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Polishing a Gem
11 years, $40M later, Pound Ridge glimmers with hope.

GB Strategies

Vantage Point

Buying Into the Game
Bill Smith finds recession-proof niche with Green Fairways.

Promoting the Portfolio
La Cantera boosted its marketing to a new level.

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It’s Time to Change the Narrative About the Future of Golf

Just yesterday, I received an email from a homeowner in Clermont, Florida, who lives in a golf course community. She was pleading with me for ideas on how to compel the city to take ownership of the golf course no longer in operation. Obviously her concern is about what would happen to the land adjacent to all these homes, and the promise of having perpetual golf course views when the homes were built 14 years ago. The words “eminent domain” were thrown around. Even without local knowledge of the situation, I sternly advised against the eminent domain idea. But I will admit, it’s painful to hear about any golf course that has failed.

Not long after the email exchange with the distraught homeowner, I was asked by someone in the media what I thought was the single biggest challenge facing the “viability” of the golf course industry. At first land despite the story of this failed course in Florida fresh in my mind, I rolled my eyes at the word “viability.” The word “viability” implies the question about our industry is an existential one, as though if we don’t do something today about the perceived land real problems, that all courses might close soon. I felt the need to correct the writer and explain our issues are not existential in nature, but about an industry that is evolving.

That sounds like corporate spin, doesn’t it? And to a certain degree it is, because we need to change the narrative when we talk with the media. Yet turn to page 38 in this issue, and you’ll read Scott Kauffman’s article about the billions in capital being reinvested in golf courses to keep them thriving and green for the next generation. Read in other places about how the demographics of golfers is changing, and how youth golf is turning into a team sport with participation rising. Recognize we have every tool we need to improve the dynamics of our industry right here in our own tool box. Success will be found when course operators make the small, incremental changes to the customer experience. Can you promote combo tee sets on the scorecard and encourage folks to play white-and-yellow instead of just white (if they can’t drive the ball like they used to)? Can you bring local brewery owners to the course to let golfers sample their wares experience the “cool, new IPA” as they go from No. 9 to No. 10? Can you add ice cream bars to the beverage cart in the heat of summer? What a delight to the golfers, and imagine the profit margin you could achieve. Can you offer combo tee sets on the scorecard and encourage folks to play white-and-yellow instead of just white (if they can’t drive the ball like they used to)? Can you bring local brewery owners to the course to let golfers sample their wares experience the “cool, new IPA” as they go from No. 9 to No. 10?

That’s what often makes any business work. But just like most people don’t always act as though they’re going to die tomorrow, that sense of mortality eggs us on (hopefully) live the lives we desire. I think if we act as though the industry could die tomorrow or our businesses could fold next year — that if we operate with a healthy dose of concern — we could possibly see the tide turn sooner than later. We might not have to wait 20 years for today’s 10- and 12-year olds to buoy our industry. To all you readers doing something new and different each season, thank you! You are the ones supporting our industry’s viability. Keep it up!
Irrigation Certification Improves Water Management

Management of irrigation schedules is the single most difficult task that a golf course superintendent faces on a daily basis. This was true long before irrigation control systems were automated and computerized and remains so, even with the advent of the modern irrigation technology. As a superintendent, I found that I couldn’t go home until I had made the “water or not to water” and “how much” decision each afternoon. I found myself virtually bound to the job until I could come to grips with that confirmation. Many days, I would be forced to pull the trigger in frustration, not convinced that I was making the best possible decision, but at some point I just had to follow my “gut feelings.”

With this in mind, I found time to take a seminar for golf course irrigation auditor certification. “The Certified Golf Irrigation Auditor Program” is a day and a half course with fieldwork followed by an exam. The class provides step-by-step procedures that assist in improving water management by generating irrigation schedules and tracking actual water use. Yes, there is training to perhaps replace my old gut decision-making process. These procedures include methods that teach you how to evaluate irrigation system performance in terms of distribution uniformity (how evenly) and precipitation rate (how fast.) Results are then combined to determine the plant/water requirement and to calculate performance in terms of distribution uniformity (how evenly) and precipitation rate (how fast.) Results are then combined to determine the plant/water requirement and to calculate performance in terms of distribution uniformity (how evenly) and precipitation rate (how fast.) Results are then combined to determine the plant/water requirement and to calculate performance in terms of distribution uniformity (how evenly) and precipitation rate (how fast.)

The best irrigation efficiency is achieved when the irrigation system is performing as well as possible coupled with proper scheduling based on local weather patterns and plant needs. Improved irrigation efficiencies may result in:

- **REDUCED MAINTENANCE**
- **REDUCED WATER USE**
- **IMPROVED APPEARANCE – FEWER WET OR DRY SPOTS**
- **COST SAVINGS ON WATER AND POWER**
- **REDUCTION OF WATER LOST BELOW THE ROOT ZONE (DEEP PERCOLATION)**
- **REDUCED FERTILIZER AND CHEMICAL USAGE**
- **COST SAVINGS ON WATER AND POWER**

I am not necessarily advocating that all golf course irrigation decision makers become certified auditors, but I do believe that the class provides the decision maker with the capability of more accurately auditing the existing practices and current equipment readiness. The result? Taking the seminar assists the superintendent to become the best irrigator possible and becoming a “Certified Irrigation Auditor” may be one of the best decisions golf course management can make today as golf course water issues continue to become more pronounced.
Caller Alert: Handling Third-Party Sales

It’s no secret that the reservation process changes on a daily basis. At one point, more than half of airline tickets were sold through travel agents and in-person sales. Now, almost 90 percent of travel is booked online or through call-centers.

As always, trends in other areas of hospitality are usually a sign of things to come for the golf industry. More and more golf courses are turning to third party call centers to handle the tee time reservation process. Minimizing overhead costs associated with employing staff to answer phones and take reservations is often the reason for this business decision. Other times, the course is simply looking to offer golfers the option to book tee times 24/7, even when the course is closed. Using call centers can offer the smart operator an opportunity to earn revenue opportunities that might otherwise be missed if the golfer is unable to be connected directly with the course.

Using third party call centers is not without its challenges and we hear about those challenges from course owners. You need to be asking the right questions — of yourself and the call center — to ensure you’re getting the best service. Are you comfortable with trade times being sold on your course website or via the call center? Have you agreed that trade times can be sold through the call center? Are you doing any secret shopping to make sure that the third party reservation specialists are providing accurate information to golfers? If you agree that trade times can be sold via the call center, are you certain that the reservation specialists are not incentivized to steer golfers to certain tee times (trade or otherwise)? Have you asked the third party if there is some rational basis (dynamic pricing strategies) for directing golfers to tee times other than those requested?

Many of these issues you must assess for yourself. First, determine whether or not you want to be in the business of bartering tee times. Next, determine under what conditions barter tee times will be marketed and through what channels they will be sold. Lastly, be certain the third party will make you aware of when, where and how tee time inventory is sold. These issues ultimately turn on knowledge. The third party that is most transparent with all their business dealings usually has the happiest operator-clients.

Is your golf course using a third party call center? Is the relationship being managed according to your wishes? I want to hear from you, contact me at jwilliams@teetimecoalition.org.
Brad Porter, general manager of Patriots Point Links in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, runs an operation that hosts many wedding ceremonies.

"Golf with a purpose." That’s the motto that drives this historic and philanthropic club, located just five miles from downtown Atlanta. And what drives Ralph Kepple, Director of Agronomy, and his staff is a commitment to excellence. According to Ralph, John Deere has helped in that endeavor. "In the twenty-plus years East Lake has partnered with John Deere, I am always impressed by their commitment to improve and enhance their equipment. The quality of cut on their mowers has always been outstanding."

Give your course the quality of cut it deserves. Contact your local John Deere Golf distributor today.

"I Do" Means Big Business

But will wedding revenue survive recent marriage trends?

Earlier this year, course operators took a break from fretting over rounds-played stats to focus on troubling data about marriages and weddings. After climbing steadily from 2010 through 2016, the number of weddings in America fell off notably last year.

Trusted by the Best

By David Gould

JohnDeere.com/GOLF

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GOLFBUSINESS.COM 15
Partly it’s those nettlesome Millennials, waiting so long to get hitched. A Pew Research study showed that the median age of an American marrying for the first time had reached its highest point on record — 29.5 years for men and 27.4 years for women.

