



GOLF BUSINESS

# **Survival** **Tactics**

Managing Expectations  
Leads To **Municipal Success**

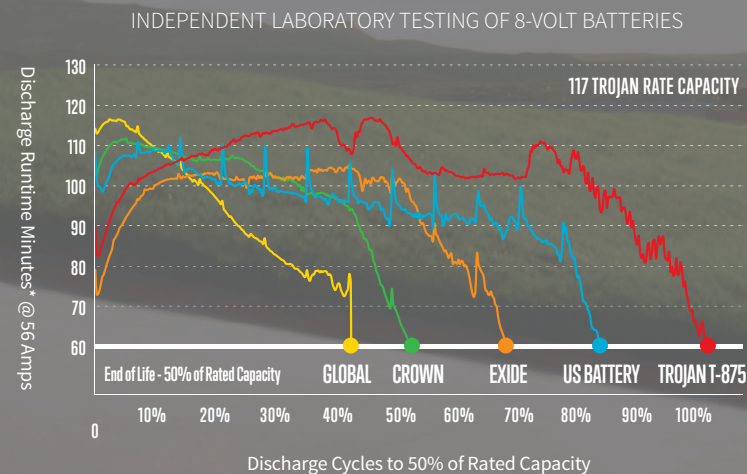
**Short, but Sweet**  
Par 3s, 9-hole  
Courses have Impact

**Going with the Flow**  
Renovations Improve  
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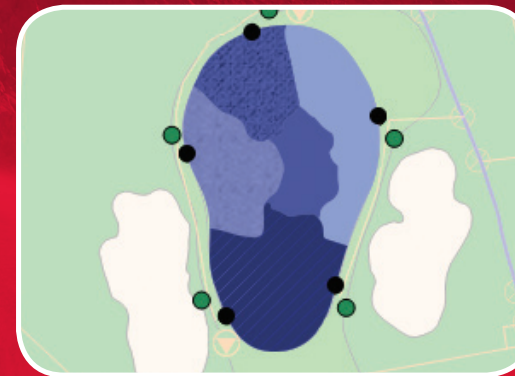


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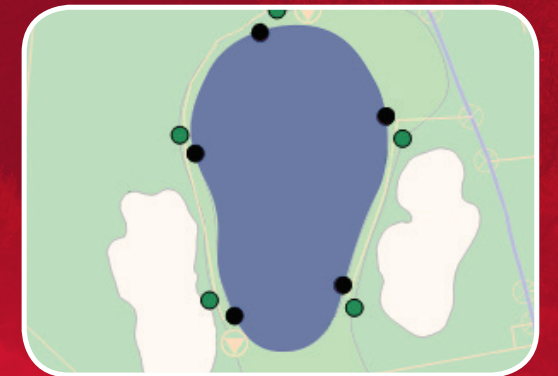
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GolfBUSINESS  
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### Survival Tactics

Using modern practices and managing expectations leads to success for municipal golf courses.



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### Short, but Sweet

Par 3s, 9-hole Courses are having significant impact, despite the smaller footprint.

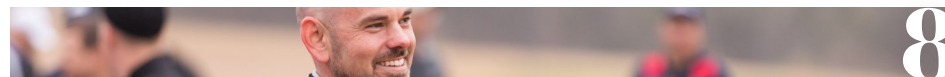
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### Going with the Flow

Unique renovations at Shaftesbury Glen improve drainage issues on the course.





