no charge, as an act of patriotism.

The Folds of Honor Mission: "Honor Their Sacrifice. Educate Their Legacy."

The first-ever fundraiser for Folds of Honor was held at the original course, which adds to the aura of American Dunes and was an appealing idea to Nicklaus as he listened to Rooney's request back in the summer of 2018. An investor group is behind the project, the sole purpose of which is to fund Folds of Honor, a nonprofit that supports the families of fallen and disabled military personnel. Over its decade-long run, Folds of Honor has distributed 29,000-plus scholarships to military families, totaling \$140 million.

If there is any golf facility in the U.S. that represents what marketing experts call "the experience economy," it's this one. Every arriving player proceeds from the club's parking lot

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into a tunnel-like passageway lined on both sides by tributes to military families who've been aided by the foundation. "You don't actually see the golf course until you've been through the tunnel," says general manager Greg Bell. "When you emerge, it's stretched out there in front of you. Most people get a lump in their throat coming through the tunnel, then they get dazzled by what they see when they come out."

Playing the course, you will notice on each hole that one of the Golden Bear's 18 professional major championships is cited, alongside a tribute to one of the fund's scholarship recipients. The club logo is a silhouette of the long-time Nicklaus symbol, the Golden Bear, with the stars and stripes of the American flag fitted into that shape. "The trip from the clubhouse to the first tee is about 200 yards," Bell says, "so if you're riding you'll be shown a welcome video featuring Jack and Dan, reinforcing the mission of American Dunes and dropping in video snippets with kids from across the U.S., who express thanks for how Folds of Honor has impacted their lives."

Other unique touches include a poignant daily custom of calling a brief pause to all activity at 1300 hours, including play on the course. It's a three-minute opportunity for reflection and gratitude, while the sound of a bugle playing "Taps" emanates from speakers throughout the property. This is followed by the ringing of chimes 13 times. "It's a moment to remember why we're all here, and to have in your thoughts someone you may know from among the fallen," explains Bell.

Nicklaus made over 10 separate site visits to oversee the grading, shaping, grassing and other fine points of course construction. Again, this all happened without cost to the project. Along with having unparalleled advantages in terms of the core product and promotional energy, the facility differs from most others in its operational and revenue model.

While the predecessor course, Grand Haven, offered a season-pass option for local regulars, American Dunes will be charging green fees for open play only. Daily-fee courses tend to have fairly complex rate structures, based on weekday-weekend, twilight, junior and senior age groups, resident versus non-resident, and the like. This golf course will have a "Patriot Rate" of \$150 for 18 holes, which everyone except veterans and active military will pay. Those service people pay a green fee of \$100.

"We expect to have a lot of interest from groups, and to handle plenty of tournaments and outings," says Bell. "But we'll be pretty un-



Photo: American Dunes

usual in that our rate won't be adjusted, even for full-field events. Everything that happens here is dedicated to the same, single purpose—supporting the families of those who give the ultimate sacrifice."

Unlike most daily fee courses, this one is set up to be a merchandising juggernaut. Even before officially opening for business it has realized that goal. E-commerce-enabled, and overseen by head professional, Ian Ziska, who's won a stack of PGA Merchandiser of the Year honors, the golf shop at American Dunes sells its modified bear logo at a consistently brisk clip. "People generally have a moving experience during their golf day with us," says Bell. "When they're in the shop afterward, they are strongly motivated to make that extra spend on a souvenir."

Given its location in a much-visited corner

of the upper Midwest, the club has an abundance of fine hotels in close proximity. To complement that infrastructure, there are plans to build a comfortable 16-room lodge, known as The Camp, and bring it online in 2022. "We are expecting play from golfers representing about 40 U.S. states in our first full season," says the club's director of golf, Doug Bell. "I don't mean that to sound prideful, I'm just going off the inquiries we've received."

Of course, any golf facility in the country can affiliate itself with the Folds of Honor Foundation, and a vast number of them do. Hosting fundraiser events at any time of the season, but particularly on the Foundation's super-successful Patriot Golf Day, puts any participating course temporarily on that meeting place where giving back and saluting military service come together. **FB**



SHOP TALK

MERCHANDISE AND PRO SHOP NEWS



Crossover Footwear Sneaking Into Golf Shops

By: Steve Eubanks

When the Wynn Golf Club in Las Vegas held its grand re-opening in 2019, the fourth group of the day went out to great fanfare and a little ribbing from the director of golf, Brian Hawthorne. “This is the fourth group on the course and our first player teeing off in Vans,” Hawthorne said, poking fun at the footwear of one of the players who wore the sneakers first popularized by skateboarders.

Four hours later, Hawthorne handed that player a bag-tag for firing the first-day course record.

“It had to be the shoes,” he said with a smile.

Athletic footwear is not just popular among the younger generation. You find more octogenarians teeing off in Converse than in traditional golf shoes these days. Golf shop operators around the country are following their customers’ leads. Athletic shoes can be found in shops throughout Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and Florida.

Companies like Golfkicks provide additional incentive for shops to get into crossover footwear. That company sells soft-spike kits that can be added to any pair of athletic shoes. Now, Air Jordans can be transformed into golf shoes in a couple of minutes.

“I get it, it’s the wave of the future,” Haw-

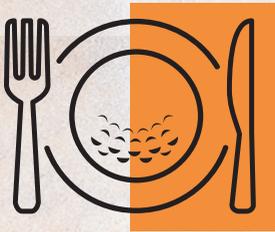


Photo: Nike Air Max. Soft-spike kits can be added to any pair of athletic shoes.

thorne said when the conversation about athletic shoes turned serious. “Soft spikes made the transition easier. You don’t change shoes to go in and out of the clubhouse now. And some of the soles on shoes like Vans have a lot of traction.”

There is also an opportunity for golf shops

to upsell footwear outside the normal niche golf market. From runners to cross-trainers to members who get out and walk their dogs in the afternoon, everyone wears sneakers. Don’t be surprised when you see more of them in golf shops in 2021 and beyond. **EB**



WHAT'S COOKING

FOOD & BEVERAGE NEWS IN GOLF



Nutritionists Service Growing Demand In Golf Industry

By: Steve Eubanks

Jenna Appel just wants you to play better. The certified nutritionist doesn't scold golfers for their eating habits. If you want a beer and some nachos while watching a game after the round, she's fine with that. But before and during play, she'd like for you to fuel up to lower your scores.

Appel isn't some expert on the Food Network. She is a nutritionist and dietitian with Addison's Reserve Country Club in Delray Beach, Florida, where she not only gives advice to golfers, she also authors a newsletter that walks members through the practical benefits of better eating.

"Your nutrition on the course can change your game," Appel said. "There are certain foods that are going to enhance the game. And there are those that are going to be detrimental to your score. The detrimental ones have excess salt, which is what you get with hot dogs, for example. Anything that has artificial ingredients or processed sugars is going to require more water intake. And most golfers don't get enough water as it is.

"Before the round, adequate water along with a balanced breakfast is hugely important. Breakfast is really key. I have a lot of clients who have a morning tee time and choose to skip



Photo: Jenna Appel, nutritionist and dietitian, Addison's Reserve Country Club.

the meal. That's terrible for your game. Good balance – proper proteins like eggs along with some carbohydrates for longer-lasting energy, as well as some healthy fats, like an avocado, as an anti-inflammatory will help. Then, at the turn, have some fruit or nuts, things that won't spike your metabolism but will give you a longer burn throughout the rest of your round."

Operators know that one-off programs like game improvement no longer meet the needs of the modern golfer. Members want a holistic

"Breakfast is really key. I have a lot of clients who have a morning tee time and choose to skip the meal. That's terrible for your game."

– Jenna Appel

approach, not just to golf but to their entire club experience. Workout routines that add distance and flexibility; relaxation exercises that calm nerves over an important putt; and nutrition that maximizes performance late in the round are all part of that holistic package.

Not every operator has a nutritionist on site. But as golfers start to expect more from their clubs than 18 holes and a beer and hot dog, the trend toward performance-based nutrition will grow. Smart owners should be ready. 



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Whoop's Tech Brings Tracking to a New Level

By Scott Kauffman

When it comes to wearable devices, Fitbit appeared to be the band of choice for active health-conscious consumers after its first groundbreaking Bluetooth device entered the market in late 2009. As other companies began introducing more appealing and/or data-driven twists on the technology (read: Apple Watch), however, Fitbit, which initially allowed users to track movement, sleep and calories burned, started to see its market dominance erode over the past decade.

One of the newest high-profile entries in the wireless wearable world is Whoop. And while some might argue the latest option in this product category is just another iteration of Fitbit's original idea/technology, rather than anything truly innovative, PGA Tour golfer Nick Watney would beg to differ.

Indeed, at a time when many people are still concerned about the effects of Covid-19, Whoop appears to offer a compelling solution to help detect the existence of this mysterious coronavirus and prevent it from being spread. Watney experienced this first-hand last June while competing in the RBC Heritage tournament on Hilton Head Island and was sold on the device ever since.

Watney spoke publicly about his illness that forced him to withdraw from the tournament on a podcast hosted by WHOOP, the health-monitoring device that now supports six of golf's leading professional circuits and counts major champions Rory McIlroy and Justin Thomas as early-round investors. Other high-profile athletes backing the company during a \$100 million round of financing announced by Whoop last October are NBA all-star Kevin Durant and football stars Larry Fitzgerald, Patrick Mahomes and Eli Manning.

What made Whoop a game-changer for Watney and so many other early believers like the NFL Players Association is the band's ability to monitor and communicate one's oxygen levels or breaths per minute. According to Watney,

the Whoop device detected a dramatic change in his breathing on the night after the tournament's first round – showing a rate of more than 18 breaths per minute versus the usual 14 his device normally recorded.

"I took a screenshot of the [breaths per minute] data," Watney shared on the podcast, "and sent it to my wife and said, 'This is very alarming,' just because I had read [an email from WHOOP] when WHOOP had analyzed data from users that had come down with COVID. It was something that jumped out."

Watney contacted PGA Tour officials and was tested for COVID-19. Nevertheless, because he was not symptomatic other than the Whoop data he shared, Watney was allowed to go to Harbour Town's practice range. Watney recalls he "social-distanced while warming up" and about 20 minutes prior to teeing up for his second round, the Tour called and told him his test came back positive and he needed to leave as "soon as he can."

In the aftermath of Watney being present at the course while waiting for what was ultimately a positive test result, the PGA Tour changed its policy the following week at the Travelers Championship event, prohibiting anyone from being on the course until test results were conclusive. Several days later, Whoop released findings of a collaborative study with CQUniversity in Australia showing Whoop's algorithm detected 20 percent of Covid-19 illnesses in the two days prior to the onset of symptoms.

Soon after, while the study was under peer review, the PGA Tour purchased more than 1,000 Whoop devices and the company started working with larger groups of Tour players at the Travelers tournament. Of course, the Whoop strap monitors much more health-related metrics than just respiratory rates, including heart rate variability, resting heart rate and sleep staging.

Company spokesperson Alex Jacobs said customers receive free hardware after joining



Photo: Whoop fitness tracker.

Whoop's subscription coaching platform designed to "optimize behavior across pillars like strain, recovery, and sleep" alongside a community of other high performers. Cost begins at \$30 per month.

On the Whoop podcast, Watney said he and his wife remember talking about that dramatic personal turn of events in June, wondering if there was a "silver lining to this" and asking "Can something good come out of this?"

"It was a bit scary," Watney added, "but if people can learn more and this helps anybody else, that can be a good thing, obviously."

In the post-Covid conditions that continue to consume our lives, any little innovative step or not that helps relieve the stress from this pandemic is welcome relief on any scorecard. **FB**



Breaking Up is Hard To Do

By Harvey Silverman

They say that breaking up is hard to do. Now I know, I know that it's true—Neil Sedaka.

Winter typically brings lots of joy with holidays and the dawn of a New Year, along with the closing of many golf course businesses, enabling operators to catch their collective breath. Boy, what a roller coaster this year has been. 2021 just has to be better, right?

Winter is also the proverbial start of the technology selling season when course operators evaluate their technology needs and start shopping for solutions. Many hone in on the PGA Merchandise Show, setting aside ample time for on-site demos of new systems or getting updated on already-installed tech. It will be much different this year, with system demonstrations relegated to online webinars. Good luck to all.

I've been on both sides of the computer screen, and like J.K. Simmons in the Farmers Insurance ads, I've learned a thing or two. One is that if there are 15,000 golf facilities in the country, they're run 15,000 different ways. Thus, no one system can satisfy the needs of every course operator.