Managers of public-access golf facilities back in the day didn’t care much about brides and grooms, but golf’s great infrastructure upgrade of this past generation has helped change that. Revenue from wedding receptions has become a big deal for course owners, as spacious new clubhouse has caught the eye of planners and brides-to-be.

That explains the existence of businesses like web-based CountryClubs & Resorts portfolio. Rachel Hall, the Patriots Point sales coordinator, says at least one in three weddings is the groomsmen’s golf outing — Porter says at least one in three weddings at Patriots Point has a golf add-on in which the groom (you always comp him) the best men and the ushers form two or three foursomes. In fact, bachelor-party golf groups are a very big part of the Friday tee sheet at Patriots Point throughout the prime wedding season. “We had six of those groups last Friday,” says Porter. “Even if you don’t get their wedding it’s good business. “ And since weddings become contagious within a certain age group, referrals to future brides from these usher outings are a natural.

Looking closely at the relevant macro research on weddings, one piece of the business. Even the trend toward delaying marriage shouldn’t be an issue.

“People are definitely waiting longer,” says Hall. “I’ve got many clients right now who are in their late 30s, including some who have been married before.”

She brings up an interesting point — the “lapsed spouse,” like the “lapsed golfer,” can be brought back into the marketplace. “We’ll toast to that. “

David Gould is a Massachusetts-based freelance writer and frequent contributor to Golf Business.

But if you’re curious what activity pays the bills, take note that the website’s main photo, its headline text and two navigation-bar buttons are expressly blogging B&G’s wedding receptions.

If your facility is just getting its act together in this line of business, there are plenty of good ideas out there to borrow. One element to bear in mind is the groomsmen’s golf outing — Porto says at least one in three weddings at Patriots Point has a golf add-on in which the groom (you always comp him) the best men and the ushers form two or three foursomes. In fact, bachelor-party golf groups are a very big part of the Friday tee sheet at Patriots Point throughout the prime wedding season. “We had six of those groups last Friday,” says Porter. “Even if you don’t get their wedding it’s good business. “ And since weddings become contagious within a certain age group, referrals to future brides from these usher outings are a natural.

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By Steve Donahue

Keeping the Autumn Tee Sheet Full

In the state of Washington, we’re very lucky with our off-season falling around the holidays. We hold several golf-shop events leading into the off season, with the most popular being the “Unwrap Your Discount” night. We wrap 20 to 30 boxes as gifts and give members the opportunity to select a wrapped box as they check out. Their “gift” is a discount, ranging from 10 to 50 percent off their total purchase. The key to the program’s success is that members must shop first before learning their discount amount. We also hold several selling events in our indoor hitting lab during the off season. Members love the opportunity to get new clubs properly fit and to be fully prepared when the weather turns.

Rick Burkardt: Our golf team, led by Peter Zellmer, gets our members thinking about the colder weather approaching as early as July. Burkardt said his staff start by running a Christmas in July sale on long sleeve/fleece items, winter gloves, beanie caps, ear muffs and more. Our members get a kick out of saving money and buying upcoming winter gear on 90-degree days! As we work towards the end of the season, we offer fun holiday sales like Black Friday specials and pick an ornament off the Christmas tree for additional savings on pur-

Rick Burkardt: We do not officially close the golf course or range, but instead let Mother Nature tell us when golf will go into hibernation for the winter. Just because the course goes into hibernation doesn’t mean our members do. Quite a few of our members have “Arcis Access,” our travel benefit program, which affords access to golf courses in the warmer climates around the world. Additionally, when the snow starts to fall (and really, really year round), our golf professionals leverage our fitness facilities to keep players in the best physical condition possible. Our pros also have connections to local indoor golf training facilities that allow us to continue teaching our members. Even two feet of snow on the ground won’t stop the Tartan Fields’ golf staff from growing the game! and runs until February. The package includes a weekend trip to a warmer climate to play golf with the group of members enrolled in this program. Popular warm weather destinations like Las Vegas and Arizona sound great in February.}

BILLY CASPER GOLF WADDLES THROUGH DATA

If actor Dustin Hoffman was in a modern-day remake of his classic 1960s movie, “The Graduate,” one of the everlasting lines to remember might be “data” is the future. Indeed, much like “plastics” was the surefire career tip for the recent college graduate played by Hoffman in that classic film, data seems to be the destiny for so many young graduates today. At Billy Casper Golf, this ubiquitous cloud-based data is the nucleus of a fundamental change in how it markets to potential free golf customers. These days, namely through a new proprietary event management technology platform called Waddle. The business intelligence tool rolled in the last year is being used to better attract, retain and grow Billy Casper golf revenue, and was developed in concert with fellow Reston, Virginia-based Perfect Sense Digital.

Basically, Billy Casper adopted a “major philosophical shift away from golf offers towards invitation-based marketing,” according to Billy Casper Vice President of Sales and Marketing Emily Clark, whose company owns or operates approximately 150 courses nationwide. “We’re really looking at inviting people to events,” says Clark, who’s in her eighth year with the company, second year in her new dual role of sales and marketing. “The foundation for any kind of invitation-based marketing is an increased focus on creating events and experiences. Creating more fun and more reasons to come to a golf course and enjoy what we offer to our clients.”

It Pays to Use DryJect

“With coring we see about a $30,000 drop in revenue. But with DryJect we lose only one day. We estimate a $15,900 saving using DryJect.” – Justin N. Smith, GM, Olde Homestead Golf Club
Getting Ahead of the Storm
As the NGCOA home office in Charleston prepped for Hurricane Florence while sending this October issue to press, we wanted to remind everyone the organization’s disaster preparedness information is still available on the homepage at golfbusiness.com. Florence has passed, but it’s never too early to make your plan for the next storm on the horizon.

Grip on (Virtual) Realty
If you missed this feature from the September issue of Golf Business magazine, check online at golfbusiness.com to learn about the state of simulated golf.

Last Call!
There is still time to register for Golf Business TechCon, returning to Las Vegas Oct. 11-12. Go online for more details, golfbusinesstechcon.com.

When it comes to being the king of the course, Trojan golf batteries lead the pack.

For over 90 years, Trojan Battery’s time-tested, Made in the USA line of extraordinary batteries have enhanced the way people live, work and play around the world.

Online What’s on GolfBusiness.com this month

Travis Mathew Headwear
Every once in a while, you get a product that transcends the golf experience, and that’s where Travis Mathew is in our store. The clothing apparel line is now No. 1 in our store and the headwear has exploded. We’re selling as much as we can bring in.

Straight Down Print Shirts
We have a brand-new proprietary four-way future in the store and sold more Straight Down shirts our first month than all of last year combined. The fun prints have been a huge hit with our customers.

Volvik VIVID 2.0 Balls
Anyone that thinks this colored ball trend is going to go away is mistaken. Volvik added a new purple shade this summer and it’s only added to the incredible phenomenon of these brightly colored matte-finish ball sales.

WHAT’S HOT In My Shop
KEN MORTON JR • VP RETAIL & MARKETING
Morton Golf, Haggin Oaks, Bing Maloney, Bartley Cavanaugh, William Land Golf Course • Sacramento, California

GOLFBUSINESS.COM 21
lot of people take up golf as adults to enhance their business careers. The game is still a big part of client entertainment. Corporate scrambles, the twice-yearly outing, charity events, customers who invite you out for a round or two at some exotic locale: that sort of thing draws a lot of casual golfers into the game.

But very few buy a golf course a year after hitting their first shots. Fewer still end up owning multiple public courses in some of the hottest markets in America. That’s what happened with Bill Smith, a real estate attorney from Chicago who took up the game solely to keep some clients happy.

“There are two types of golf courses. There’s the type where if you raise rates 50 cents you’ll lose a bunch of players. And then there are those where you can raise the rate five bucks and nobody even notices.”

**Buying Into the Game**

Bill Smith Finds Recession-Proof Niche with Green Fairways

BY STEVE EUBANKS

Bill Smith, a real estate attorney from Chicago, bought his first golf course a year after playing his first round.

© 2018 Photo by Visual Etiquette

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"I played golf three days in a row with some clients and thought, 'I'm either going to love this game or hate it,'" Smith said. "After playing three days in a row I joined Riverside Golf Club in Riverside, Illinois. It was one year later when I bought my first golf course."