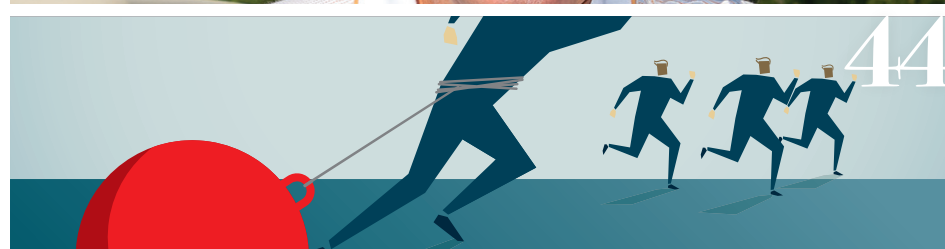
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**NGCOA In Action**

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From the CEO  
**Vantage Point**

By Jay Karen  
CEO  
NGCOA

# The Muni Discord

This month’s feature piece by Steve Eubanks does a really nice job illustrating the spectrum’s ends of how municipalities approach the business of golf. [Page 36]

Some are doing their best to employ progressive business practices to produce a healthy financial return, while others may see golf as a business that doesn’t necessarily need to make money. It’s a service to the community that can lose money or be subsidized. Even in the private sector, you will find owners who run golf courses more as a lifestyle business than as a profit center, while others are doing their best to maximize the business financially.

The municipal topic is a timely one. Media outlets across the country – including NPR, The Washington Post and many regional papers – keep calling for my perspective on the health of golf and the closing of courses, including municipal ones. I explain that the closure of privately held golf courses is much more complex than the hyperbolic narrative of “golf is dying.” High land values, succession issues and all kinds of factors can facilitate course closings.

But what about “government golf?” That’s a different animal, and one that stirs a lot of debate in the NGCOA cir-

cles. Some would love to see their local government get out of the golf business, or at least perhaps privatize it.

The NGCOA board firmly believes that government owned and operated golf facilities should not enjoy unfair competitive advantages, which include tax abatements and tax-payer financing. But, as Del Ratcliffe notes in the article, many of golf’s “bunny slopes” are dying off. So would the private sector step up and fill the void left by failing municipal golf courses? There’s no broad-brush answer – it would depend greatly on local market dynamics. If golfers worry about affordable golf dying along with the closing of municipal golf courses, one needs only to look at the dangerously low price of golf found on the Online Tee Time Agencies. And nonprofits like Youth on Course are facilitating amazingly low prices for kids to play the game.

As municipalities grapple with the question of what to do with poor-performing courses, I suggest civic leaders reach out and talk with the owners and operators of privately held facilities in their areas. Some honest discussions about the supply and demand realities of their markets might yield interesting conclusions about the future of golf and green space.

*In the meantime, if more munis could operate on a level playing field, that would be a good start.*

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**BOOTS GIFFORD**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
BGIFFORD@NGCOA.ORG

**DAVE ALEXANDER**  
ART DIRECTOR  
DALEXANDER@NGCOA.ORG

**CONTRIBUTORS**  
STEVE EUBANKS, DAVID GOULD,  
SCOTT KAUFFMAN, SALLY J. SPORTSMAN

**ADVERTISING STAFF**  
**KELLY MACPHERSON**  
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT MANAGER  
KMACPHERSON@NGCOA.ORG

**VICTORIA LANE-WARD**  
ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS  
VLANEWARD@NGCOA.ORG

**BARBARA SEARLE**  
CLASSIFIEDS, GOLF COURSE MARKET  
BSEARLE@NGCOA.ORG

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291 SEVEN FARMS DRIVE, 2ND FLOOR,  
CHARLESTON, SC 29492  
GOLFBUSINESS.COM  
GOLFBUSINESS@NGCOA.ORG  
PHONE (843) 881-9956  
FAX (843) 856-3288

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## Addressing The Issues

By **Ronnie Miles**  
*Director of Advocacy*  
**NGCOA**

## Teaching Pros Under Fire

**G**olf courses around the country deliver golf instruction programs every day. This instruction is generally delivered by a golf professional. While many of these professionals are employed by the golf club, more and more clubs are augmenting the market's demand by allowing independently contracted PGA professionals to use their facility.

This is a win-win for golf clubs and PGA professionals who desire the flexibility of not being employed by the clubs and offering their services at numerous locations to better meet their clients' preferred location. These business arrangements have been in place for many years. But in California, the use of independent contractors may be a thing of the past.