Second, it's a huge mistake for someone to sit down for a demo and say, "Show me what you've got." I advise clients to walk into a sys-

tem demo with a list of the top-10 things they absolutely have to have for their facility. Take control of the demo and ask to see those first. If you're not satisfied with any one of these, pick up and move on. It's harsh, but all too often, the demonstrator wants to show all the bells and whistles of our "new, updated system." Much of it can be fluff, and by the end of the day enduring several demonstrations, you'll be at the Hyatt drinking a beer and wondering, "What did I see today?" It all becomes a blur.

That brings us to the breaking up part. The IGDB (Internet Golf Database) reports that GolfNow is losing market share with its various PoS systems (G1, EZlinks, and IBS in particular). Others gain share as a result, including (but not inclusive of) Club Prophet Systems, ForeUP, Lightspeed, and Jonas/Club Caddie. IGDB's is not a full accounting of system placements – it based the market share data on 18-hole or more regulation facilities by examining course website tee time booking engines. It's the best available, but boy, wouldn't it be great to know the golf system market shares' full extent?

"Beware of Barter," published a year ago, had the desired effect of eliciting comments from golf course operators, many accompanied by a horror story about their current point-of-sale system provider. I tracked and interviewed four who share a common nightmare, the GolfNow purchase of EZLinks.

Kenny Fill is the Director of Golf at Shula's Golf Club in Florida. Before he became an NGCOA member, Kenny wrote a scathing note to CEO Jay Karen detailing his EZLinks/GolfNow nightmare, inspired by attending one of Karen's Golf Inc. presentations about the dangers of bartering.

Fill wrote, "In 2010, our club had agreed to terms with GolfNow using the barter method. Over time, we saw these rounds selling for as low as \$10 per round. We had no control over these prices and were unable to establish a floor with GolfNow. I decided it was time to increase our online presence and take control of our online business. Through various marketing efforts, our club had built up a database of over 25,000 golfers. We continued to track our online reservations on our site and compare them to that of GolfNow. We spent years identifying the GolfNow users and informing them that they could book directly with us and pay \$0 in reservation fees. Over time, we watched our online reservations grow and outperform that of GolfNow. However, we could not offer a low price guarantee on our site due to the barter times we were giving GolfNow. We were stuck in a bad relationship. Then COVID-19 came along.

"Our club was able to re-open after being closed for six weeks. We noticed a surge in demand for golf. We also saw a rise in online and prepaid reservations. We had zero bookings from

“It’s not unlike how GolfNow has treated us in the past, but we never expected our systems supplier to act like this...”

– Bill Place

the GolfNow platform for seven weeks from April to June. Our tee sheet was anywhere from 75% to 100% full. Golfers had found a way to book with us directly instead of with GolfNow.

“We thought it good fortune but later learned it was an interface error between GolfNow and EZlinks, our PoS system. Why that took so long for discovery, I don’t know. But the seven weeks told me that we could survive and thrive without the need for GolfNow. I now had the ammunition I needed to re-negotiate new terms with GolfNow. I offered to go to a commission-based model similar to what we were doing with TeeOff.com. GolfNow refused and said that the barter method was their bread and butter.

“I ultimately told GolfNow that we would discontinue their service if they were going to continue with barter. They offered commission – 25% to 30%. Our rack rates run \$85-\$100, and paying exorbitant commission to GolfNow would wipe out profits from every round they sent us. We finally left GolfNow in July - one of the best decisions we have ever made. Our online traffic is at an all-time high, and we continue to capture new customers through our site. It took time and a global pandemic to do it, but we did it.

“Now, our EZLinks contract expires in a few months. GolfNow tells us that EZLinks won’t be around within a couple of years and wants us to convert to G1 – on a barter payment model. Fool me once, shame on me. Fool me twice, ain’t gonna happen.”

Bill Place of Ace Golf operates four courses in the Tampa, Florida, area. He wrote, “We have IBS at two courses and EZTee at the other two. EZLinks/GolfNow had pushed us to EZTee back in November 2019 when we did not want to pay the high fees of EZTee Pro. We asked to have all courses on IBS (EZSuite), but GolfNow said that it would soon be discontinued. Our conversion to EZTee (their EZTee Pro “Lite” system) from EZTee Pro in March was a nightmare. I calculated the failed implementation cost me at least \$5,000 in lost business (no on-

line tee times) and asked GolfNow for a credit. Sure, they said, as long as I signed a two-year commitment to the GolfNow Marketplace.

“They are now offering to let us put those two courses onto EZSuite (which makes no sense if it’s being discontinued) but are pressuring for a two-year agreement at all four courses with a GolfNow Marketplace tie-in. We had considered moving all clubs to EZSuite, but we won’t if pressured to also buy GolfNow Marketplace and extended agreements. I told them that would cause me to eliminate EZLinks as a system choice, and they simply don’t care. It’s their way or the highway.

“It’s not unlike how GolfNow has treated us in the past, but we never expected our systems supplier to act like this. As I look at other systems, I find many competitors to GolfNow/EZLinks who have no contractual term requirement.”

At publication, Place has moved three courses to ForeUP and exited the GolfNow Marketplace at one course.

A facility in New Jersey prefers to remain anonymous, fearing retaliation. That’s a story in and of itself – fearing your technology provider. This course tried bartering tee times with GolfNow a few years ago on a two-month trial. The results? Over 600 barter rounds sold, and not even a 10% return on rounds driven by GolfNow. That was the end of the barter experiment.

EZLinks is the facility’s technology provider, and all was well until it sold to GolfNow. With the EZ360 cloud system installed for \$550/month, the course owner was shocked when COVID hit – the system lacked the functionality for prepaid greens fees. Then, GolfNow informed ownership that EZ360 support would soon end and suggested a change to its G1 system.

A monthly fee of \$550 fits nicely into the annual budget. GolfNow offered it, sort of, in one of three payment options: Two tee times a day, or 20% commission on rounds driven

from the GolfNow marketplace (the weekend rate with cart is \$75), or \$550/month PLUS a \$1500 install fee PLUS one tee time a day. Take it or leave it.

Too much, the owner replied. Bartering tee times is a non-starter, and a 20% commission on a \$75 greens fee could add up quickly to far more than \$550 a month. And so, with an expiring contract, this facility will add to GolfNow’s market share loss and add onto someone else’s by spring.

Last, we find Todd Miller, PGA General Manager at Santee Cooper Resort in South Carolina. Miller kicked off the Accelerate string with this: “Our courses have been long-time partners with EZLinks. We stayed with them a year ago when they upgraded us to their EZ720 cloud system. We liked the tee sheet, and they signed us for cash, no barter, which we liked. After the “merger,” we are feeling squeezed into going with the more traditional GolfNow barter payments if we want improved service. Have any other properties had similar experiences?”

Miller agreed to expand in a phone interview. “Converting to EZ720 from EZSuite was horrible, but we’ve grown used to the cloud system now. It took months to get it right, during which time we did not pay for it. We then learned that GolfNow would soon no longer support EZ720, that we were one of just a few to change to EZ720. GolfNow offered to take us back to EZSuite (not cloud) or convert to G1. Our contract expires in 15-16 months, and we’ll be looking for something new. We’re on GolfNow.com by default because GolfNow took barter times to repay our debt, one time per day through the end of our contract. The arrangement works because of COVID cash flow considerations (we’re a resort with no villa occupancy – ouch!). Local play keeps us in business, but we see no more than about one tee time reservation a month coming through GolfNow. If we were simply giving them one tee time to be listed, we’d see no return on that investment.”

Changing point-of-sale systems is an arduous task. You shouldn’t have to endure bully tactics to stay with what you have. I’ve held the hands of managers and staff while consummating a conversion, including a midnight one at a 12-month course that had no appetite for shutting down for a day. Research, demonstration, selection, negotiation, implementation and training define a PoS system change elements. This is the system that runs your business! If you’re lucky and choose wisely, you might only have to do this once and not suffer buyer’s remorse. 



THE HEALING POWER OF GOLF

Healing and Renewal Emerge as
Resonant New Themes
for the Industry



By David Gould

As America seeks to rebound from its Covid-19 misery, golf is ready to further assist. Meanwhile, the industry can take pride in having written a comeback story of its own, amid the chaos of 2020.

Victimized by the Great Recession and shifting societal preferences, golf was still scuffling when out of nowhere came the pandemic. Like Rudolph on a foggy Christmas Eve, the game went from under-appreciated to uniquely valuable.

What followed was a summer of triumph,

driven by built-in social distancing plus a unified industry approach to the workarounds and messaging needed for safe operation.

Now there's a chance to extend that comeback tale and write a new chapter for golf's public image. It's about getting the mainstream media to stop grouching about fungicides and fertilizer and start portraying golf as a crossroads of good causes, good deeds and contributions to society. Negative reports about course closures don't have to endure forever. They could legitimately give way to stories highlighting personal recovery on the links and golf's growing value as a stress reliever.

David Lorentz, head of research at the National Golf Foundation, tackled this topic in a recent essay. “Golf has a lot of people’s attention right now,” Lorentz pointed out, “and with that comes the opportunity to create impressions—new and better impressions.” He went on to “counterpunch,” in his words, against the standard critiques of costs-too-much and takes-too-long.

But the comment by Lorentz that “the marketplace will define your story if you don’t give it a story to talk about” also suggested it was time to take credit for positives, not just refute negatives. That makes sense to Scott Allen, executive director of the Salute Military Golf Association, which benefits post-9/11 veterans through a multi-pronged effort. Allen instinctively connects his group’s work to a bigger public-relations picture for the game.

“The coronavirus led to golf being seen as a refuge and a remedy,” said Allen. “That’s a very

Contact with nature slows down our stress response and induces calm.”

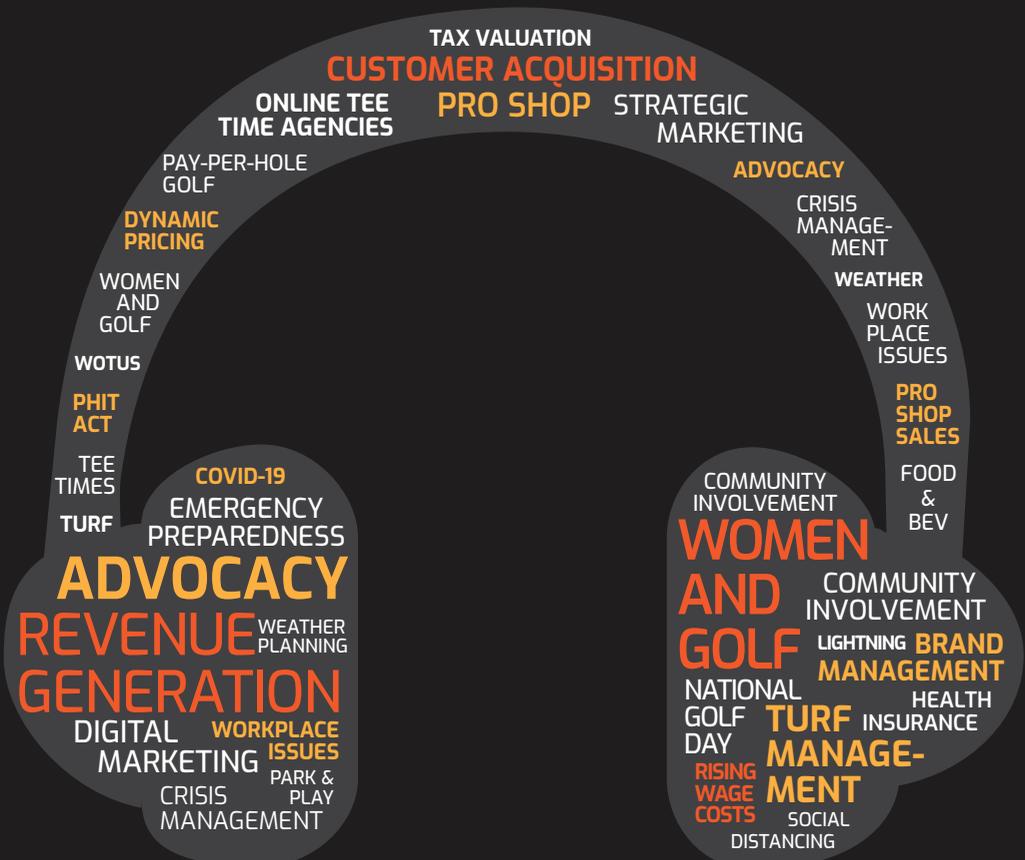
– Jenny Roe

good thing, but it’s been true for populations like wounded veterans and underprivileged urban youth for a long time.” The feel-good stories he’s referring to get told on a piecemeal basis quite often, yet never seem to add up to a general impression of golf as a broadly therapeutic environment. But “there’s a definite chance to get the world thinking differently,” he believes.