That golf course was Antioch Golf Club in Antioch, Illinois, north of Chicago. "In addition to being a real estate attorney, I also did a good bit of real estate investment with some partners," Smith said. "I have an engineer and a broker and some partners in the business so we bought and sold real estate. As part of that we bought the Antioch Golf Club back in 1998 because it had 200 single-family lots around it. We developed the lots and had this golf course as part of the deal."

For three years, while he developed the lots, Smith and his partners let a third-party company operate the course. But Smith was learning the business — understanding the type of courses that drive cash flow, fixed and variable costs, key personnel and what it takes to turn a profit. Smith was learning the business — and the layout and condition of the golf courses and outings kept the clubhouse hopping. "Smith said, "We were smart enough to manage it ourselves, "

Thus started Green Fairways, the ownership and management company that now has golf courses in Illinois and Florida. "Not much later, I bought The Rail Golf Club in Springfield (which was the home to the LPGA State Farm Classic for 26 years) and Deer Creek Golf Club in University Park (Illinois). Just like that, we were off and running in the golf business. This was the early 2000s when golf was on its big upswing." What he discovered later, during the Great Recession, is that quality and location make some golf courses impervious to economic fluctuations. "For starters, I was able to get a lease that was a fair price. Smith said, "I recognize the right away that it had a great pedigree being levee's first design. And it had been in foreclosure for 10 years so it was a great opportunity to repurpose it and make it a great resort course for the community of Key West. We did that."

The good news about that even in the downturn, we still maintained a good business down there. "There are two types of golf courses. There's the type where if you raise rates 50 cents you'll lose a bunch of players. And then there are those where you can raise the rate five bucks and nobody even notices. Key West was the latter."

"You look at the courses in Oregon (Bandon Dunes) and the ones in Wisconsin (Riviera) and places like Pebble Beach, what those people are able to charge is terrific for them and for the business. Key West was great for us because you have a lot of price elasticity because of where it's located. It's a great resort town. There are no other golf courses down there."

There have been some challenges in Key West. Beyond the general weirdness of the island during things like Hemingway Days, the course has taken a beating from hurricanes George, Wilma and Irma during the two decades Smith has owned it. "We lost 300 trees during Irma," he said. "Business was in the tank for a couple of months. We looked at the golf pros and said, 'Well, you can be laid off now or you can grab a chainsaw and go to golf course maintenance for a few months.' Everybody went outside. We did the same thing for the girls in the restaurant. We told them they could be laid off or go to work painting the inside of the clubhouse. So they all grabbed a paintbrush and went to work." All the courses are thriving now that the economy has turned. But Smith has no plans to expand his footprint. He owns a marina in Key West and some office buildings and warehouses on the west side of Chicago. But while his cash flow might be a little more predictable in those areas, nobody wants to talk about his low-slung industrial buildings. He has lots of conversations about his golf courses. "I'm at a good number of courses," he said. "We can centralize top management and stay on top of things while still doing business very locally. That's really all we're looking for."
It’s a buzzword in every business. But “sustainability” has taken deep roots in the golf industry in recent years because of its positive business implications.

From the USGA’s “Brown is Beautiful” campaign to the current Green Section initiatives to create more natural areas on golf courses, conservation and being good stewards of the environment has moved to the forefront of the industry and improved the bottom lines of many courses.

“Reducing the amounts of areas that have to be maintained are not only good for our clients in terms of reducing costs, it’s great for the environment because you are returning areas to their natural habitat,” Hanley said. “Streamsong has only one cut, a fairway cut, and all the other areas are natural areas, which helps not just aesthetically but from an overall cost standpoint as well.”

Kemper also promotes sustainable areas like chef farms, where clubs grow many of the vegetables that are served in their restaurants.

“Farm-to-table is a big thing in the food service industry now and we promote that at our properties as part of an overall sustainability strategy,” Hanley said. “But we also just do common sense things. You turn the air conditioner off at night. You use economical and environmentally friendly lighting. Little things, but things that add up and that really make a different, not just for the environment, but also for our clients’ bottom lines.”

Steve Eubanks is an Atlanta-based freelance writer and New York Times bestselling author.
Pound Ridge Golf Club has received accolades since the Pete Dye gem — his first design in New York — opened in 2008.

But things weren’t always pristine on the small-town site. Around 1939 or 1940, a short 18-hole country club was built on 50 acres straddling Stamford, Connecticut, and Pound Ridge.

“In the 1960s or ’70s the local denizens turned the property into a gambling/strip-tease-girl kind of thing,” says Pound Ridge owner Ken Wang, whose late father, born in China, purchased some nearby property while considering buying a house.

“We kind of thought this part of the country needed high-level public courses.”

Polishing a Gem

11 years, $40M later, Pound Ridge glimmers with hope

BY STEVE DONAHUE
“Even though we were both horrible golfers we wanted a place to play and a real-estate investment,” says Wang.

A developer who owned the golf-course land ultimately sold them 9 1/2 holes of the course on the Connecticut side of his property, and enough land that years later Wang could develop. The Wangs hired a young pro to oversee operations at the 9 1/2-hole course.

“Four years we just laid-banked that course,” says Wang. “Finally, golf became more popular. Tiger came along and eventually my dad and I decided what to do with the land. We started interviewing name architects. I’d always loved Pete Dye’s courses and hoped he’d do it. I’d met Perry Dye, his son. I asked him if he could get his dad to do it. Pete said yes.”

Thus began an 11-year process to get it approved and eventually built, says Wang, also president of U.S. Summit Company, the New York-based global marketing and distribution company.

The 11 years of agency and development delays ultimately cost Wang roughly $10 million. “Despite the delays it never occurred to me not to continue the project,” says Wang.

The course finally opened in 2008 – during a recession.

“Certainly, that worried me,” says Wang. “We opened a few months, plus or minus, when the market, everything, fell apart. There’s nothing you can do about it. Businesses have been scrabbling for 10 years.”

The golf industry has changed in that time because the world has changed, says Wang. “Because the economy in general has changed since 2008, you see the decline of outings and weekends at the golf course, people aren’t willing to play golf because they want to keep their jobs, there are many changes in the environment of golf courses, like society,” says Wang.

“A lot of changes have fundamentally changed the pattern of where people play golf, with a menu of where golfers can go. In the old days people always ate at their favorite restaurant. Now they have many options. A course may get its share of golfers, because they’ve been shopping around, but it’s different than when we started. Many different shifts are going on. Maybe I’m wrong, but my sense is most of the industry is struggling with these different variables.”

Wang, who has an office near Pound Ridge, visits his club fairly frequently. “I stop by almost every few days, for sure weekly, and talk to the manager quite a bit,” he says. “Fortunately, I have a pretty good management team. I don’t play that often, partly because my game, which has never been very good, keeps getting worse.”

Wang’s older sister, famous fashion designer Vera Wang, is a golfer who has played at her brother’s club. She is also a member at New Jersey’s Liberty National and, like Ken, at Long Island’s Atlantic Golf Club.

“She doesn’t play much these days,” adds Wang. “She’s very busy and doesn’t have much time.”

When Pound Ridge opened, there was a small possibility of a Vera Wang women’s signature apparel line. “It’s funny,” Wang says. “Early on I suggested that might happen, but her business got much bigger than that. She also educated me, saying that with golf apparel, women always want to wear something someone else won’t wear. So, she said the problem is, if she sold out of a pro shop she’d be concerned women wouldn’t buy it even if they liked it because five other women would show up wearing the same thing.”

As Pound Ridge celebrates its 10th anniversary, it heads into its 11th year with confidence.

“We’re holding our own,” says Wang. “It’s when we first conceived of doing this we got all the demographic information we could find and one thing was obvious for this part of the country – there is a prevalence of private clubs, very few public courses and hardly any munis. We thought there was a hole in the market in that respect and we met demand. It probably didn’t hurt that Pete wasn’t doing a lot of private courses anymore because I don’t think he believed in them anymore.”

Wang philosophically thought there were elements of golf back then that were more restrictive, that it was still too much of an elitist sport in the northeast.