Following a recent California Supreme Court decision in *Dynamex Operations West Inc. v. Superior Court of Los Angeles*, which cited the harm to a misclassified worker who loses workplace protection and the loss to the state of needed revenue from payroll taxes, payment of premium for workers' compensation, Social Security, unemployment and disability insurance, prompted the state lawmakers to introduce legislation to codify the court's decision.

On May 24, the California Assembly introduced AB-5 Worker Status: Employees and Independent Contractors, requiring employers to convert to regular employee status those independent contractors delivering services at their place of business.

How should you determine if you are an independent contractor? Currently, the DOL uses six-factor criteria better known as the

"economic realities test." Under AB-5, the California test requires "hiring entities" to establish: (A) the worker is free from the control and direction of the hiring entity in connection with the performance of the work, both under the contract for the performance of the work and in fact, (B) the worker performs work that is outside the usual course of the hiring entity's business, and (C) the worker is customarily engaged in an independently established trade, occupation or business. Only when all three elements are met may a company properly classify its workers as independent contractors.

Through the efforts of the newly formed California Alliance for Golf (CAG), sponsoring members of AB-5 have agreed to entertain expanding the list of excluded professionals to include Teaching Golf Professionals. NGCOA, along with PGA, GCSAA and WAG, has filed our letter with Senate and Assembly members requesting our Teaching Golf Professionals be included in the exemption list in the final bill. We recognize there are other independent contractors delivering services to our golf clubs that will be affected by AB-5.

On Sept. 11, the bill was approved and now goes before the governor. But hope remains. At press time, according to CAG representatives, the bill's author, Assembly member Lorena Gonzalez, has agreed to include a "Letter to the Journal" that defines the role of the independent PGA teaching profession as coming under the terms of the "business to business for professional services" exception. If successful, this will be a bridge allowing for further adjustment during their 2020 legislative session. NGCOA will remain engaged as this bill moves forward. This decision can be expected to spread into other states that are looking for ways to raise revenue through expanded labor laws.



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291 Seven Farms Dr., 2nd Floor,  
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phone (843) 881-9956  
fax (843) 881-9958  
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## Coalition Concerns

By **Jared Williams**  
*Managing Director*  
**GOLF USA TEE TIME COALITION**

## Apply & Demand

**A**nd so, association members, ask not what your association can do for you — ask what you can do for your association. Not to get too presidential on you (in paraphrasing Kennedy's inaugural address), but after all, this is the USA...Tee Time Coalition.

But if you really break down the specific demand, there is a lot that we can deduce from that call to action. With the Tee Time Coalition founded by the PGA of America and the NGCOA, I've been able to see the different programs and plans of action put in place in hopes of better serving members. As a member-based association, the content and education developed is largely indicative of the perceived value its existing and prospective members have for the respective associations.

In fact, that is why the Tee Time Coalition was formed — to have an organization dedicated to all issues related to online tee time distribution. To have a point person or ombudsman, to whom members could reach out directly for assistance on any tee time distribution questions and concerns.

We've done panels, delivered section education, built a robust website and created guidelines, standards and a Bill of Rights that act as resources for the golf industry. Our website and YouTube channel offer over 61 educational videos, whitepapers, surveys, historical timelines or various other types of content to assist in understanding the best practices for tee time distribution and managing business relationships with your vendors.

So, while there was (and still is) a definite

demand for education in this space, there is still a missing piece. Somewhat an elephant in the room, if you will.

We have responded to the demand with supply (in the form of content).

But, what about the application part? Moving from supply and demand to applying the principles, best practices and insights? If we're being honest with ourselves as an organization, we've struggled to get golf courses to fully buy-in and begin using this content to buttress their existing operational efforts, practices and procedures.