Among the marketing group at Troon Golf, the same “cause marketing” initiatives that Fortune 500 companies have been pursuing for years are now actively in play. Troon’s senior vice-president of sales and marketing, Kris Strauss, encourages his team to connect

with that broad swath of consumers that bases so many purchase decisions on whether part of the price goes to worthy charities. “The more we can do positive things in our communities to help those in need—for pandemic-driven reasons or otherwise—the more golf will be looked at in a favorable light,” Strauss said, adding: “And it’s also the right thing to do.”

The UK psychologist and neuroscientist Stephen Smith recently wrote a paper arguing that the game’s throwback qualities position golf as “the go-to leisure activity in a post-pandemic world.” Smith pointed out that our central nervous systems have been stressed in a way that



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calls for something serene, scenic and genteel to soothe it. “As we continue to deal with the first global pandemic in over 100 years, the need for certainty and confidence has never been greater,” Smith wrote, citing golf’s pastoral traditions as a uniquely stabilizing force.

Here in the States, a University of Virginia social scientist made similar comments. “Contact with nature slows down our stress response and induces calm,” explained Professor Jenny Roe, an environmental psychologist. “It promotes stress-resilience, it decreases our risk of depression and it increases our social wellbeing—particularly on a golf course where you are interacting with other members of that community.” Picking up on this theme, Syngenta Golf conducted a survey of people who had joined golf clubs in the prior six months, discovering that 55 percent cited “mental wellbeing” as their primary reason for joining.

The effect of Covid-19 on children is being

studied with appropriate urgency by groups like the prestigious Aspen Institute, which recently looked at Covid-driven changes to participation in youth sports. Examining a long list to see how vulnerable each sport had been to interruption, the group’s researchers found very strong numbers for golf. Out of 21 sporting activities, golf took the second-smallest Covid hit, as measured by hours per week spent on it by youth participants. Indeed, golf trailed only bicycling: Kids went from an average of 10.5 hours per week on their bikes down to 9.1 hours, whereas for golf the numbers were 10.4 hours pre-Covid and 8.4 hours once the crisis hit. No sporting activity that usually requires parent involvement fared as well.

Some of the experts quoted in the Aspen Institute report reacted in near-panic to the data. One of them called it “a frightening number for the viability of the youth sports system.” He expressed his view that “it’s really important we

acknowledge that kids maybe don’t want to go back to sports the way they were—this looks like a real pivot point.” Again, golf proved exempt from that worrisome pattern, suggesting that even young people found it to be a balm.

When industry veteran Cathy Harbin is asked how golf might go about retaining all the “Covid newbies” who sought refuge on America’s fairways, one theme that comes to her mind is golf-was-there-when-you-needed-us. For Harbin, a PGA Master Professional as well as a course owner and former ClubCorp executive, the ideal welcome for that new player was a combination of safety precautions with a caring attitude and the right style of instruction.

“For the customer who is leaving coronavirus behind as they make their way into golf, the ideal experience in my view is socializing-meets-coaching,” says Harbin, owner of a Paris, Texas, daily fee called Pine Ridge. “If they keep hearing one promise, that ‘we’re going to



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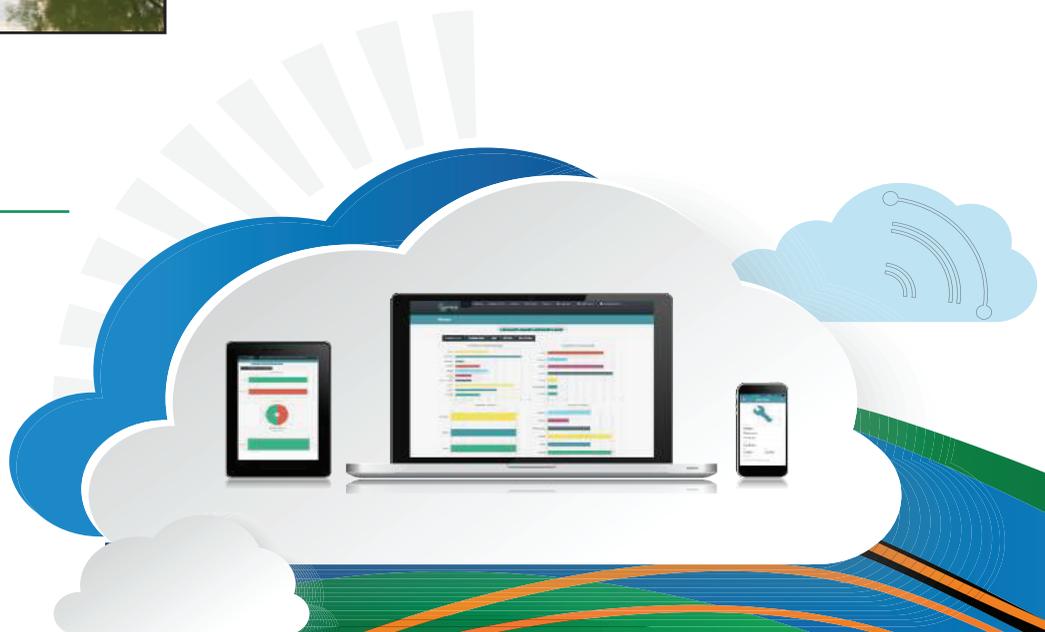
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have fun and you're going to get better,' and that promise gets kept, we've done our jobs. We've provided an escape from the misery of the pandemic—people won't forget that."

Working to attract more women and girls has been a factor in golf's tilt toward wellness and well-being programs. This trend was cited by the Wall Street Journal in a 2017 article titled, "Can Yoga Save the Golf Club?" In a similar vein, the influential online magazine Women's Golf Journal recently published a feature article on "Top 10 Wellness Golf Getaways."

And where else but in golf would you find a story like Alison Curdt's? One of the most recognized women in the golf instruction field, Curdt personifies the connection between golf the game and golf the therapeutic platform. On her journey from collegiate stardom to professional competition and then to the teaching side of the business, Curdt earned a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. The move stemmed from her early experience on the lesson tee, where many of her female golf students responded to Curdt's natural gift for talk therapy by sharing their emotional and psychological challenges. Curdt remains a highly sought-after golf coach, but she's also a practicing psychotherapist in the state of California.

Parkinson's Disease is the latest condition to avail itself of golf as a healing and prevention tool. There's a Parkinson's Golf Clinic attached to the Norton Neuroscience Institute in Louisville, Kentucky, and a similar program underway at Boston's famed Massachusetts General Hospital. "We've found that golf helps with balance, gait and rotation—functions that Parkinson's patients often struggle with," said Megan Cash, a physical therapist who works in the Norton program.

In response to Covid, golf showed off its capacity for healing and stress reduction. At the same time, the golf community was also flexing its fundraising muscles to financially support front line workers. Dan Pasternak, a nationally known PGA professional and GM of Essex Fells Country Club in northern New Jersey, serves as president of his PGA Section's charitable arm, the New Jersey Golf Foundation, which recently donated \$20,000 to the RWJBarnabas Health Emergency Response Fund, in support of Covid-19 relief efforts. The donation was well publicized, which Pasternak feels is important.

"There is so much charitable activity within the golf community that it's hard to keep it all straight," said Pasternak. "We as an industry could probably be more efficient and do

more good if our efforts were more organized and centralized—that's one of the key reasons why the New Jersey Golf Foundation was established in the first place." His comments circle this discussion back to cause marketing, which is basically an agreement between a vendor and a consumer that every business transaction should contribute to the public good.

You can hear similar pragmatism concerning the game's image from other industry leaders who have been around awhile. Golf could make an even greater contribution to the common good, they sincerely believe, if the industry didn't have to "counterpunch" against the same criticisms that get recycled over and over. David Lorentz is one of many industry researchers certain to keep an eye on public-image trends for golf as 2021 and '22 unfold.

"The good news is that opinions of golf have been improving," Lorentz pointed out. "Seven years ago, 43 percent of non-golfers had neutral or positive things to say about the game. Earlier this year—pre-pandemic—that proportion had risen to 55 percent. It's significant progress but there's room to keep going." The messaging that would make that happen seems clear enough: Come out to the golf course and feel human again. **FB**



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DESTINATIONS

HAMMOCK BEACH GOLF RESORT & SPA

EMPHASIZING THE GREAT OUTDOORS, WELCOMING CHANGE

By Sally J. Sportsman



Photo: Yoga on the beach. Hammock Beach Golf Resort & Spa

Golf always has been considered a healthy activity, a feast for the mind, body and spirit – with fresh air, sunshine and exercise as the secret sauce. Now more than ever, golf is a welcome respite, as evidenced by increased play during the pandemic. Hammock Beach Golf Resort & Spa, in Palm Coast, Florida, is shining a spotlight on the value of golf and other outdoor activities as a key to recovery, both for visitors and for the resort itself.

“We have been extremely busy,” says Brad Hauer, PGA, general manager of Hammock Beach. “Since June we have been meeting our budgets in rounds played because people recognize golf as a safe way to recreate.”

The two golf courses at the resort, a Jack Nicklaus and a Tom Watson design, never shut down during Covid-19, although a portion of the lodging did close temporarily. Local, state and national guidelines are followed as safety protocols on the golf course and throughout the property. In addition to golf, health-and-wellness activities at Hammock Beach include swimming pools, a marina, kids crew, tennis, beach access, a fitness center, a putting course, bicycling and a full-service spa. Resort occupancy throughout the summer months was 90%, with the average length of stay, three to five days, unchanged. Families and buddy golf trips remain the primary guest groups, including occasional visits by Chicks with Sticks, so-

cial groups of female golfers. That isn’t to say, however, that the impact from the pandemic wasn’t severe.

“Our resort business took a hard hit last spring, with 90% of business lost,” Hauer says, “but our membership held strong and our resort business started coming back in early June. Lessons are down 20%, but our pros are still teaching, and rounds are strong.

“Overall, I notice that people are happier. They are relieved to be out playing beautiful golf courses.”

Kerry Mitruska, director of sales and marketing at Hammock Beach, notes that the resort has adapted to the restrictions and requirements of the pandemic, as have other hotel and

DESTINATIONS

hospitality venues. While there was close to a 50% reduction in business at the resort in 2020 compared to 2019, leisure and group business is picking up noticeably. Social distancing, sanitization and mask practices are in place with corporate and church groups, family reunions and golf business trips at Hammock Beach. Several new initiatives have been implemented, including a virtual learning center for students. This quiet space to study has been well received by resort guests and families, many of whom live relatively nearby.

“We have a robust digital database,” Mitruska says. “People now want to drive instead of fly, so the three-to-four-hour drive market serves us well.

“We are lucky. Our leisure occupancy over the summer and during fall weekends stayed at 90%.”

The resort’s marketing strategies have changed as a result of the pandemic. With a decrease in revenue, every department took a look at expense reduction. Consequently, the marketing budget was reduced by 30% “We found that we can function with the reduced budget,” Mitruska says. “We plan to keep it in place through 2021.”

Another change is that advertising content now focuses more on the generous outdoor spaces at the resort and the multitude of healthy activities available to guests. Overall strategic planning looks different, too.

“We do a lot of virtual business planning now, but soon our team will be back on the road selling the resort at trade shows and with meeting planners.”

Carlton Grant, managing director of Hammock Beach and senior executive on property, observes that many of the resort’s business strategies are evolving as a result of the pandemic.

“The biggest impact in food and beverage operations has been in banquets and catering,” Grant says. “We are starting to see gatherings come back, but weddings now have 20 to 30 people instead of 200, with a more intimate environment and personalized banquet service.”

Buffets have been replaced by plated appetizers and covered dinners. On the service side, the emphasis is on sanitizing, gloves and distancing between staff and customers.

“I think some of these changes might stick,” says Grant.

Food and beverage costs and pricing have risen slightly, according to Grant, due to a pan-



Photo: Hammock Beach Golf Resort & Spa

demic-related crisis in protein streams; those are stabilizing now. For example, diners continue to enjoy locally caught grouper, mahi, snapper and shrimp at the resort’s Atlantic Grill restaurant.

Business executives are telling Grant they expect to resume travel in mid-2021. In the following two years, Grant anticipates that guest numbers and revenue figures will return to normal. The focus on outdoor wellness activities at Hammock Beach will be a contributing factor.