“We kind of thought this part of the country needed high-level public courses and we were surprised there weren’t many,” adds Wang. “The early years were kind of tough. We held our own and we’re getting better. We’ll see what happens.”

Steve Donahue is a Connecticut-based freelance writer.

**Pay-by-the-Stay Club Rental a Strong Pitch**

A popular New Mexico golf destination has found a unique way to save visiting golfers the money and hassle of checking their clubs.

Twin Warriors Golf Club and Santa Ana Golf Club in Santa Ana Pueblo allows guests to rent sets of premium TaylorMade rental clubs during their entire stay at the resort’s two on-site hotels.

Typically, golfers must pay to use rental clubs for each round he or she plays, or at the very least pay daily. Twin Warrior’s and Santa Ana’s program, however, only charges guests $60 one time, even if they’re playing multiple rounds over an extended period of time.

“We’re trying to drive extra rounds of golf for that extended stay,” says Derek Guiterrez, the resort’s director of golf and general manager. “The differentiator might be that $60 round fee, which can add up over three days elsewhere.”

Guests love this promotion, especially mid-to high-handicaps, says Guiterrez.

“They would rather pay $60 for a set of rentals than to lug their clubs across the country for twice as much,” says Guiterrez. “While shipping clubs through a private company can be convenient, it’s not always cost-effective.”

The program debuted in 2010. “The start-up cost was minimal,” Guiterrez says. “We definitely had interest from TaylorMade when we offered their brand. We introduced a ball program which includes two sleeves of balls — a nice incentive for our customers to rent their clubs here on property.”

Since starting the program, the club-rental revenue has increased significantly.

“The program saw a 12 to 15 percent increase in the second year and we probably saw anywhere from a 10 to 18 percent increase from 2010 to 2017,” says Guiterrez. “Our ball sales have risen as well; our club rentals don’t include golf balls, so many guests also buy a 15-ball pack at a $25 price point without ever blinking an eye. In addition, we’ve seen the number of rounds played increase and have received a lot of positive guest feedback. They visit because they won’t have to deal with the hassle of transporting their golf clubs.”

Steve Donahue is a Connecticut-based freelance writer.
Mistwood Celebrates Guinness World Record Win

BY STEVE DONAHUE

Mistwood Golf Club takes the Fourth of July seriously, having hosted a hyper-patriotic “Stars & Stripes” tournament and other festivities at the Romeoville, Illinois, daily fee course for 20 years.

This year, however, course management upped the ante by seeking to reclaim a Guinness Book of World Records feat — creating the longest continuous line of cooked hot dogs, a record which was 1,157 feet and held by Japan’s Nakakyushu Kubota — and that’s no baloney.

Mistwood partnered with Vienna Beef on the world-record attempt as the Chicago-based company celebrated its 125th anniversary and the kick-off to national hot dog month in July.

“We did break the world record,” says Mistwood General Manager Dan Bradley. “We planned on breaking it by about 200 feet, but we apparently made a calculation error and only broke it by six feet, ending up with 1,163 feet of Vienna Beef hot dogs.”

One of the many rules required the hot dogs to be “consumable” after the attempt. Thus, the wiens were cooked to temperature, placed in buns and wrapped before being placed in one long line. Volunteers helped to arrange tables and move pans of hot dogs.

“We had about 300 people witness and help with the event,” says Bradley. “People really got into it.”

The World Record attempt was free to attend and open to the public. Staff and volunteers lined up the hot dogs on tables that stretched from tee to the green on the spectacular par-5 third hole, measuring more than 550 yards.

The annual tournament is always popular, with entrants wearing patriotic costumes while playing.

“There have been some crazy costumes over the years,” says Bradley, “which doesn’t make it easy to play golf. We typically see American flags worn in all forms — although this year’s most memorable adult costume was a hot dog. We have games, activities and contests on many holes, but the most popular attraction is the fireworks. We supply each group with bottle rockets and encourage them to celebrate every birdie by lighting one off. Bottle rockets explode around the course all day.”

The Stars & Stripes tournament is very popular and profitable, Bradley says. “There is a reason we’ve been running it for 20 years!”
Aaron Green spent 13 years at La Cantera Resort and Golf Club in San Antonio, Texas, rising from a front-desk staffer in 2001 to head professional by 2007. Come mid-2013, though, Troon Golf offered him a larger role at a public facility near Corpus Christi, followed by a general manager position at a private club in Pittsburgh. But when the director of golf position opened up at La Cantera this past February, Green jumped at the chance to return to where he started.

Promoting the Portfolio

With various facility upgrades to tout, La Cantera boosted its marketing to a new level

“It’s a tough hiring environment now, and money is important to people, of course. But we try to show that culture is most important.”
Even better for Green was the fact that the La Cantera he came back to had added significantly to its hospitality offerings since he left, giving him lots to work with as he planned ways to drive more rounds and revenue.

First, there was what he calls “a massive renovation” of the 49-room hotel that included the creation of Seven, an entire floor exclusively for guests over 21 that included the creation of Seven, an entire floor exclusively for guests over 21 who will win the next big PGA event. At other times “we’ll do a contest about who will win the next big PGA event and at what score, or a contest for the smartest get around our ‘course tip,’” he says. Also on his content calendar are updates on lessons and junior clinics, F&B outlet updates, and mention of the TwoScore Card frequent player program which offers preferred rates for the member and a guest. “attention to detail is something that culture is most important,” Green says. “It helps us make sure it doesn’t happen to another guest, and also turns that specific encounter around and maybe creates a lifelong guest.”

As evidenced by the spate of new infrastructure at La Cantera, “we do a good job with not being comfortable with the status quo,” Green says. “Our Wednesday staff meetings are all about how we can get better this coming week versus last week. Then we have monthly meetings where we go over surveys with the whole staff, so we’re trying to impress on people to get everyone up to an A player, which means the people who hit “like” on a post will then see other La Cantera posts more frequently because of how Facebook and Instagram operate their algorithms. “Signature restaurant and our spa have big followings on their own Facebook pages as well,” notes Green, who occasionally tags that audience by providing relevant crossover content.

Green and his team most often create “wish you could be here” social posts featuring a photo or brief video of a particular area of the golf facility, or tips on how to best play particular holes. At other times “we’ll do a contest about who will win the next big PGA event and at what score, or a contest for the smartest get around our ‘course tip,’” he says. Also on his content calendar are updates on lessons and junior clinics, F&B outlet updates, and mention of the TwoScore Card frequent player program which offers preferred rates for the member and a guest. “attention to detail is something that culture is most important,” Green says. “It helps us make sure it doesn’t happen to another guest, and also turns that specific encounter around and maybe creates a lifelong guest.”

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Commercial builder and avid golfer David Tavlin never dreamed of owning a golf course. When a local Lakeland, Florida, residential course began teetering on the brink of financial collapse a couple years ago, however, Tavlin considered buying the Sandpiper facility because he already owned a handful of rental homes at the community.

The fact Sandpiper represented 100 prime acres in the middle of the growing corridor between Orlando and Tampa was another factor in pursuing the property. So Tavlin, 57, acquired the struggling course last year for a little more than $1 million and quickly began planning for the development of 47 new golf course homes.

“I bought it three days before Hurricane Irma,” says Tavlin, president of Lakeland-based Crossroads Construction Co. “What great timing that was. The eye of the hurricane came right over Lakeland.”

Last year’s hurricane timing notwithstanding, the biggest challenge for Tavlin was restoring a deteriorating facility that barely had a functioning irrigation system, was overrun with weeds and got further damaged by the hurricane that also plowed through Puerto Rico. More than a year later, Tavlin figures his final course-related tab will be “close to $3 million” after he completely renovates, redesigns and modernizes the entire property by summer 2020 with 200,000 square feet of new sod, a new lighted driving range and a shiny new Rain Bird irrigation system among other big-ticket items.
While the Sandpiper project might not represent the typical fixer-upper in Tavlin’s real estate portfolio, this major course makeover is emblematic of a looming course infrastructure crisis facing thousands of course owners across America. Indeed, a decade after the Great Recession, hundreds of public and private course owners and operators, now flush with capital, are pouring hundreds of millions into course improvements and irrigation infrastructure to shore up aging facilities and position properties for greater long-term sustainability.