Perhaps we need to make the process seamless from education to application. I think we did a decent job of this in spelling out exactly how to use our cease-and-desist templates to curtail any attempts by third parties to siphon away your golf course's legitimate web traffic.

But maybe there is more we can do to encourage golf courses to apply that education to their daily operations. After all, no matter how good the content is, if it's not applied at the course level, then the impact is not what we hoped. We've seen this with the ORCA report. It delivers robust data for course operators in a similar fashion to the hospitality industry's STAR report. Yet, while the STAR report is a daily reference on pricing occupancy and rate for hoteliers, the ORCA report hasn't experienced similar widespread adoption.

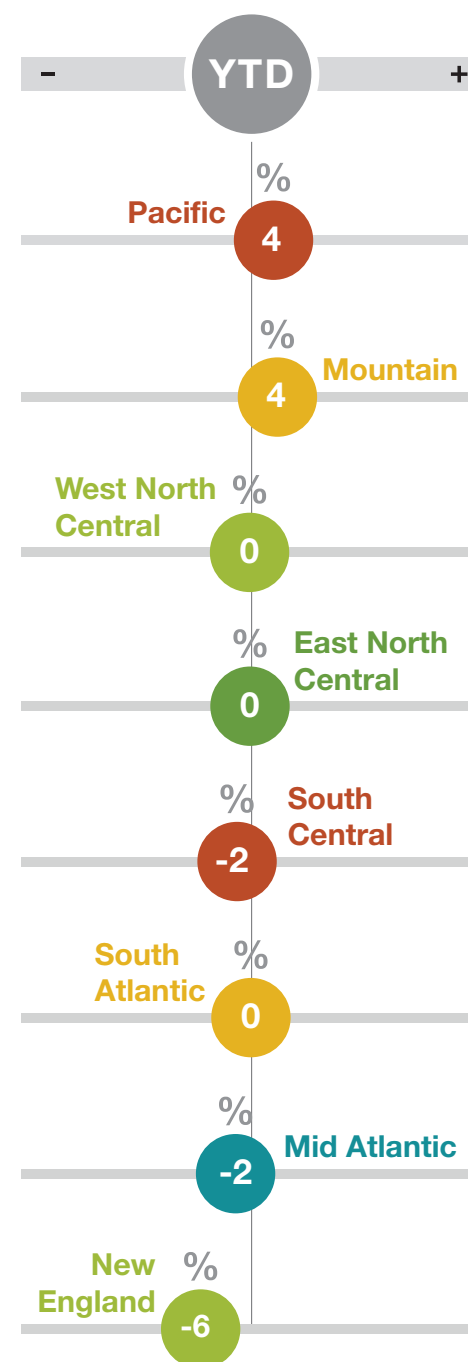
With the rumors of several of the largest OTTA providers in the midst of mergers and acquisitions, education efforts will need to ramp up. So, ask more of us. Tell us where our education efforts should be focused. Tell us where there is a missing link between education and practical application. Help us help you.

Please do not hesitate to contact me (jwilliams@teetimecoalition.org).

## Rounds Played

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## Innovation Insights

BY SCOTT KAUFFMAN

### Setting the Pace for Member Acquisition

Back in 2013, when mobile-based marketing was still in its infancy, entrepreneur George Stavros saw an opportunity to help the struggling private club industry stimulate membership sales through this type of upstart technology.

From the perspective of Stavros's new Pacesetter Technology company, mobile was skipping right past private golf, and he realized the only way to get the attention of this stagnant sector was to design something that truly enhanced the overall member experience. So, the first Pacesetter app was born, successfully combining beacon technology and name recognition for a better bag-drop experience and faster food-and-beverage ordering – on or off the course.

Now, Pacesetter's app is transforming the membership experience when it comes to the age-old private club referral system. Stavros credits Medinah Country Club general manager/COO Robert Sereci, who's always "on the cutting edge" for the latest innovative technology inspiration.