“We are a fortunate property,” Grant says, “as our golf and wellness coverage converge. We have huge outdoor spaces, including almost one mile of coast, and we are not an overly developed property.

“You can play catch with a football on an

event lawn, and you can run, jog or do yoga on the beach. We predict that in 2021 we will continue to have a strong family and leisure pattern.”

There are several event lawns on property, ranging in area from 10,000 to 70,000 square feet. These open-air spaces are in use now more than ever for weddings, conferences and staging areas. “The grass lawns are beautiful spaces where guests feel safe and secure,” says Grant. “We are likely to continue this usage trend in the future.”

Golf will be a strong revenue stream in 2021, in conjunction with increased outdoor recreational activities, according to Grant, who has been at Hammock Beach since 2014, when he helped open the property.

“It’s been an incredible journey, and we see a bright future,” he says. **FB**



Photos: Monarch Beach Resort

Monarch Beach Resort: Focus on Fitness

At Monarch Beach Golf Links, Fitness is Multidimensional

By Sally J. Sportsman

For nearly nine years, Eric Lohman, PGA, has been general manager of Monarch Beach Golf Links, the preferred golf course for Monarch Beach Resort in Dana Point, California. During that time, he has seen change aplenty, including the current pandemic and golfers' reactions to its challenges.

"The whole world has been affected by Covid," says Lohman, who also serves as general manager of OB Sports and as secretary of the Southern California PGA. "Golf made it to the top of the food chain."

Monarch Beach always has been a busy, successful resort, Lohman says, but since reopening after an initial pandemic closure, it has witnessed a level of activity as never before, with sold-out tee times, a wait list and some people being turned away. The average golf rate has risen 25% due to increased demand. These days, 85% of business is drive-in daily play from the surrounding vicinity, with the remainder resort guests who stay on property several nights. Stringent Covid-19 protocols are in place at the golf course and throughout the resort. Yet despite the pandemic and the pervading need for everyone to adapt, guests' dedication to golf and fitness is more evident than ever at Monarch Beach.

Lohman believes fitness is far more than

strength, flexibility and endurance.

"Fitness is a broad term that applies to both the physical and mental side of things," Lohman says. "Many people take pushcarts now, for example; we sell them in the golf shop or people have their own."

There is no charge for use of push carts, and the trend has reduced standard cart usage at the venue by 15%, meaning less cart repair and maintenance. This shift potentially could save the ownership group \$30,000 over five years, Lohman says, as well as \$40,000 in fleet rental. Since the golf course is walkable, the course's caddie program is often in use, too.

The golf academy has seen an uptick in lessons of over 100% in recent months. All six three-day summer camps for juniors were sold out, and two more were added. More of the juniors were resort guests than in years past.

The mental side of fitness is reflected in instruction at Monarch Beach with the Mindful Golf program. A trained spiritual advisor from the spa can walk a round with a golfer. Or a mindful caddie can spend time with a player, talk over lunch or at the practice facility, walk a few holes, help get the guest in the proper mental framework – and even offer guidance on how to incorporate mindfulness into everyday activities away from the golf course.

"I teach a lot of resort guests," Lohman says, "and we talk through mindfulness as they putt,

"Fitness is a broad term that applies to both the physical and mental side of things."

– Eric Lohman

practice and play. I'm trained in this approach, helping people look at golf and life in a 360-degree more mindful way."

Although group-related golf travel to Monarch Beach has decreased by 95% during the pandemic, frequent individual travel – couples and families – is up 15%, allowing Mindful Golf and mental fitness to continue to play an important role in golfers' experience at the destination.

"The increase in play surprised me greatly," says Lohman. "Now that we have this new influx of golfers, if we can retain them, it will be a strong scenario.

"Luckily, golf was and remains in a position to succeed." **FB**



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Pronghorn Resort

Finding New Efficiencies

By Sally J. Sportsman

Over the last seven years, resort rounds increased steadily at Pronghorn Resort, in Bend, Oregon. Surprisingly, March through May of 2020 brought the biggest increase ever at the resort's two courses, with an 85% rise in green fee revenue in May compared to May of 2019. Covid-19 was the impetus for the growth, as was the case at many resort properties around the country.

"We were lucky; our resort never shut down," says Jerrel Grow, PGA Director of Golf at Pronghorn. "A number of our guests were local and regional, wanting to stay here to shelter in place."

Guests often worked in the mornings, then were on the golf course by 2:00 p.m. They took lessons, participated in clinics, visited the pool and spa – increasing resort revenue even more.

With pandemic protocols firmly in place, Pronghorn Resort found ways to deliver a satisfying guest experience, fostering return visits. The approach was effective.

"We will have done 3,000 more rounds in 2020 compared to years past," Grow says, "by restoring perceived value during Covid."

A masked concierge began walking the driving range, cleaning clubs and guiding golfers to their first tee on time. An increased focus on junior golf, including AJGA and U.S. Kids events, has helped fill the new hotel, which opened in April 2019.

And then there's walking.

"More people are walking now than ever before on our courses. I hope that phenomenon will stick."

– Jerrel Grow

"More people are walking now than ever before on our courses," says Grow. "I hope that phenomenon will stick."

"I've got to believe that these trends will continue in 2021 as we plan. Our guests express gratitude for the safe escape that our resort provides."

Pro shop sales, though, have been flat these past months at Pronghorn. Some items, such as apparel, balls and gloves, were hard to come by due to a breakdown in supply chains. In response, the resort increased its inventory of logoed items. Hats are now the best-selling item in the shop.

Another noticeable shift in response to the pandemic is that guests' exercise routines moved from inside to outside, observes Spencer Schaub, general manager of Pronghorn Resort. The pool opens two hours earlier than before so that adults can swim laps before the children arrive. Yoga and fitness classes now take place outside, with a 75% participation increase over years past. The resort also has seen an escalation in fly fishing, hiking, paddle boarding, kayaking, white water rafting and

mountain biking.

"During this past year, our marketing strategy was two-fold," Schaub says. "We had to manage customers' expectations upfront, with rigorous cleaning protocols and safe practices; and we had to manage whatever operational changes the resort may have made."

"For example, there's no daily cleaning of a room unless a guest requests it. The bellman is still happy to carry a guest's luggage to the room, but he asks first."

Corporate and group business are down significantly, as is group golf. A bright spot is that 90% of the weddings that were on the books for last year have been rescheduled for this year.

Schaub notes that Covid-19 has been challenging.

"It made us managers and leaders roll up our sleeves and dig into operations," he says. "I mowed fairways, folded laundry, cleaned rooms and did transportation runs."

"When you work side by side, it gives you opportunities to find efficiencies and to implement positive change." 



MULTIPLES

OMNI LA COSTA RESORT & SPA

LEADING THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS REVOLUTION FOR DECADES

By Steve Eubanks



Photo: La Costa Cafe, La Costa Resort and Spa

It was once a regular on the PGA Tour calendar. Those who remember the days before wrap-around seasons and FedEx Cup points recall the days when events still sought associations with celebrities like Danny Thomas (the Memphis Classic, which has always benefited St. Jude Children's Research Hospital) or Glen Campbell (the L.A. Open) or Jackie Gleason (Miami), Bing Crosby (Pebble Beach) and Bob Hope (Palm Springs) La Costa Resort and Spa in Carlsbad, California, a 30-minute drive from the San Diego airport, was a spring staple, the host course of the Tournament of Champions.

Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player, Don January, Al Geiberger, Lee Trevino, Tom Watson, Lanny

Wadkins, Tom Kite, Davis Love and Phil Mickelson all won there. Tiger Woods won there with a near ace in a Monday-morning playoff against Tom Lehman.

Paul Azinger, who won the Tournament of Champions at La Costa in 1990, said, "It was always a great spot. The golf course was solid and you got strong fields because everybody playing there had won. It was one of the biggest events, certainly one of the biggest wins I had that wasn't a major. And the resort was great, laid back, kind of a fun spot to spend a week with the family."

The place was built in 1965 by some Las Vegas investors. It was a Southern California getaway, a residential playground with golf, tennis,

equestrian and some rooms. The initial 40 units rented for \$22 a night, which included greens fees.

"It was the acclaimed 'La Costa Lifestyle' that really distinguished the resort and began to define a new kind of vacation excellence, one where guest well-being was at the heart of the resort experience," said the resort's director of marketing, Michelle Zwirek. "At the center of La Costa's innovative excellence was its spa, the likes of which America had never seen before - a resort within a resort. From the beginning, La Costa's spa was more in keeping with the European design of a spa retreat.

"As a recreational resort, La Costa had it all: championship golf, tennis, stables and

riding trails. There was also an Olympic-size swimming pool, complete with cabanas, locker rooms, snack bar and teen area, which was unique at that time. When it came time to relax, as if a day at the spa or an afternoon of golf wasn't relaxing enough, La Costa won rave reviews with its incredible accommodations, award-winning cuisine and sensational service."

Then came the golf boom of the 90s. Resorts with rooms, restaurants, golf, tennis, pools and spas became a ubiquitous part of the American landscape, especially in California. San Diego County alone has close to 100 courses and the Coachella Valley a couple of hours to the east has even more. Suddenly, the things that made La Costa special could be found in a lot of places, some with newer rooms and views of the ocean.

The PGA Tour also moved the Tournament of Champions to Maui. And while the field strength and winner's list for that event didn't improve, the views from the Plantation Course at Kapalua in January made for the kind of television that no other property could match.

Enter Omni, the Dallas-based hotel and resort company that purchased La Costa in 2013. Because Omni owns a number of historic properties, including the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, North Carolina, their executives understood that La Costa could carve out a unique spot in the health and wellness niche. The spa was redesigned and updated and the resort struck a deal with Dr. Deepak Chopra, the Indian-born physician known for his new-age approach to wellness. The Chopra Center became the centerpiece of the La Costa experience.

"Resort 'wellness' is more than yoga classes, smoothies and Instagram posts," Zwirek said. "Wellness is a lifestyle and a commitment. Our director of spa, tennis, golf, recreation and culinary each, respectively, stays abreast of trends in product and service to ensure that La Costa remains at the forefront of destination wellness and travel. Our Spa, for example, is currently focused on providing treatments in the safest way possible, ensuring the health and safety of both our associates and our guests."

As with every resort in the world, but especially in California, COVID-19 hit La Costa hard. Dining restrictions extended through 2020, and the spa, where massages and aqua

"Resort 'wellness' is more than yoga classes ...Our Spa, for example, is currently focused on providing treatments in the safest way possible."

– Michelle Zwirek



therapy play a key role in an overall package, remained closed for more than 10 months. But Omni stuck with the strategy. As other clubs and resorts "discovered" health and wellness, La Costa was in a position to say, "We've been here all along."

"The culinary team at La Costa is consistently seeking to innovate, educate and meet the dietary demands of the modern traveler," Zwirek said. "A primary focus is sourcing sustainable and local products in order to reduce our carbon footprint while making California produce the star."

The holistic approach to wellness goes top to bottom. Resort staff will design a menu for you, a fitness program that suits your goals, and

set you up with golf, tennis, spa treatments and meditation therapy – programs that other golf properties are just beginning to discover but that La Costa has had in place for decades.

"In many ways, La Costa has remained unspoiled over the last 50 years," Zwirek said. "Most of our guests are pleasantly surprised by the wide-open space, the gorgeous flowers, the ocean air and the blue sky."

"The design, the footprint and the location of the resort naturally encourage deeper breaths, longer walks, an extra nine holes or afternoon siesta."

Given the year everyone had in 2020, all those things are good for the health and wellness of the mind, body and spirit. **FB**



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Sebring Courses Employ Nash Equilibrium Theorem Without Realizing It

By: *Steve Eubanks*

The book and film *A Beautiful Mind* explore the brilliant genius and tragic schizophrenia of American mathematician John Nash, who won the Nobel Prize for his breakthrough work expanding on Adam Smith's invisible hand theories. But what both the book and movie gloss over is the seminal work of the Princeton professor, the Nash Equilibrium, for which he won the Nobel Prize.

While complex in its proof, Nash Equilibrium is, at its core, game theory that says each participant's strategy is optimized when considering the decisions of other participants. So, every player wins because everyone gets the outcome they desire.

It fights the hand because it goes against the zero-sum formula that says every competitor is striving to gain market share or to "win" at the expense of others who seek the same outcome.

If that sounds complicated, it shouldn't. In golf,

we see it all the time. Two courses fight for one golfer. Operators lower prices, offer incentives, work hard to make their courses better, all under the guise of beating their competitors. That's what Smith saw as the invisible hand of markets.