Based on feedback from many course owners, operators, and irrigation experts, the industry might be approaching the cusp of what could be the greatest period of golf course capital improvement projects ever—a 10-15-year cycle that could result in nearly $10 billion worth of complete bunker and greens renovation work followed by irrigation component technology upgrades to full-blown brand-new irrigation systems.

“We’re really at the front end of a wave of irrigation projects,” says Jeff Spangler, Troon senior vice president of science and agronomy, whose Scottsdale, Arizona-based company counts 23 major course, bunker, and/or irrigation renovations since 2016. “If you look at the life expectancy features of a golf course, bunkers got the shortest unfortunately. But that’s changing now with new liner systems. So, we’re in that wave where every one of those 500 courses we were building every year for a while, every one of those has a bunker renovation. Then we’re probably going to go into a cycle of greens resurfacing. And as soon as that’s done, you’re starting to get into the ground and putting in new irrigation systems.”

So how big can this next wave of course-related capital improvements actually get? Consider in 1994, the National Golf Foundation reported an all-time high 190.5 daily-fee golf courses opened in America with another 769 courses under construction. At the time, it was the greatest amount of new golf course development activity in the 20-year history of NGF research.

Nearly 25 years later, those 1,000 courses alone are starting to show serious middle-age wear and tear, much like Tavlin’s Sandpiper facility that opened in 1985. “Our irrigation system is completely on its last leg,” says Tavlin, whose front nine was closed this summer while contractors installed the new Rain Bird system, dug a new well and put in a new well pump. “Keep in mind our infrastructure reinvestment is being made possible via the homes I plan to construct on the course. I just could not imagine how most of the public courses in this area are being able to complete such a reinvestment without sources of income outside normal green fees. Without me being able to develop these houses it certainly wouldn’t have been something economically feasible.”

“I’m not looking to make money off (the course operations). I definitely want to make the golf course look better and we recently completed renovations in the clubhouse bar and pro shop. Now the bathroom, kitchen and restaurant are being done. … So everybody’s excited about these changes. We couldn’t have stuffed more people on the golf course from January to April. Of course, we had nine holes closed and we’re still using some of the course. But I don’t know if the course is going to be a viable entity or not.”

And that is precisely the predicament many course owners face these days: does one renovate a property and invest in the future, hoping for a future payback, or just keep patchworking the course on a day-to-day, month-to-month basis, trying to stay afloat in what can be a challenging business for many golf markets.

Longtime irrigation consultant Dave Ragan of Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, says he often gets asked the question, when will I need to replace my system? “I tell them when you can’t take the pain anymore,” says Ragan, whose name-sake Ragan Technical Solutions company consulted on Tavlin’s Sandpiper irrigation upgrade. “Unfortunately, many courses have to live with it because they don’t have a million and a half dollars to replace it like Sandpiper. … I’m very busy right now. Never been busier in 30 years.”
When it comes to GCSAA membership, you could say Dick Stuntz knows the value inside and out. Dick Stuntz went from collegiate golfer to golf course superintendent to owner to NGCOA president. And along the way he learned the value of GCSAA membership, which is why he’s been a member for the past 41 years.

“Knowledge, networking, opportunity, GCSAA gives you all you need to become the best superintendent you can be.”

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GCSAA
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I’VE SEEN THE VALUE GCSAA MEMBERSHIP BRINGS AS A SUPERINTENDENT, AN OWNER AND A GOLFER.

DICK STUNTZ - Golf Course Owner & President of NGCOA

“Say you have some bubbling in the fairway on No. 2 hole. By the time you go out there and invest in new pipe and fix it, it might cost you $5,000. You do that two times a month and that’s close to $23,000 a year. … For a lot of course superintendents, it’s the cost of doing business.”

According to the National Golf Foundation, in the 10-year span between 2006-2016, during a period when the industry starting annually closing more courses than opening new layouts, nearly 1,000 facilities made the former business decision and conducted multi-million-dollar course renovations representing a conservative $3 billion in all.

It’s a conservative estimate considering NGF defines a major renovation as one that involves a minimum nine holes being closed for a minimum of three months. Throw in the countless number of minor rehabilitation projects, where courses are just revamping a few greens or bunkers, or upgrading software irrigation control systems and/or other components, and that $3 billion figure could easily grow by another $250-$500 million.

What’s often forgotten is there were actually 1,000-plus new golf facilities that opened during golf’s development boom from 1986 through 2001. So, if some 1,000 facilities underwent an estimated $3-plus billion worth of restorative work, the coming decade portends to be quite problematic for architects, irrigation consultants and contractors and irrigation equipment suppliers like Toro Company, Rain Bird Corp., and Hunter.

“In 20 years, you have stuff starting to cause some irrigation irritation,” says Ragan. “In 25-30 years, it’s daily.”

Perhaps that’s one reason Toro’s Professional Segment had another record year in 2017, representing 24 percent of the company’s overall record sales in 2017, and the golf division represented 24 percent or $433 million of that growth. Toro executive Steve Snow agrees with Spangler that the wave of full blown irrigation renovation projects are still a few years away, but the industry is certainly busier than ever planning in upgrades to various components – everything from pump stations this year to control systems the following year and sprinklers next, he said. The only thing getting in the way of more work, according to Snow: labor. Quality contractors to be specific.

“Renovation work is as good as it’s been,” adds Snow, Toro’s North American director of sales and service for golf irrigation. “Since 2016, it’s been a steady progression. Not double digits (growth). There’s a capacity to do more but were bumping up against labor. You couldn’t upgrade 400 this year if we wanted to …

“This is a complicated task. And if you want that particular contractor or that one guy, you better get on a schedule. … There’s maybe 10-20 contract companies that are in demand, and when you’re spending $1.5 to $3 million, you don’t want just anybody digging holes and upsetting your operations.”

Many have already started these types of capital intensive endeavors. Kelly Greens, an active-adult golf course community in Fort Myers, Florida, that opened 30 years ago, recently completed a $3.9 million course renovation that featured a new Rain Bird irrigation system and pump station, 44 acres of newly aerated greens, an active-adult golf course community in Fort Myers, Florida, that opened 30 years ago, recently completed a $3.9 million course renovation that featured a new Rain Bird irrigation system and pump station, 44 acres of newly aerated greens, redesigned greens complexes and tee boxes and the replanting of 800 trees. Basically, “every square inch of the course was moved,” says superintendent Mark Thomas, and the newly minted course has been met with rave reviews.

Moreover, Thomas reports the investment behind a newer more efficient irrigation system is already paying off with significant savings in water usage since the property reopened to members more than a year ago.

“Golf’s solid participation rate and growing latent demand, as well as a positive national economy are driving golf course owners and operators to enhance their offerings,” says Billy Casper vice president of agronomy Bryan Bielecki, whose Bostwick, Virginia based company completed 20 course renovations in the past two years. “Furthermore, the time is now to upgrade the countless courses built during the ‘Tiger Effect’ days, so they’re up to modern standards. Renovations in the form of irrigation, bunker work, putting greens and everything tee to green are gaining steam.”

Stuart Hackwell, Rain Bird’s national sales manager for the golf division, is getting frayed for robust business indeed.

“There are definitely a growing number of courses that are talking about updating the system to 21st century standards,” Hackwell says. “This includes replacing aging infrastructure (pipe and wire), locating sprinklers in the correct places on each hole, taking advantage of improved sprinkler performance, upgrading old control systems and replacing aged inefficient pump stations. We believe this trend will continue to increase as clubs try to justify the financial investment of a seven-figure project.”

“We have added staff in the U.S. market and key other places around the world and expect to see continued success in these markets with increased renovations in future. All in all, the future is really bright for Rain Bird and the golf irrigation industry.”

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Scott Kauffman is a golf business writer and the managing director of Delta Media Group.
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Identify the Trends
According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ BLS Office of Productivity and Technology, the golf course and country club industry sector has experienced some of the greatest increases in compensation while experiencing a decline in productivity over the most recent 15 year period. In these analyses, the BLS data indicates a sharp decline in labor productivity and output per employee during this period. The data illustrates the joint effects of many influences on the amount of goods and services produced per hour worked.

The increasing pressures to elevate the minimum wage along with impacts that large box retailers have had on wages has certainly contributed to the increased cost of labor. The estimated long term impacts of these movements on the unemployment rate are mixed. The Illinois Economic Policy Institute suggests that these will be no long term effect, while the Congressional Budget Office projects job loss if there is an increase in the federal minimum wage.