Indeed, at a time when many top clubs still use a paper-intensive, cumbersome system that puts the onus on members, Sereci figured there has to be a better way for club members to go about doing this in today's digital world and challenged Stavros to come up with a solution.

You know the routine, Sereci says. A member wants a friend to join, so they call the membership office and ask for a packet, which they can send to their friend. The membership office emails or mails them the information and then the member emails or mails the packet to the friend.

Then the friend receives the packet, reads it, puts it aside and forgets about it. It just shouldn't be this hard for the club – and the member, Sereci points out. Or, if the club is the type of place where the prospect is to call themselves, that might be too forward, Stavros says, so that call might never be made.

Now, thanks to Stavros's newly tweaked Medinah club app, members can invite a friend to join with a push of a button. Medinah was Pacesetter's first club in the world to develop and roll out this new member-referral application, and it's just an addition to the club's app that already allows members to pay bills and do routine things like book tee times.

The way it works is each time a member refers a friend either by email or text, the friend is required to download

a guest version of the Medinah app. The app is loaded with information and photos – everything a prospective member would want to know about Medinah.

And now, instead of getting buried and lost under a pile of paper somewhere at home or in the office, the "digital brochure" continues to reside on the phone of the prospective member as a constant reminder.

"So no matter what, you might look at your phone 3,000 times a day, you're going to see my Medinah logo," Sereci says. "We go wherever they go, and you see my logo all the time."

Sereci acknowledges the Pacesetter mobile software technology might not be cost effective for many, but it's already paying off in less than two months of being launched with one new member signed up and two other prospects in the process of applying.

According to Stavros, the full app development is \$10,000 upfront plus \$1,500 a month for a custom app that features numerous membership applications as well as the prospective member's app.

"When we started to build the software (for the original app) it was based on the simple premise to help general managers improve the member experience," Stavros says. "At the time, nobody was using mobile technology to help them deliver it, and yet everybody's walking around with this super powerful device in their pocket.

"We are always thinking about the ways it can be leveraged in the private club market. Our whole thought is if it's top of the mind, let it happen. Push of a button."

Scott Kauffman is a golf business writer and is regular technology columnist for *Golf Business*. You can contact him with tech news at [iwritegolf@gmail.com](mailto:iwritegolf@gmail.com).



George Stavros' Pacesetter app is bringing member recruitment to your mobile device.



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## THE START

NEWS & VIEWS TO PROPEL YOUR BUSINESS



By David Gould

### **Short, but Sweet**

**Par 3s, 9-hole Courses have Significant Impact, Despite A Smaller Footprint**

**S**omeone says “golf” and you’ll picture 7,000 yards, par-72, on 125 or so acres. Courses half those sizes – same scale, just nine holes – tend to disappoint. An 18-holer that’s all par-3s might likewise draw shrugs.

Kelly Kirby Benson runs Kelly's Country Club in Norfolk, Nebraska, with her siblings and husband.



**B**ut the golf market is shifting. Alternatives to “championship” length have grown in value. That doesn’t mean today’s par 3s and 9 holers have an easy time of it, merely that they’ve got a more relevant niche. They offer the briefer, more affordable golf experience that’s increasingly in demand.

And if you check rates for quality par 3s, you’ll find they’ve got some pricing power, compared to neighboring courses of regulation length. And so, if operators can charge a healthy green fee while having to maintain only one-third the acreage of a regulation course, have they beaten the system with a powerful 1-2 profit punch?

Not exactly.

“Our 18-hole course plays to 2,621 yards at par 54 and it covers 42 acres,” says Fred LaSelva, who manages a classy par 3 called Twin Brooks Golf Course in the Cape Cod town of Hyannis, Massachusetts. “That sounds like a small area to maintain, but the difference is all fairway yardage – greens and tees really aren’t any different a maintenance challenge for us than for a full-length course.”

Operators of non-regulation courses tend to have a well-developed understanding of their local market, and LaSelva is no exception – he knows his customer segments and what they come looking for.