Nash said, not quite. And while he didn't play golf, if he did, Nash might have said the two courses would be better off not fighting for the one golfer but being cognizant of each other's interests and working together to bring in five more.

Operators in Sebring, Florida, didn't run their problems through Nash's equations. In fact, when they created the Citrus Golf Trail, John Nash's name never came up. But his theorem is hard at work there. A group of operators, sensing that they were killing each other by fighting for the same golfer, chose to band together to bring five more golfers into the fold.

"We have a great collection of golf courses in the area but none had the budget to market itself in an impactful way," said Casey Wohl

Hartt of Visit Sebring. "When the Citrus Golf Trail first formed and presented their concept to Visit Sebring, we liked that (the course operators) were working together in a cooperative and coordinated manner to address their marketing needs. This led to Visit Sebring providing a 1:1 match of marketing funds raised by the Trail. We later evolved into Visit Sebring temporarily taking over management of the Trail and providing direct marketing assistance to Citrus Golf Trail as our local golf brand."

There are five courses involved: Sebring Municipal, Sebring International, Sun n Lake, River Greens and Pinecrest. On their own, they languished. Together, and out of necessity, they have created a model that can be emulated around the country.

"The Citrus Golf Trail has significantly increased visibility and brand awareness for our area golf market," Hartt said. "Although prospective players may not always know exactly where the Citrus Golf Trail is located, they do



Photo: Pinecrest Golf Club



know - based on the name - that it is in Florida. The Trail has been a great way to attract attention to our courses and increase golf play in the destination. With the inclusion of Inn on the Lakes as the Trail's hotel partner, it helps Visit

Sebring achieve our goal of increasing overnight hotel stays."

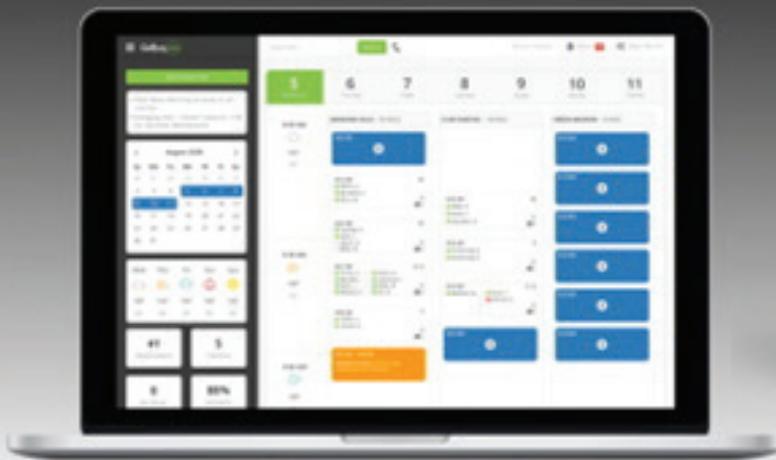
Next year, the trail will host a national scotch-foursome amateur event modeled after the original Haig & Haig, which later became

the JC Penny Classic.

It's just one more way that considering the decisions of others ensures that all involved reach their ultimate goals. And that is a beautiful thing, indeed. **FB**

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EXCLUSIVES

FOREST LAKE

GROWTH FOR THE GENERATIONS TO COME

By Scott Kauffman



Photo: Forest Lake

As Forest Lake approaches its 100th anniversary in a few years, this member-owned club has seen its fair share of generational changes and trends during its time as a traditional private ‘golf club’ in Columbia, South Carolina.

But what remained constant over the years was a club mostly highlighted by an older male-dominated membership focused on playing the 18-hole championship course that opened in 1928, enjoying a no-frills clubhouse built in 1955 or hanging out for a drink and/or smoke inside the modest men’s locker room lounge. Recently, however, the lifestyle at Forest Lake is becoming dramatically different than

decades past and the impetus behind the evolving club life are some newly completed capital improvement projects driven by Atlanta-based private club specialists Kuo Diedrich Chi Architects.

Among the \$3 million-plus round of popular new amenities changing the club’s look and feel are the family-oriented resort-style pool complex and free-standing pool bar to go along with a newly refurbished competitive-length lap pool that goes back to the 1950s. Throw in a completely transformed 44,000-square-foot clubhouse setting that now features upscale dining/lounge facilities, the highly popular new Lakeside Grille dining venue and com-

pletely remodeled and well-appointed women’s and men’s locker rooms (smoking no longer allowed), and Forest Lake resembles nothing like its former club life past of previous generations.

Indeed, this “legacy-type” member’s club in the heart of Columbia’s affluent Forest Acres community is younger, healthier, and more active than ever before. To be sure, this traditional golf club was always well-rounded with a decades-long swim program with 150 members competing in youth leagues, not to mention a membership often found using the club’s 10 tennis courts (8 clay; 2 Har-Tru surfaces) or new tennis shop built in 2010.

Considering Forest Lake has long been

EXCLUSIVES

capped with 1,150 members and little or no membership attrition/retention concerns some members certainly questioned why all the club changes and capital investments were even needed. Chartered in 1924 and incorporated two years later with approximately 100 members that quickly grew to 200, Forest Lake's founding members would likely agree, seeing that the original vision turned out to be quite successful for some 94 years.

But there is a new generation of Forest Lake members living and working in the surrounding neighborhoods, and their tastes and private club expectations are nothing like their parents' or grandparents." Club manager Sean McLaughlin, who is in his eighth year at Forest Lake, has been at the forefront of Forest Lake's transformational membership demographic changes.

For instance, though Forest Lake lost a number of older core golf members in their 60s during the recent capital investments, McLaughlin says the club not only experienced an influx of new younger members (average age around 45), but they also are more inclined to be less price sensitive and willing to pay for a higher-level food-and-beverage experience.

As McLaughlin describes it, this is a membership no longer motivated by maintaining catered appreciation parties free of charge or lowering the prices on their favorite fillets and/or glasses of house wine. To the contrary, this is a membership that is far from frugal and willing to pay for a "better chardonnay than accepting the free house chardonnay," McLaughlin says.

"The younger members really don't care what it costs," McLaughlin adds. "They want what they want when it comes to quality and experience."

Perhaps the most popular destination for this changing membership is the new 140-seat Lakeside Grille, a casual indoor-outdoor dining venue overlooking Forest Lake and the new pool facility. McLaughlin says the new Grille and pool complex, featuring family-friendly splash pad and fountains, zero-degree entry and underwater seating, contributed to significant increases in member satisfaction/growth in 2020 and food-and-beverage revenue approaching \$2 million annually.

Besides revenue growth, McLaughlin also credits the new amenities for driving higher initiation fees in 2020 as well as next year, and consequently shoring up the capital reserve account. Meanwhile, Forest Lake managed to



Photo: Forest Lake pool

grow its wait list by another 16 percent with 100 individuals getting added to what is now a four-year list.

And all of this growth in overall member activity, revenues and interest was achieved despite the Lakeside Grille being forced to close in March within a month of opening and limited to takeout only through the end of May due to the pandemic. Since June, Forest Lake resumed outdoor dining at the Grille but stayed at 50 percent capacity out of member caution and still had an extremely busy summer pool season with pool and snack bar numbers hitting budget, thanks in part to the Grille menu being served poolside.

McLaughlin sums up the club's state of affairs by stating: "Our new members have sophisticated tastes in wine and dining, are avid golfers and tennis players, and they're family oriented and use all of the amenities – especially the new pool facility. These members have access to the best clubs in the Southeast. Our goal is to exceed these expectations to continue to make Forest Lake Club the most desired club in the area."

Based on the recent round of capital improvement projects and return on investment, Forest Lake Club appears to be positioned right where it wants to be for another centennial of compelling South Carolina club life. **FB**



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Photo: Mirabel Golf Club



New Additions to the Mirabel Golf Club

By Scott Kauffman

Even in the rarefied air of America's prestigious private clubs, Mirabel's exclusive Scottsdale, Arizona, course had a debut in December 2001 like none other in recent memory. At least that is one way to describe the new Tom Fazio-designed course Discovery Land Company built for its members – immediately after taking over the property the prior year and blowing up a yet-to-be opened new course designed by Greg Norman.

When Discovery Land took over the golf project in late 2000 for the new property owners, real estate investment firm Terrabrook, Norman's namesake design firm had just completed a new \$15-million layout for the previous landowners. They envisioned it to be an upscale daily-fee "target course" with just 45 acres of turfgrass. However, before the first ball was teed up for what was then called Stonehaven, Discovery Land founder Mike Meldman said Norman's course "wasn't a good fit" for the type of private club community he would go on to master worldwide and decided to tear it up and spend another \$15 million on the Fazio-inspired layout.

Nearly 20 years later, Mirabel is still blowing up and reimagining things to keep this club as relevant and appealing as ever for its discerning members. This time, though, the motivation behind the latest renovation work is about

everything but the golf course – namely health and wellness and dining/social activities that Mirabel's active membership desires.

The focus of Mirabel's new \$6-million construction project locally based Erik Peterson of PHX Architecture started last May is the renovation and expansion of the original Desert Lodge clubhouse and adjacent amenities that sit on a prime North Scottsdale peak at 3,000 feet. When fully completed before the end of January, the clubhouse will feature a new indoor and outdoor peninsula bar with full glass sliding walls that showcase picturesque daytime and nighttime "down-valley views of Phoenix-Scottsdale," according to club general manager/chief operating officer Marcie Mills. Other notable enhancements are increased casual dining space, more outdoor patio dining room with additional fire pits, a private dining room and two new glass walled wine rooms.

Meanwhile, another major addition for the member-owned club is a new fitness center that is double the size (4,800 square feet) with dedicated areas for stretching, additional free weight equipment, Pilates and other classes. Locker rooms also are being updated as part of the plan, and additional space will be available for more salon and spa services.

Outside, the tennis and racquet center grew as well with four new pickleball courts as that sport continues to gain in popularity among

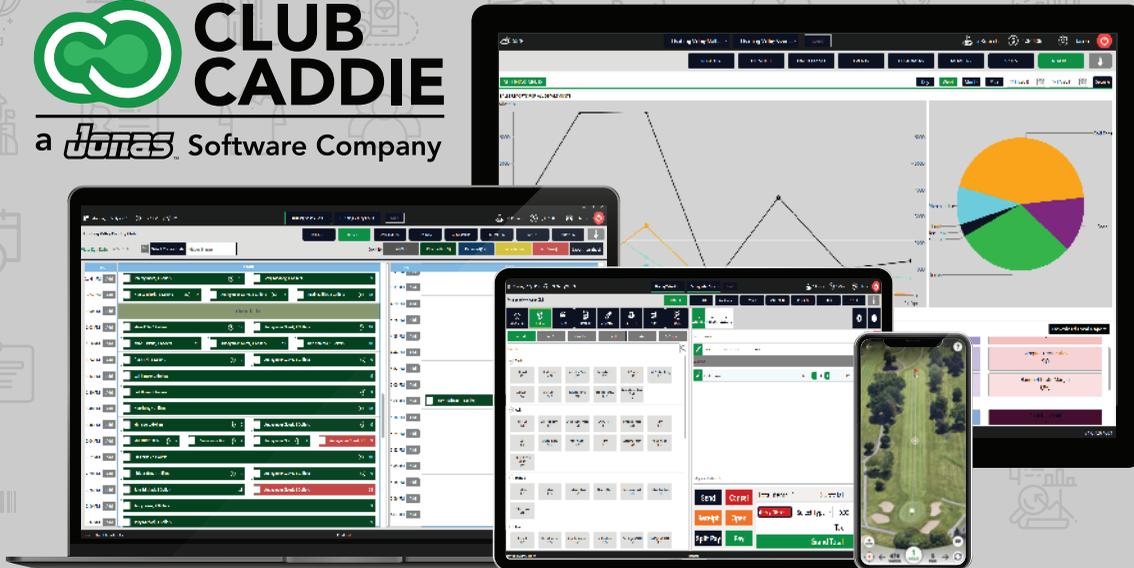
members and prospective members, according to sales and marketing director Nissa Sjoberg. Perhaps the genesis for Mirabel's compelling new capital improvement projects was the success Mirabel had in 2014 by enclosing an existing patio for more casual dining and adding a new bar with cascading fire pits that overlooked the 18th green.

"Over and over again," according to Sjoberg and Mills, members kept telling them how they would "love a new bar and then it grew into pickleball." Eventually, there became a groundswell of interest for simply more health and wellness space and social activities – mostly from the club's extremely active female membership.