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Identify Opportunities to Differentiate
Every organization faces unique challenges and opportunities when it comes to making the workplace run smoother. In many ways, an employer’s response to today’s dynamic labor market is shaped by their view of the future of their business. As organizations work to build teams designed to meet these new challenges, business leaders can consider lessons learned by others, and the success they have had to improve strategic decisions and business results. Think of the potential value that could be realized if decisions around the workforce were elevated to the same level as the decisions businesses leaders make about customers, markets or new products?

Navigating a Path Forward
Employers have an opportunity to change the dialogue to guide decisions around workforce investments and differentiate their employment brand. From this realignment, new cultural connectivity can evolve to embody mutual respect, aligned incentives and balanced rewards for employees. What’s more, leadership can mitigate operational risk and strengthen their workforce investments.

Managing Returns on Workforce Investments
Similar to any portfolio, employers can actively manage their workforce investments to create the type of workplace that attracts and retains the best people. To guide these investment allocation decisions, many leading organizations now include an evaluation of employee preferences in their ongoing program management responsibilities. These evaluations consider the impacts of a changing workforce and create additional insights to:

• Reallocate reward investments to new programs, or modify existing arrangements;
• Identify aspects of pay and benefit programs that are valued by critical workforce segments; and
• Understand the underlying drivers of employee engagement.

In these studies, employees complete a series of survey questions that measure relative importance and recommended financial allocations for the benefit and reward elements being evaluated. Employees are also asked to evaluate different combinations of these items to determine what tradeoffs they are willing to make, the drivers and sensitivity of preferences for different reward elements. Employers can then refine the analysis and project across time to evaluate changes in the mix of base salary, incentive compensation and employee benefits to better define the optimal workforce investments.

Stop — What’s not working? Start — What might give us better results? Continue — What is working well that we should keep doing?

By engaging with other business leaders, as well as marketing and customer acquisition experts, business owners can better determine what trade-offs are needed to advance their workforce investments.

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Our research suggests that the most successful employers: (a) adopt long term planning and enhanced strategic integration, (b) promote employee wellness and account- ability, and (c) act on a commitment to inform and engage employees about their business. One solution is to use the “Stop-Start-Continue” framework, which helps gain incremental im- provements by facilitating conversations with critical stakeholders.

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How much does your extended family know about where the family business came from and what made it what it is today?”

The biggest reason that business families fall apart is that the family hasn’t developed the kind of culture that supports keeping the business in the family. Families that leave this to chance rarely make it to the next generation. So, how do you create this kind of culture?

1. Know Your Family Stories. We are the stories we tell ourselves, and high-functioning families have heard their family stories over and over again. How much does your extended family know about where the family business came from and what made it what it is today? How much do they understand the sacrifices, efforts and tenacity that went into making the family business you have today? Do they know stories about family members putting the good of the family ahead of their own interests? Are intentional about telling these stories. The more stories, legends, myths and parables, the stronger your family’s culture and the more likely your family business is to endure.

2. Have Family Vacations. Your family vacation could be five people or 100 people, but whether it’s a large group or a small one, having aunts and uncles and cousins spending time together greatly increases the chances of building a family business that lasts. A vacation means time set aside to share experiences and to get to know and appreciate each other and to embed the family’s values. It’s a time for all branches and all generations to build the shared stories and memories that lead to trust and caring. This is especially important if family members are geographically dispersed, because it allows extended members to get to know each other.

3. Subsidize a family vacation after you’ve gone. All too often when the patriarch or matriarch passes on, family members stop seeing each other. Maybe for the first few years they’re together at major holidays, such as Thanksgiving. And later on, maybe they get together for weddings. But gradually, there’s nothing left and family members have superficial relationships or no relationship at all. A highly effective antidote is to leave money in your will to pay for a nice vacation. Either way, having an endowed yearly meal or vacation can keep families together across the centuries. Ideally, there’s even money budgeted for babysitters and child-friendly activities. Endowed family get-togethers can be a highly effective tool for helping the family continue across the generations.

4. Write a family newsletter. This is an ecosystem of family advisors who can help. There’s no such thing as a family business that doesn’t have conflict, and when there’s a serious family conflict, the pain from it can permeate every hour of every day. Not to mention that it can blow up the whole family, and with it the family business. So just as you’d get medical help if you had alarming chest pains, don’t put off getting professional help if a conflict in the family is getting out of hand. Many families don’t stay intact over the generations. This is likely to happen when a family leaves its culture to chance. Family harmony is so important that anything you can do to nurture it is a wise investment.

5. Get help if you need it. Fortunately, there’s a whole new ecosystem of family advisors who can help. There’s no such thing as a family business that doesn’t have conflict, and when there’s a serious family conflict, the pain from it can permeate every hour of every day. Not to mention that it can blow up the whole family, and with it the family business. So just as you’d get medical help if you had alarm- ing chest pains, don’t put off getting professional help if a conflict in the family is getting out of hand. Many families don’t stay intact over the generations. This is likely to happen when a family leaves its culture to chance. Family harmony is so important that anything you can do to nurture it is a wise investment.

By Mitzi Perdue

“"How much does your extended family know about where the family business came from and what made it what it is today?”

Mitzi Perdue is the author of How to Make Your Family Business Last, drawing from her experiences in two long-lasting family enterprises. For more visit MitziPerdue.com.
C an golf course owners be held liable if a guest gets stung by an insect? The California Court of Appeals seems to think so.

In early August, appellate judges overturned a lower court ruling in the case of Staats v. Vintner’s Golf Club LLC., which held that a woman could not sue a golf course for yellow jacket stings she received on the course. According to the appellate court, golf course owners are responsible for providing a reasonably safe environment, which could include protecting them from bee stings. It all started in July 2013 when Carolyn Staats was taking a playing lesson at Vintner’s Golf Club in Napa Valley. On the fifth hole, Staats stumbled onto a yellow jacket’s nest (usually an undetectable hole in the ground) and was stung more than 50 times. Paramedics were called and Staats was hospitalized for a time. According to numerous published reports, she came close to death and now carries a number of Epipen for bee-sting allergies.

Staats sued. The lower court threw out the case stating “the duty of golf course operators to not reasonably rid an outdoor facility like a golf course of stinging insects. But this California Court of Appeals seems to think so.”

Arizona attorney Dev Sethi, who has tried several cases involving bee stings, said, “Bees are wild animals like snakes or all on the highway, so just because you get a bee sting or even a swarm of bees on your property doesn’t automatically expose you to responsibility.”

This California ruling could change that and open up golf course owners to legal jeopardy. At the very least, liability insurance rates could be affected. Win or lose, having to fight a lawsuit in court is never cheap. Many course owners would be ruined by such a battle. It is also a huge and no one knew the insects were there.

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SAVE THE DATE

The Golf Business Conference is NGCOA’s annual member meeting, and is the industry’s largest gathering of golf course owners and operators. The event offers education on the most critical areas of golf course operations, a casual golf outing for fun and networking, and an awards banquet to recognize some of the most significant contributors to the golf industry. It also coincides with the annual Golf Industry Show, which includes exhibits, demonstrations, and additional networking opportunities.

February 5–7, 2019 • San Diego, CA

GolfBusinessConference.com

Golf Business Conference 2019 Sponsors

Brought to you by NGCOA

“SAVE THE DATE”

BY STEVE DONAHUE

Thrice in a lifetime shots spark social media frenzy

Savvy course operators know a good public-relations opportunity when they see one. On Friday, June 16, members helped the Fox Hopyard staff document one of golf’s rare feats — capturing fellow member Merritt Zahner’s two — nearly three — aces in a seven-hole stretch.

These members rallied to make Zahner’s $7 million to 1 accomplishment — achieved during a 90-minute span at the East Haddam, Connecticut, daily fee — a customer-service/promo opportunity.

When I first heard I said, “No way,” says Director of Golf Iron Beck. “He’s a 10 or 12 handicap, at best, but a pretty good player. He hits the ball a mile but all over the place. Not the kind of guy you’d see hitting three pinpoint shots.”