“Being lenient about dress code fits our role, but so does teaching people to fix ball marks, rake bunkers and not hold up play,” says LaSelva. “If you play golf here, we’ll get to know you, you’ll become a knowledgeable player and you’ll develop a lot of important skills.”



Mike Kirby oversees the grounds keeping at Kelly's Country Club in Norfolk, Nebraska - a 9-hole course he helps manage with his siblings.

Twin Brooks gets nice exposure via the radio show LaSelva has co-hosted for years with famed New England teaching professional Jane Frost. Out of that collaboration has come an interesting instruction strategy. New players who get their feet wet at Twin Brooks and want to improve will be sent to Frost’s golf academy 10 minutes away. It’s connected to an 18-hole course, Sandwich Hollows, but LaSelva doesn’t mind if some of the green-fee business from his newbies ends up there.

“We’re part of a community here on the Cape,” says LaSelva. “Our course makes a profit and we’re able to do our capital improvements, but our suc-

cess doesn’t come from thinking about money first, it comes from fulfilling our role and putting the golfers first.”

You’ll hear a similar mindset from Davis Sezna, a worldly entrepreneur who owns the Crosswinds Par 3 in Greenville, South Carolina, which is currently undergoing a dramatic renovation and expansion.

“Golf courses of every kind should be well-fitted into their surrounding community,” says Sezna. “Golf always followed that mindset, until the boom in real-estate courses, which threw everything out of whack.”

Having built and managed two championship layouts, Sezna enjoys

running a facility that attracts everyone from low-handicappers honing their scoring shots to grade-school kids taking their first swings.

“A course like this puts more smiles on a greater variety of faces,” Sezna says.

He makes the related point that a regulation golf course could choose to set up a player-development program if it wished to, but par 3s and most 9 holers are automatically in that business, providing a portal for new golfers. You can’t run a short-yardage course if you aren’t focused on creating new golfers, “and a major part of that portal effect is a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere,” contends Sezna.

Is it possible to maintain that casual warmth even as you redevelop the property to include a stone-and-glass, 4,500-square-foot facility with a 100-seat restaurant and bar, plus a rooftop bar and seating area, all overseen by a celebrity chef? Sezna, a purist golfer who competed in the U.S. Amateur and belongs to the R&A, is certain you can. “Golf teaches the value of generosity and social interaction,” he says. “Anyone who really loves this game wants to share it.”

Along highway 275 in Norfolk, Nebraska, Kelly’s Country Club is a classic rural 9 holer that continues to unfurl golf’s welcome mat, an icon of family ownership and small-town unpretentiousness. Local attorney Vince Kirby built the 2,800-yard par-36 on land he received as payment in lieu of cash from a client. A father of 12, Kirby died two years ago at age 89 while working on the course. Several of his children work for the facility, three of them full-time, including Kelly Kirby Benson, alongside her husband, Reggie Benson.

“Our weekend fee for nine is \$15 plus \$10 for half the cart,” says Kelly Benson. “On a nice Saturday or Sunday we’re pretty much packed. We do 125 league golfers a week, and probably 20 walkups a day along with that. We can always use more golfers, but it’s a pretty steady business.” Since 1990, when the course was built, Norfolk’s growth

# “Being lenient about dress code fits our role, but so does teaching people to fix ball marks, rake bunkers and not hold up play,”

- Fred LaSelva

pattern has come in the course’s direction – helping build ancillary revenue.

“We’re starting to do a lot of holiday parties in the winter, and since we built a pergola last year we’re in the wedding business, too,” says Benson.

The establishment has a full liquor license and lately its bar orders include “a lot of those new funky drinks with interesting names,” she adds.

Her father’s famous “Poor Man’s Prime Rib” still slow-roasts in the cook-and-hold oven, only now son-in-law Reggie serves as meat-master. The place gets taken over by 70-player tournaments two weekends a year – free-spending golfers

from the Omaha network of Vince, Jr., who grew up from baby of the family to become a highly successful contractor.