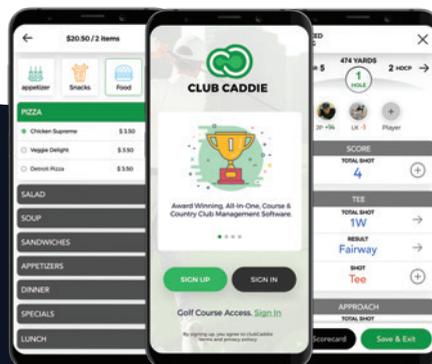
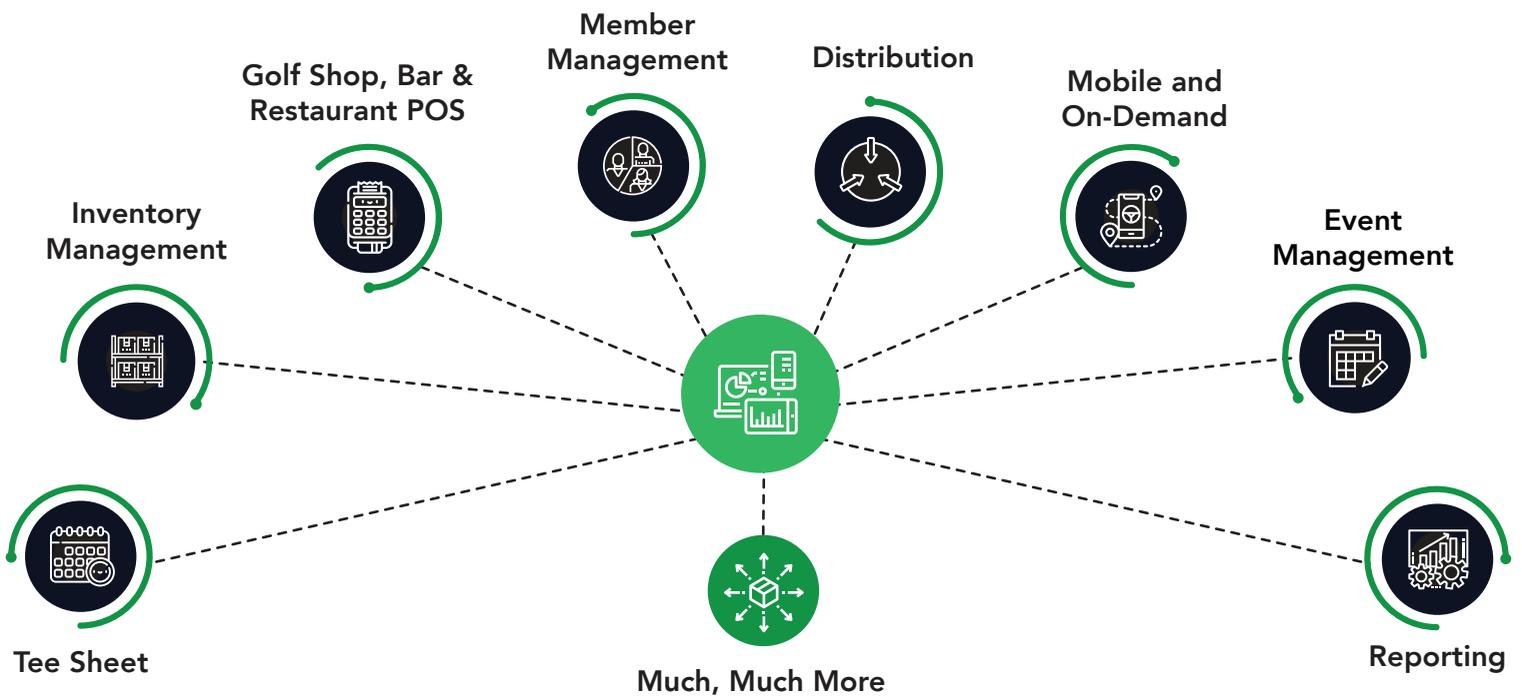
"Our fitness center before was running 90 classes a month," Mills points out. "We're a membership of 325 persons and to have that high demand for fitness class, we just needed more space. We have a very engaged population here. And we really focus on women.

"As you know, women are the decision makers in the household, so we have a whole guide to ladies activities that we nurture and cultivate here at the club. It's everything from painting and cooking classes to happy hours to spa and wellness retreats for women. We developed this whole program that really focuses on female engagement off the course."

A golf course, to be sure, that certainly doesn't need to be rebuilt any time soon. **FB**



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SINGLES

CAROLINA COUNTRY CLUB

SHIFTS FOCUS TO FITNESS

By Steve Eubanks



Photo: Carolina Country Club

The facility was second to none. When Roger Milliken, CEO of Milliken & Company, one of America's leading textile manufacturers, built Carolina Country Club as a place for his executives to live and recreate in the company's home base of Spartanburg, South Carolina, it was everything a country club was supposed to be. The golf course, situated in a valley surrounded by the southernmost bumps of Appalachia, is a tough but fair test, one of Tom Jackson's best designs. The clubhouse is appointed with the amenities every early-1980s member expected – rich, thick wallpaper, a cloak room, one dining facility after another with lots of dark wood and

Brunswick green leather. This was, after all, where the captains of industry would come for dinner on Saturday nights, where birthdays and anniversaries would be celebrated and where debutants debuted. It was where every company worth its Southern salt hosted its Christmas parties and where every well-heeled bride and groom wanted their reception held.

The business of banquets grew so great that the club built 2,500 additional square feet with exposed beams, chandeliers and a hefty stone fireplace. Just like that the club could host a wedding, a bridge club, a business luncheon and a couple of golf groups at the same time.

What it couldn't provide, at least until

recently, was a gym.

Then the coat-and-tie 80s and open-collar 90s gave way to a new millennium of members, a group of people who went out on Saturday nights to downtown bistros, got married barefoot on the beach with a reception at the nearby brewpub; people who joined clubs, not to sip brandy with captains of industry but to enjoy the company of healthy and active friends. For those people, fitness was a prerequisite.

They wanted to walk the golf course with a carry bag on their shoulder or a pushcart leading the way. They wanted to utilize the pool for laps and not splashing around with the kids or sipping drinks on a gaudy float. The tennis

SINGLES

courts were important, even if they only used them for pickleball or some other racquet sport. And, most of all, they wanted a place to work out.

“There’s no doubt that gym membership is in the family budgets of the members we’re trying to attract,” said Tim Dunlap, who purchased Carolina Country Club in 2020. “That’s why it’s so important to include that amenity as part of the overall country club experience. It’s more than an up sell. It’s a necessity. Because you can rest assured that if your family is paying two sets of dues – one to the country club and one to the local gym – and something has to get cut, the gym membership is not going to get cut.”

The folks at Carolina CC understood that. They also realized that while the new banquet space was nice for the 10 to 20 overflow weddings a year the club hosted, most of the business generated in that space came from outside the membership. “It wasn’t a value add,” Dunlap said. “You could sell that space to a local bride looking for a place to host a reception, but you couldn’t use it to sell memberships.”

The club converted the beautiful, exposed-beam space into one of the most eye-popping gyms in the south. “I can’t think of many other gyms that have chandeliers,” said Jonathan Seymour, the wellness director at Carolina CC. “It’s a gem of a gym. When you walk in, you’re like, whoa, I didn’t expect that.”

It’s also a much more consistent and reliable profit center. “If you think about banquet space, you’re constantly having to sell it to new people,” Dunlap said. “And even if you do everything perfect, you’re making, what, 20% margins? That’s doing it all right and getting lucky... A gym provides a membership value, which is essential in membership retention, club usage, and building a consistent dues line. This space, and having Jonathan (Seymour) working with the members, accomplishes all of that.”

“My No.1 goal is to engage the members, not just from a ‘hey, I can help you,’ standpoint, but also from a ‘hey, I want to get to know you,’ kind of relationship,” Seymour said. “I don’t want them to think that I want something out of them. I just want to get to know them. Out of that, trust is formed. If you trust somebody, you’re more likely to do what they ask you to do to help their body and get them back to full strength.”

Seymour or someone like him is a key element in the equation. “I have a doctorate in physical therapy and a bachelor’s in exercise



Photo: Carolina Country Club

physiology,” he said. “So I can see the member who is not hurting and help them stay active, get stronger and continue to play their preferred activity and hopefully improve performance, as well as help that person who hurt their back, their neck, their shoulder, or their hip and is having pain. They want to play but can’t seem to play without pain. I can help them get back to playing pain free. So I provide a service that they can maximize their enjoyment of the club.”

Because of the fitness center, which is adjacent to the swimming pool, Carolina Country Club now has three levels of membership, full, social, and athletic, the latter of which includes all activities except golf – tennis, pool, dining and fitness.

“On average 800 to 900 members a month come into the gym,” Seymour said. “That’s probably 60 of the same people over and over. But I see that the new members are engaging in the

fitness center more than the long-term members. It’s never going to be Gold’s Gym where it’s packed shoulder to shoulder and you have to wait on your machine. That’s the perk of having it built into the membership. But we have a good stable of moms who are here in the late morning and early afternoon – right after they drop the kids off and right before they go pick them up. Then we have the seniors who come in early and the golfers who come in after their rounds. It’s a routine, just like the groups that play golf together every Saturday. The same people come in. That’s where the encouragement comes from and where the relationships are built.

“It’s amazing the bond that forms when you worry more about making people better than about taking people’s money,” he said.

And it is amazing how that bond builds a base of revenue that sustains a club through up and down times. **FB**



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Photo: Desert Mountain Golf Club

Club Fitness in Times of COVID

By: Steve Eubanks

It was once the place you went to convalesce. Famous sufferers of respiratory ailments like Doc Holiday, who died of tuberculosis, migrated to Arizona for clean air and dry heat. But in 2020, few states suffered more from the ravages of COVID-19. With an older-than-average population, many of whom, like Holiday more than a century ago, had retired to the desert because of underlying health conditions, Arizona was ripe for an airborne virus that attacked the elderly.

But while many businesses locked down, golf and other recreational pursuits associated with clubs thrived in the desert. The Ranch at Desert Mountain, for example, includes more than 20 miles of hiking trails, horseback riding and a 33-acre wilderness amenity in addition to a 42,000 square-foot clubhouse that has a fitness center, physical therapy and personal training.

Of course, there are the standard amenities you'd expect to find at a top-end club – golf, tennis, croquet and a pool. Like many places throughout the country, pickleball took off at Desert Mountain during the pandemic. Outside of golf, it is the most engaging sport that can be played with friends in a socially distant and responsible way.

“At Desert Mountain we’re fortunate to have lots of wide-open spaces and areas to use for fitness and wellness classes, as well as a temperate climate well-suited to outdoor activities,” said Arnaldo Cocuzza, who oversees all recreation

within the clubhouse and wilderness areas. “During COVID, we have created an ‘outdoor studio’ adjacent to the grass tennis court. This studio holds equipment needed for a variety of fitness classes such as boot camp, yoga and H.I.I.T. (high-intensity interval training), plus individual equipment that allows members to work out on their own as well.

“In addition, the clubhouse courtyard now features open-air spinning classes. Fortunately, we have nine tennis courts and three different playing surfaces (grass, clay and hard court), as well as six pickleball courts, so our active racquet sports enthusiasts still have plenty of options. Our two pools allow members to swim when they’d like or by pre-scheduled time slots.”

As government regulations changed, Cocuzza adjusted the club’s health and fitness protocols.

“Obviously, we had to abide by county guidelines,” he said. “But as restrictions were lifted or amended, we were able to adjust access to our indoor facilities. Currently, members make appointments to come to the fitness center, indoor weight room and cardiovascular equipment. We limit the number of people in the space at any given time, according to local guidelines, and equipment is wiped down after each use. Each day at noon, the facility is closed for an hour to undergo an electrostatic cleaning process.”

Fitness became therapy for many members during the height of the pandemic. But, as always, golf remained the center of the club.

“At Desert Mountain we’re fortunate to have lots of wide-open spaces and areas to use for fitness and wellness classes, as well as a temperate climate well-suited to outdoor activities.”

– Arnaldo Cocuzza

“Our community is known for the excellence of its golf courses and to say that golf has been popular during COVID is an understatement,” Cocuzza said. “We recorded 140,000 member rounds in 2020.”

That, under any circumstances, is about as healthy as it gets. **RB**



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TITLE: Owners

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MINDing Your Business

*How to stay
on top of your
mental game in
tough times*

By Doug McPherson

The pandemic hit Don Rea at the worst possible time. “March is our busiest time of the year,” said Rea, who owns Augusta Ranch Golf Club in Mesa, Arizona and was recently elected as Secretary of the PGA of America. “We immediately lost three weeks of business and that hurt because we actually lose money in the summer.”