Zahner and his partner, Joe Breda, were playing Joe Lambert and Bob McGovern in their usual 1:30 p.m. Friday match. The first seven holes were uneventful until, on the downhill 155-yard eighth, Zahner’s towering 9-iron shot landed six inches from the hole and hopped into the cup for his first career hole in one in 30 years of playing.

Pandemonium ensued with high fives, chest bumps, hugs and hearty yelps among the group. Groups on No. 7 fairway and No. 18 tee also witnessed and celebrated the ace. The social media blitz of Facebook posts, Instagram, Twitter, texts, emails and phone calls ensued.

On No. 11, Zahner’s tee shot funneled toward the hole and stopped six inches short of his second ace.

On the 165-yard 14th, Zahner’s towering 9-iron shot landed six inches from the hole and one-hopped into the cup. A Caddyshack-like scene broke out, with dancing, singing and cutting loose. Zahner’s second ace was once again witnessed by the group on the 13th fairway.

“I don’t know if anyone has been so close to three aces in one round,” says Beck, who left early and didn’t even hear about the feat until the next morning.

Once he heard he got local and national media involved. “We got it on a couple of local TV stations, in a few local newspapers, I sent it to three national golf publications, and Golf Channel. We’ve been getting some mileage out of it. It’s really amazing.”

Steve Donahue is a Connecticut-based freelance writer.

DISCOVER THE TROON EXPERIENCE

YOUR CLUB, OUR PASSION. YOUR SUCCESS, OUR PROMISE.

At Troon®, every member of the Troon Privé® team brings a competitive passion for enhancing the success of our private clubs. By utilizing the professional expertise of our team and collaborating with our clients, we generate private club communities, making them relevant, healthy, and sustainable, resulting in membership retention and growth. To learn more, contact the Troon business development department at 480.606.1000, or visit troonmgt.com.

Featuring course highlights: Columbia Country Club, Columbia, Missouri; The Saticoy Club, Somis, California; Persimmon Country Club, Independence, Oregon; The Reserve Club at Woodside, Aiken, South Carolina; Tiburón Golf Club, Naples, Florida; Bahía Beach Resort & Golf Club, Rio Grande, Puerto Rico; The Reserve Club at Woodside, Aiken, South Carolina.

FREE GOLF APPS IN ITUNES

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troon.com/troongolf
By Steve Donahue

Private club members enjoy home-course advantage when hosting golfers from other facilities. However, that advantage is nullified each November at Columbia (Missouri) Country Club’s annual Cross-Country Tournament. The unique, successful social event keeps gaining popularity, says General Manager Brett Bieske.

“Over the last seven years the layouts have ranged from seven to 10 holes that have changed,” says Bieske, “while covering more acreage than the standard golf holes and a pace of play of up to three hours.”

The professional staff creates a safe, altered route around and through the course, using a variety of tee boxes and meandering through, around and over anything to reach each tournament green.

Creating a scorecard representing true yardages and the newly established pars for the course, with holes ranging from par 3s to par 7s, is key. As guests check in, staff explains how the layout works, and manages tee times to guarantee spacing. With golfers scattered throughout the property playing a makeshift layout, a shotgun of groups are scattered throughout the property playing a makeshift layout, a shotgun "to cover more acreage than the standard golf holes and a pace of play of up to three hours." The professional staff creates a safe, altered route around and through the course, using a variety of tee boxes and meandering through, around and over anything to reach each tournament green.

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“It's not 18 holes,” says Bieske, “so each year’s layout determines how many people we can get on the course at any given time. Usually that’s 20 to 24 people, so six groups playing eight to 12 holes.”

The tournament is promoted weeks in advance, so there is no shortage of conversation on how to play the holes, which leads to great excitement and increased participation levels. "Each year several holes stay the same but we try to change it up so it stays alive," says Bieske. "The shortest hole is about 60 yards. However, it might be from a high tee box to a low green or something, where you have to skirt some trees or maybe have to carry a tight bunker — something that makes it more unique than just 60 yards. The longest hole is in the 700- to 800-yard range. It definitely helps to have rangefinders locate landing spots." Trees are great obstacles to get around and safety is the biggest issue, says Bieske. "Since there are numerous blind spots, have two or three guys play some holes ahead of time with carts and map it with obstacles, landing areas, etc. We also map our using range finders, so when we indicate a hole goes a certain direction we don’t want golfers reaching the hole and going the opposite direction. We’re also creating safety.”

Shaking Things Up at Columbia Country Club

By Steve Donahue

"Each year several holes stay the same but we try to change it up so it stays alive."
Cleveland Country Club

401 PARK AVENUE • CLEVELAND, OH 44115

NEW LISTING: Just 40 minutes west of Cleveland, private 18-hole championship course on 173 acres. This is a prime golf course with a long history of success and a great opportunity for growth.

Confidential - Retail Store

1200 MAIN ST • CLEVELAND, OH 44115

Yes, a retail store that is profitable and more than just selling golf merchandise. Includes the business, equipment, trade name, inventory (fluctuates) and fixtures.

Crosswinds Signature Par 3

Greenville, SC

Unique specialty designed hole for a new or existing community. Under Contract.

Fort Smith Country Club

4200 FALLS RD • FORT SMITH, AR 72902

Under Contract, with equipment, name rights and building and equipment included in this long term lease. Memphis, TN. Contact Bret at Miller Management Associates, brett@mmagolf.com for more info. $625,000. Possible owner financing.

New North Star Golf Club

Beautifully developed Northern Utah 18 hole Championship golf course on 173 acres. This is a prime golf course with a long history of success and a great opportunity for growth.

Retreat at Lake Tocay Country Club

Lake Tocay, NV

NEW: Stunning mountain home/lodge/retreat at one of Western NV’s premier communities Lake Tocay Country Club. Incredible 60 mile mountain and lake views from all rooms in the 5700 square foot custom built Great Room. Located within Walking distance of the $600,000 Call Brett at Miller Management Associates, 828-775-7765 or brett@mmagolf.com for more information.

Silver Creek Plantation

Mount Pleasant, SC

Price Reduced

Elliot 932-708-3789

Under Construction

Springdale Resort

Canton, NC

ITEM UNDER CONTRACT

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Home with Putting Green & Driving Range!

Spring Valley Golf Club

Canton, NC

Privately owned, 18-hole public golf facility sitting on over 252 acres. Par 72 championship venue includes practice facility and clubhouse with an 18 hole practice facility and full service restaurant that overlooks the entire golf course. Includes additional land adjacent to the golf course and significant water rights. Asking Price $4,100,000. Contact Brett at Miller Management Associates, brett@mmagolf.com.

Luxury Home with Putting Green & Driving Range

Lavinille Falls Golf Club

Near Twelve Oaks with functional pro shop, golf, attached cart shed, driving range. Bax greens, bermuda fairway, with highway frontage on 221 to the tourist destinations of Boone, Blowing Rock and Blowing Rock. Owner financing preferred with solid down payment. Contact Brett at Miller Management Associates, brett@mmagolf.com.

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Golf Course

Just Sold Listings!

Golf Course

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NGCOA’s Smart Buy program saves the Daniel Island Club over $23,000 on our fixed costs with SIB, and around $100 per month on our base fees with DirecTV. When NFL season rolls around, we should see an additional savings of $600 on our NFL Sunday Ticket!

SIB and DirecTV are NGCOA preferred suppliers and part of our Smart Buy Program. The Smart Buy Marketplace is a complimentary program that comes with NGCOA membership.

Greg Keating
Vice President of Club Operations
Daniel Island, SC

Not yet a member of NGCOA? Join today to save money on all the products and services within Smart Buy Marketplace.
**NGCOA Mid-Atlantic (Virginia, Maryland, and DC)**

NGCOA Mid-Atlantic Awards – Nominations are now open for the 2018 NGCOA Mid-Atlantic Awards, which will be presented on Tuesday, October 23, 2018 during the NGCOA Mid-Atlantic Annual Meeting at The Federal Club in Glen Allen, VA.

**Michigan Golf Course Association**

Michigan Golf Course Association promoted Jada Paisley to Executive Director. Paisley replaces Kate Moore who is retiring. In this role, Jada will lead the group in advocacy, education and promotion of the industry. Paisley has worked within the company for the last 11 years, starting out as membership coordinator and then being promoted to associate director two years ago.

**Oregon Golf Course Owners & Operators Association**

The Oregon Golf Course Owners & Operators Association’s annual meeting is October 28-29, 2018 at the beautiful NGCOA member Tetherow Resort in Bend, Oregon. A top employee attorney will help navigate pro-employee/anti-business laws, a top Oregon lobbyist will present, and attendees will discuss best practices and vendors. Contact new OGCOA Executive Director Trey Harbick at oregongolfcourseowners@gmail.com with questions.

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**Save the Date for Golf Business Conference & Golf Industry Show 2019!**

Mark your calendar for February 5 – 7 at the San Diego Marriott Marquis and Marina. This event is the NGCOA’s annual member meeting, and is the industry’s largest gathering of golf course owners and operators.

You’ll experience educational sessions and workshops on the most critical areas of golf course operations, a casual golf outing for attendees networking, and an awards banquet to recognize some of the most significant contributors to the golf industry.

Golf Business Conference also coincides with the annual Golf Industry Show, which includes exhibits, demonstrations, and additional networking opportunities. Visit golfbusinessconference.com to get the latest information.

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**Golf Business Podcast Episodes Are Now Available**

In each podcast episode, NGCOA brings you original, curated, informative content to help your golf course business thrive and grow. You’ll get original and insightful dialogue from owners, operators and others in the industry. Listen at golfbusiness.com.

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**Affiliate News**

**EVENTS**

Golf Business TechCon 2018, being held October 11-12 at the ARIA Resort & Casino in Las Vegas, is designed for anyone in the business of golf who wants to leverage new technologies to streamline operations and increase revenue. With three tracks comprised of 25 educational sessions (including training and demonstrations), and fun networking/social activities, Golf Business TechCon puts golf courses’ technology-focused staff front and center with the latest products, services, and suppliers currently transforming golf course operations. For more information and to register, visit golfbusinesstechcon.com

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**Help us #CraftYourGBC19**

What if the classes at a golf conference were EXACTLY what you needed? NGCOA wants to make that a reality for you. Email Boots Gifford, NGCOA’s Director of Education, at bgifford@ngcoa.org with answers to these questions... then stay tuned for an educational program you can’t wait to participate in!

What keeps you up at night? What is your biggest operational challenge? What if you could learn that ONE thing to make life easier?

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**SEats may still be available for this year’s most technology-relevant golf business event!**

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**If you’re interested in sponsoring, please contact**

Mike Ketterman, NGCOA’s Director of Corporate Partnerships, at mketterman@ngcoa.org.
In Action

Community

What’s happening in the Accelerate Member Community?

Log into the Accelerate Member Community at accelerate.ngcoa.org to read more about, and add to the discussion of, these and other critical issues in golf business. Here is a sample of recent discussions; reply to these, or post your own for member feedback!

I want to increase business through corporate memberships. I’m interested in information on pricing and benefits. How much is reasonable and what benefits come with such a membership?

We are considering becoming the home course for the local college golf team. Does anyone have an example contract they would be willing to share? Or how you would recommend structuring an arrangement such as this.

Trading Post

Did you know Accelerate Member Community has a "Trading Post" where you can buy and sell used equipment? Visit https://accelerate.ngcoa.org/communities and join the Trading Post community today.

Awards

Who are you nominating for the annual awards?

We are now accepting applications and nominations for NGCOA’s annual awards, which recognize and honor the most outstanding members and industry professionals of the past year. These individuals and businesses have helped preserve the tradition of the game while embracing the challenges and opportunities of the golf business.

Visit ngcoa.org/awards for details on all awards and a list of past winners.

NGCOA members in good standing may submit applications and/or nominations electronically to Jay Andersen, NGCOA’s Director of Membership, at jandersen@ngcoa.org by midnight, October 31, 2018. Award recipients will be honored at the Golf Business Conference 2019, February 5-7 in San Diego, CA.

Savings with Smart Buy

NGCOA Members — Apply for your rebate checks today!

Have you made purchases with Yamaha, Pepsi, Rain Bird or Toro through the NGCOA Smart Buy Marketplace? Please remember to submit your Smart Buy rebate forms for any qualifying purchases as soon as possible!

Members converting from a competitor receive $50 per golf car or utility vehicle for purchase or lease. Members renewing their fleet receive a free registration for Golf Business Conference or TechCon.

Members receive a $2.00 rebate per gallon on Pepsi brand post-mix fountain products, $1.10 per 24-count case of packaged products relating to the brand Gatorade, $0.75 rebate per case on all other Pepsi brand bottle and can products and free service and preventative maintenance!

1.5% rebate on the purchase price of Rain Bird Golf Products when purchased from a U.S. Authorized Rain Bird Golf Distributor or a Golf Contractor who purchased from a U.S. Authorized Rain Bird Golf Distributor.

1% rebate on new and/or 0.5% rebate on used Toro branded equipment purchases for existing courses converting from a competitive brand, and initial purchases for newly constructed courses.

NGCOA Announces New Corporate Partnerships

GM/Cadillac

NGCOA members receive exclusive General Motors factory-direct fleet discounts up to $9,400 (off dealer invoice) on the purchase or lease of most new 2019 Cadillac, Chevrolet, Buick and GMC products. It also provides your club start-of-model-year pricing assurance, extended powertrain warranty of up to 5 years or 100,000 miles, priority order processing and factory build and final dealer delivery.

Players 1st

NGCOA members receive a free digital comment card and access to a Players 1st dashboard that will aggregate all survey responses and provide a net promoter score for the course. NGCOA members also get 55% off Players 1st’s top-tier Combined Package which includes more comprehensive automatic and ad hoc surveys, immediate results, dialogue features and downloadable reports.

Details of both these partnerships, along with all NGCOA Smart Buy Marketplace offers, can be found at http://www.ngcoa.org/smartbuy
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 SGACon.

Human Resources
30% discount on new ADP services.

Business Credit Card
No Annual Fee with Unlimited 2% Cash Back.

Television Programming
Up to 40% savings on video programming while enhancing guest experience.

Food and Beverage
Includes Sysco, Gordon Food Service, Performance Food Group, in the 800+ vendors in our portfolio. Typical savings are 7% to 15%.

Alternative Golf
15% discount on lowest pricing available at FlingGolf.com.

Pre-Owned Turf Equipment
Discounts on tiered pricing plus 120-day extended warranty (normally 90-day).

Automotive Vehicle Manufacturer
Significant factory direct fleet discounts on 2019 GM products.

Golf Simulators
5% discount off MSRP.

Performance Reporting & Benchmarking
30%-50% discount on all reporting packages.

Beverage Supplier
$2.00 rebate per gallon on Pepsi and post-mix fountain products and rebates on bottles, cans and Gatorade.

Customer Experience Solution
Free survey tool and 55% off Players 1st’s top-tier Combined Package.

Irrigation Solutions
1.5% rebate for NGCOA member golf courses that purchase Rain Bird Golf Products during contract terms. Rebate is based on the selling/award price, and is paid to the NGCOA member course.

Hourly Employment Job Board & Hiring Solutions
Save 50% on services.

New and Used Turf Maintenance Equipment
1% rebate on new and/or 0.5% rebate on used Toro branded equipment purchases for existing courses converting from a competitive brand, and initial purchases for newly constructed courses.

Rain Bird has been a huge help for dialing in our system. They made it a much easier transition during the restoration.

Stephen Rabideau, CGCS | Director of Golf Courses, Winged Foot Golf Club

Winged Foot Golf Club brought incredible precision to their irrigation.

To prepare for a major championship, this prestigious club recently completed a historic restoration. By partnering with Rain Bird, they also received hands-on help implementing new intelligent irrigation practices. From dialing-in nozzle settings in their Central Control to setting up a Rain Watch™ system that responds to microclimates, a dedicated commitment from Rain Bird made it easier for the club to protect their water source and defend their turf.

See more renovation stories at rainbird.com/RenovationPartner.
Ten years of keeping superintendents on top of their game.

For ten years the Syngenta Business Institute℠ has helped golf course superintendents grow their careers as well as turf. Encourage your superintendent to apply for the three-day management curriculum, designed in conjunction with the Wake Forest University School of Business, by August 14 at GreenCastOnline.com/SBI.