Cathy Harbin, owner of Pine Ridge Golf Course in Paris, Texas, feels Rea’s pain. “Every day for four weeks we didn’t know if we’d get shut down,” Harbin said. “Employees were coming up and asking about their jobs.”

If there’s one thing Rea, Harbin and everyone in the business can be certain of, it’s uncertainty. Yep, par for the course. So many responsibilities and so many worries – then toss in a heavy dose of the unexpected and eventually it can weigh heavy on the mind.

Some studies suggest entrepreneurs like course owners are twice as likely as the general population to face mental health problems.

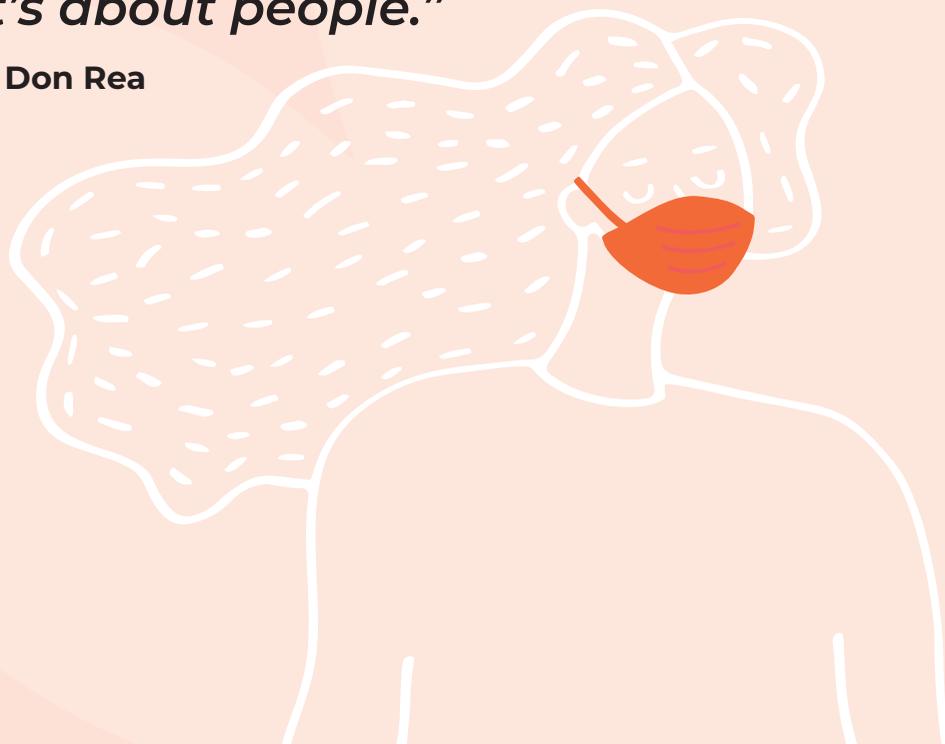
Why? Aleya Littleton, a licensed mental health counselor in Colorado who works with small business owners, said in addition to all the uncertainty and responsibilities, being the final decision maker with success riding on your choices can get exhausting.

Harbin agrees. “When the pandemic hit, I felt like I was making a major decision every hour.”



“Golf itself is so good for mental health. We need to celebrate what golf gives us naturally and tell people about that. It’s bigger than making money, it’s about people.”

– Don Rea



Both Harbin and Rea admit 2020 was a tough test, but they endured with help from others – family, friends, colleagues and customers, too.

“We all felt like we were in the same foxhole together,” Harbin said. “Customers understood how hard we worked to stay open and to make it safe for them and they really appreciated it.”

Rea said he always thinks about people in his day-to-day life, but especially when difficulties hit. “I manage by walking around and talking to the staff and customers, too. It helps me to stay connected to everyone.”

Littleton said while there’s no foolproof way to thrive in hard times, connection and support amid life’s storms is crucial for mental health. “You want people who offer empathy and encouragement, who help you problem solve and normalize your feelings,” Littleton said.

It’s those feelings that need extra attention to stay mentally healthy. To better understand your feelings and how you respond to them and to stress, Littleton suggests developing a stress

continuum, a color-coded tool that’s perfect for golf lovers because the goal is to get to the green. In the continuum, green equals healthy – it’s you feeling your best: creative, open, flexible, patient and social (add your own words). Yellow is mild stress where some of those good traits start lagging. Orange often features insomnia, irritability, cloudy thinking and depression. Red is chronic stress where suicidal thoughts can appear.

To stay in the green zone, Littleton said to focus on what you put in your body, which creates the hormones and neurotransmitters that keep you feeling healthy. Avoid sugar and alcohol, exercise, take vitamins and supplements such as Omega-3s, and consider natural sleep aids like magnesium or valerian root near bedtime to unwind.

Other tips:

1. Spend three minutes at the end of the day to feel your feelings. “Reflect on the day and feel the stress, cry, shake, get mad or feel hopeless. Then

tell yourself, ‘I can release my feelings’ – breathe deeply and say, ‘I will release them now.’”

2. Adopt a mantra to improve your perspective and decision making. State out loud every day, “Everything works out for me!”

3. Do a brain dump after work by writing down everything that’s bugging you to free up head space for relaxing and enjoying down time.

4. Start a daily gratitude practice to boost positive neurochemicals: serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin. “It’s basically a free antipsychotic medication,” Littleton said.

On the topic of gratitude and looking back at 2020, Rea and Harbin both said their appreciation for working in the world of golf grew because of what it offers people.

“We were the only place where some were going outside of their house,” Harbin said.

Rea added, “Golf itself is so good for mental health. We need to celebrate what golf gives us naturally and tell people about that. It’s bigger than making money, it’s about people.” 

ONLINE

MORE GOLF INDUSTRY NEWS FROM THE WEB



GolfBUSINESS WEEKLY

Once You've Got It Up, Keep It Up: A Plea to the Golf Industry for 2021

After years, actually decades, of slowing demand, customers getting older, less "new" customers to replace the dying ones, overbuilt golf markets, too many new courses, dried-up credit options, and discount-demanding golfers...everything has changed. And it changed overnight. This euphoric feeling after our escape from decades-long futility is what Andy Dufresne must have felt like after escaping Shawshank Prison in 1969. Read more here.



Allison George and Rock Lucas; and House Chat with George Cooper, Forbes Tate

Allison George, Toad Valley Golf Course, IA and Rock Lucas, Charwood Golf Club, SC discuss the past year and what they can incorporate and apply in 2021 from what transpired in 2020. George Cooper, Partner, Forbes Tate Partners discusses post-election legislative activities. He also chats about what's on the horizon for golf course owners and small businesses as 2021 approaches...with a new administration beginning and COVID-19 still very much in play.



GolfBUSINESS LIVE

Driving Revenue Through the Golfer Journey: Experience Satisfiers and Dissatisfiers

USGA takes a deeper look at the motivations, expectations and desires that golfers have, while identifying and discussing specific touch points at each stage of the journey. View this two part series here!

2021 GOLF INDUSTRY EVENT CALENDAR

All events and dates are subject to change. Please visit event websites for updated information.

JANUARY 25 – 27

**Golf Business Conference
Virtual Summit**
golfbusinessconference.com

SEPTEMBER 13

**CGCOA & GCSA of Northern
California & Northern
California PGA Meeting**
*Baylands Golf Links
Palo Alto, California*

AUGUST 21 – 24

American Golf Expo And Forum
Atlanta, Georgia
aagolfexpo.com

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PACKAGES	BENEFITS						PRICING
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BEST VALUE! ALL-ACCESS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	MEMBER: • Individual: \$600 • Entire Facility*: \$850 NON-MEMBER • Individual: \$750 • Entire Facility*: \$1,050
BASE			✓	✓	✓	✓	MEMBER: • Individual: \$350 • Entire Facility*: \$500 NON-MEMBER • Individual: \$500 • Entire Facility*: \$700
Trade Show Only					✓	✓	FREE

* Facility = 18-hole golf course

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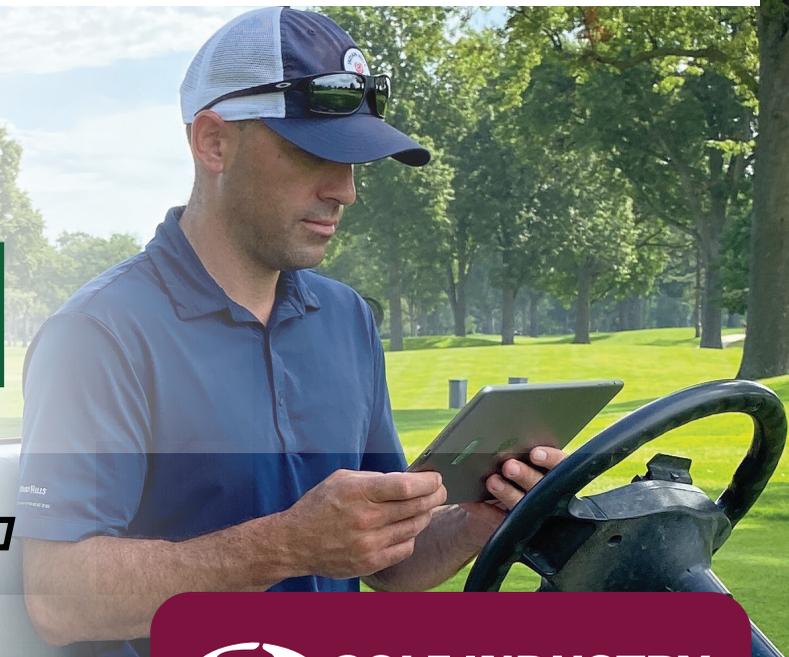
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JANUARY
25-27

REGISTER TODAY

GolfBusinessConference.com

Part of Virtual PGA Show Week

Expand and strengthen your business at Golf Business Conference 2021

Golf Business Conference is the industry's **largest annual gathering of golf course owners and operators**, and is hosted by the NGCOA. Each year, this event offers **relevant and timely education** delivered by **expert speakers** on the most critical areas of **golf course operations**.

This year, GBC will be 100% virtual, and will offer education over three days with business-critical topics. GBC21 will also

Who should attend #GBC21?

- Golf Course Owners, Operators, and Managers
- Buyers for Golf Facilities and Courses
- Golf and Pro-Shop Owners and Managers
- Golf Tournament Directors and Organizers
- PGA Professionals and others who are interested in becoming an owner or operator
- Anyone else who is responsible for the success of a golf course business

offer education beneficial to new golf course owners, and PGA Professionals and others interested in **golf course ownership**.

GBC21 education sessions will be eligible for **continuing education credits** from the PGA of America, as well as the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), the Club Management Association of America (CMAA), and the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA).

Return to your golf business with new and stronger relationships, and tools and tangible plans for improving operations, enhancing marketing efforts, increasing revenue, and starting the year off strong!

2021 PGA Show Virtual Experience & Marketplace

Our strategic alliance with the PGA of America offers you an incredible venue to learn about the latest trends and suppliers, while affording ample opportunities to discover innovative products and services to run a better golf operation. This year, explore interactive exhibitor showrooms featuring the latest products in apparel/apparel accessories, technology, equipment, training aids, travel and more.

Monday, January 25

All times are Eastern Time

11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

The Election, COVID-19 and Legislation

An update and look ahead to 2021

Holly Wade | Executive Director | NFIB Research Center



12:00 PM – 12:50 PM

Winning the “Find a Golf Course Near Me” Internet Battle

How to compete when the competition is stacked against you...

Harvey Silverman | Principal | Silverback Golf Marketin

Rob Hoffman | Vice President of Sales and Marketing | Gallus Golf



1:00 PM – 1:50 PM

What’s Really Driving the Golf Surge and Keys to Sustaining It

Connecting Your Growth Strategy to Golfer Behaviors

Jon Last | President | Sports & Leisure Research Group



2:00 PM – 2:50 PM

Controlling Capital Project Costs from the “Need Stage”

Putting Objectivity and Strategy into the Capital Cost Planning

Jim Ehret | Ehret Construction Consulting



Tuesday, January 26

11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

Maximizing ROI for the Property You Have

Novel course designs, millennials, and vision

Agustin Pizá | Director | Pizá Golf



12:00 PM – 12:50 PM

So You Want to Own a Golf Course?

Take this test to see if you are ready

Cathy Harbin, PGA, LPGA | Owner |

Pine Ridge Golf & Country Club

Chuck Bennell | Former President and CEO |

Tam O’Shanter Company



Register today at GolfBusinessConference.com

1:00 PM – 1:50 PM

State of the Industry

State of the Union Aside, Let's Talk about Golf

Jim Koppenhaver | Founder & President | Pellucid Corp
Stuart Lindsay | Principal | Edgehill Golf Advisors



2:00 PM – 2:50 PM

Mars, Venus and Millennials, Oh My!

Customer service strategies for 2021 and beyond

Whitney Reid Pennell | President | RCS Hospitality Group



Wednesday, January 27

11:00 AM – 12:00 AM

PGA Keynote



12:20 PM – 12:55 PM

Buying or Selling A Golf Course in 2021?

What's the state of the golf course market?

Larry Hirsh | President | Golf Property Analysts



1:15 PM – 1:50 PM

Top Marketing Trends for 2020

Preparing for Success in 2021

Kris Strauss | Sr. VP Sales & Marketing | Troon



1:55 PM – 2:30 PM

Modern Math! Dynamic Goal Times + Smart Intervals + Pace of Play = Revenue

Improve player experiences AND increase revenue, through efficient management

Steven Borrer | Director of Golf | Bandon Dunes
Bodo Sieber | CEO | Tagmarshal



2:35 PM – 3:05 PM

Inclusion Guidelines for Golf Facilities—A Must Do Checklist for All

Linnet Carty | Director of Inclusion & Community Engagement | PGA of America



Register today at [GolfBusinessConference.com](https://www.GolfBusinessConference.com)

GOLF BUSINESS CONFERENCE 2021

Part of Virtual PGA Show Week

JANUARY 25-27

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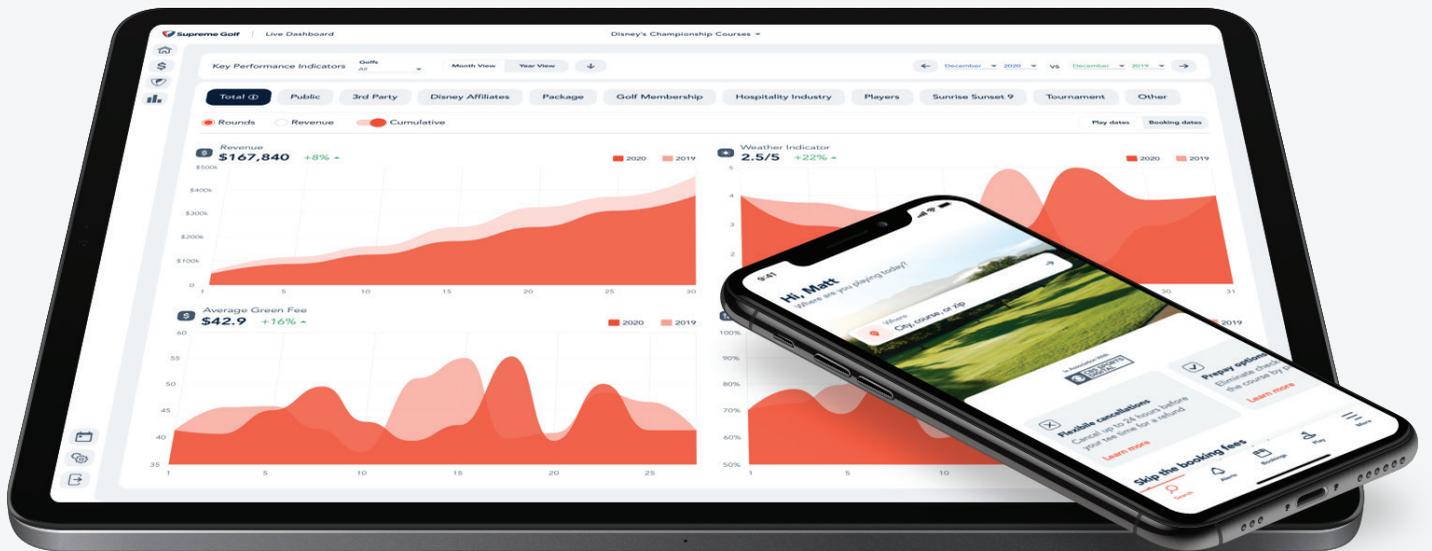


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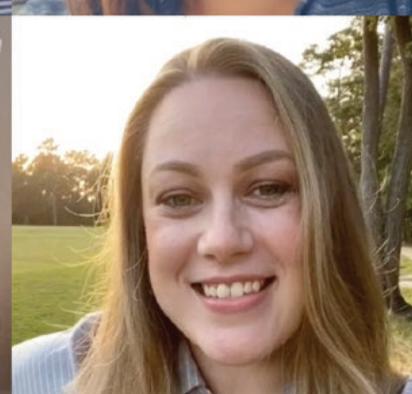
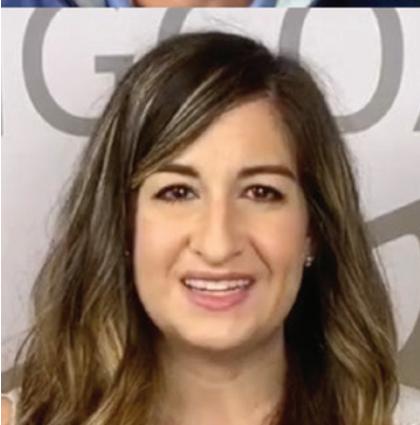
OUR TRUSTED PARTNERS





NGCOA In Action

News from the National Golf Course Owners Association



NGCOA In Action

SMART BUY SPOTLIGHT

Are any of these back office functions on your golf business's new year resolution list?

Golf course owner and operator members, as well as corporate members, can take advantage of the **NGCOA Smart Buy Marketplace's "Back Office Solutions"** benefits to save money and streamline operations and personnel management:

deluxe

Save money and add efficiencies on payroll solutions and HR services with Deluxe



Modernize your payment processing with First American

Lincoln

Financial Group®

Offer (or switch!) your employee 401(k) program to Lincoln Financial



Offer or upgrade your staff's medical, dental, vision and life insurance plan with NGCOA Insurance Services



Enhance your staff's health with telemedicine services with Give Virtual Care



Improve hospitality services and staff confidence with training from RCSUniversity

What's Happening in NGCOA's Smart Buy Marketplace?

NGCOA Offers Members App-Based Medical and Prescription Programs with Give Virtual Care Partnership; Comprehensive Telemedicine Plan Covers Staff and Their Families

Give Virtual Care (GVC) is the newest NGCOA Smart Buy Marketplace partner. This partnership gives NGCOA members (both owners/operators and corporate), their employees and their families access to virtual healthcare, including 10 percent off a monthly Give Virtual Care Group Membership, which includes Teladoc, Rx Valet, Expert 2nd Opinion and iCrisis Connection International mobile app services.



Give Virtual Care

Give Virtual Care is NOT a health insurance program, but a bundled healthcare membership, offering multiple remote healthcare services to NGCOA members. If a golf course or company already offers traditional medical insurance to its staff, GVC's online offerings can be used to enhance those services, especially during the pandemic. Give Virtual Care was created in part to assist employers in providing safe, secure medical assistance from home, and eliminates the barriers and restrictions created via conventional health insurance. Visit givevirtualcare.com/ngcoa for information and enrollment.



ADVOCACY

Share Your Feedback So We Can Ensure a Fair Marketplace

If you are a customer of GOLFNOW or EZLinks, the NGCOA is interested in learning about your experience with either of them in the past year, including changes in your technology service agreements for point of service, reservation system, websites, email function, online booking and/or distribution of tee time inventory on their online tee time agency (OTTA) platforms.

If you are not a customer of GOLFNOW or EZLinks, have you witnessed or heard of any changes in the online marketplace? We appreciate your time and hope you will take a few minutes to provide your feedback on this issue. Please contact Ronnie Miles, NGCOA's Director of Advocacy, at rmiles@ngcoa.org.

Tee Time Advocacy

The Advocacy Center on the NGCOA website now includes the **Tee Time Advocacy section**, which addresses issues related to the **history of online tee time distribution**, the current players involved, and the things you need to do to ensure you are protecting your golf course brand.



- Tee Time Basics
- Guidelines & FAQs
- Operator's Bill of Rights
- Data Privacy
- Branding & Advertising
- Golf Management Software Reviews

INDUSTRY EVENTS

Register today for Golf Business Conference, January 25-27, 2021

Each year, the Golf Business Conference offers engaging and interactive education sessions filled with insight and solutions to your most pressing golf business challenges. This year, the event will be conducted virtually alongside the PGA Show Virtual Experience & Marketplace. GBC21 will offer three days of business-critical education. GBC21 will also offer education on golf course ownership basics, and property assessment and real estate — information beneficial to new owners, and PGA Professionals and others interested in becoming an owner or operator. GBC21 attendees can earn continuing education credits from the PGA, LPGA, CMAA and GCSAA. Learn more at golfbusinessconference.com.



NGCOA Sponsors, Speaks at the Inaugural African American Golf Expo & Forum



The NGCOA is sponsoring the first African American Golf Expo & Forum. The event, re-scheduled for August 21-24, 2021 at the Marietta Hilton Hotel and Conference Center in Atlanta, seeks to “promote the game, the business, the industry, the careers and the opportunities in golf to African Americans” and other communities currently underrepresented in the sport. The NGCOA will also present educational programming related to golf course ownership. This new relationship not only puts NGCOA in a better position to help the business of golf — especially as it relates to supporting currently underrepresented populations in golf with revenue-positive course ownership — it is also a tangible demonstration of the organization’s commitment to a more diverse and inclusive sport. Learn more about this new event at aagolfexpo.com.

Hot Topics on NGCOA's Accelerate Discussion Board

- Including state and local taxes in membership dues
- Payroll as a percentage of revenues and expenses
- Treasury and IRS Update PPP Forgiveness Guidance Agreement and contracts for annual passes
- Recommendations for POS/Online Tee Time system
- Recent credit card scam Information and updates
- Retirement benefits
- Monthly subscriptions
- Punch Card Protocol
- Facebook semi-private groups
- Personal Use Golf Carts
- Leasing vs selling restaurant operation



NGCOA In Action

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NGCOA members get significant **discounts, rebates and value-added packages** from hundreds of the most recognized names and reputable, industry-leading companies. Many of these companies offer exclusive deals not available anywhere else.



Golf Cars & Utility Vehicles

Members converting from a competitor receive \$50 per-car for purchase or lease. Members renewing their fleet receive a free registration for Golf Business Conference or RevCon.



Player Reward Program

Members receive an 80% discount on the one-time set-up and license fee.



Human Resources & Payroll

Up to 50% on HR and payroll costs.



401(k) Program

Effective and competitive 401(k) plan benefit for NGCOA member courses' employees.



Television Programming

Up to 60% savings on programming.



Insurance

Comprehensive employee benefits (health, dental, vision, life and disability), property casualty insurance at competitive rates.



Food and Beverage

Typical savings is 7% to 15% on more than 800 vendors, including Sysco, Gordon Food Service, Performance Food Group, and many others.



Performance Reporting & Benchmarking

30%-50% discount on all reporting packages.



Subscription-based Loyalty Program

Members get a 10% discount, and first rights in your area, on subscription-based loyalty programs tools, including software, sales reporting, best practices, and more



Beverage Supplier

Rebates on various Pepsi and Gatorade fountain, bottle and can products; includes equipment and service programs.



Payment Processing

Discounted rates and special incentives on payment processing fees.



Golf Event Organization

Members receive a 7.5% discount golf event organization; NGCOA golf outing sponsors receive a 10% discount on hole-in-one insurance.



Virtual Medical Services

Members receive 10% off the cost of Give Virtual Care Group Memberships (groups of 10 or more)



Career Services

10% discount for the ExecuSearch program.



Pre-Owned Turf Equipment

Discounts on tiered pricing plus 120-day extended warranty (normally 90-day).



Customer Experience Solution

Free survey tool and 55% off Players 1st's top-tier Combined Package.



Automotive Vehicle Manufacturer

Significant factory direct fleet discounts on 2021 GM products.



Irrigation Solutions

1.5% rebate on Rain Bird Golf irrigation products.



Communication, Commerce and Booking Platform

FREE 'Virtual Pro Shop' - Standard Package. Waived setup fee (\$299+ value). Waived monthly fee (est. \$1,200 annually).



Hospitality Training and Resources

FREE access to 2 online lessons with 4 FREE lessons to come and a 20% discount on annual subscription services.



New and Used Turf Maintenance Equipment

1% rebate on new and/or 0.5% rebate on used Toro branded turf maintenance equipment.

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