When you tell her all these factors comprise a solid “brand positioning” for her business, Kelly Benson simplifies matters, saying: “What works for us is that our golf course is an easy one for beginners and everyone here is friendly.”

Along with a serving of Reggie’s slow-cooked beef, you’d take that recipe for success anytime. **7B**

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



Kelly Kirby Benson's father, attorney Vince Kirby, built Kelly's Country Club in Norfolk, Nebraska, on property he received as payment for legal fees.



By Steve Eubanks

## Twice this year at professional golf events – the U.S.

Women's Open at Country Club of Charleston in May and the PGA Tour Championship in Atlanta in August – lightning struck trees on the golf courses. No one was on the course in Charleston during the strike, but **five spectators were hospitalized** in Atlanta after the strike at East Lake Golf Club. Miraculously, the injuries were minor and victims were treated and released.

But when and how operators gauge dangerous weather and what they do to get people to safety is an issue worth addressing.

**What is the benchmark for when the courses are evacuated during a weather event and what system, if any, is used to determine that threshold?**



**Alex Rhyne**  
HEAD PROFESSIONAL  
BOOT RANCH GOLF CLUB  
FREDERICKSBURG, TEXAS



**Cary Corbitt**  
VICE PRESIDENT OF SPORTS AND OPERATIONS  
SEA PINES RESORT  
HILTON HEAD, SOUTH CAROLINA



**Alex Rhyne:** Boot Ranch uses a system called Thor-Guard to detect lightning and get golfers off the course. This system has been programmed to go off when lightning strikes within a 10-mile radius. Thor-Guard then begins a 10-minute countdown. Once there is no lightning in the area for 10 straight minutes the system will give an all-clear siren.

**Cary Corbitt:** The Sea Pines Resorts also use the Thor-Guard system, which has various levels of alerts and warnings. For us, guest safety is the most important factor. We'd prefer to be overly cautious. If there is lightning detected near any of our three golf courses, the sirens are activated. We get yellow caution notices at 12 miles out and a red alert at 3 to 3.5 miles, which causes the alarms to activate.

## What is the process to ensure that evacuation occurs and is complete?

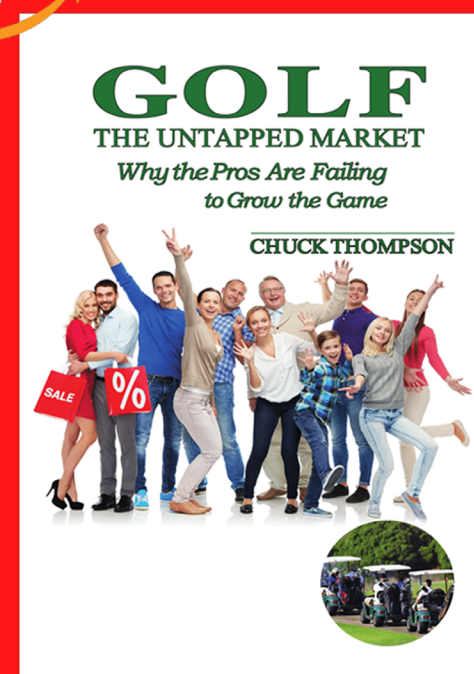
**Rhyne:** The process we have in place is very sufficient. Once Thor-Guard gives us that first alarm, the golf staff sends two people to make a loop. One staff member will go to the front 9 and one will take the back 9. Our team will ask for all golfers to make their way back to the clubhouse, as there is not enough shelter on the course.

**Corbitt:** Based on the detection of potentially dangerous weather, a horn sounds, which indicates that golfers and caddies should evacuate the course or seek safe shelter. We have the marshals back check and drive the course to make sure that all players are safely evacuated.

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*Ted Bishop*  
38th President PGA of America

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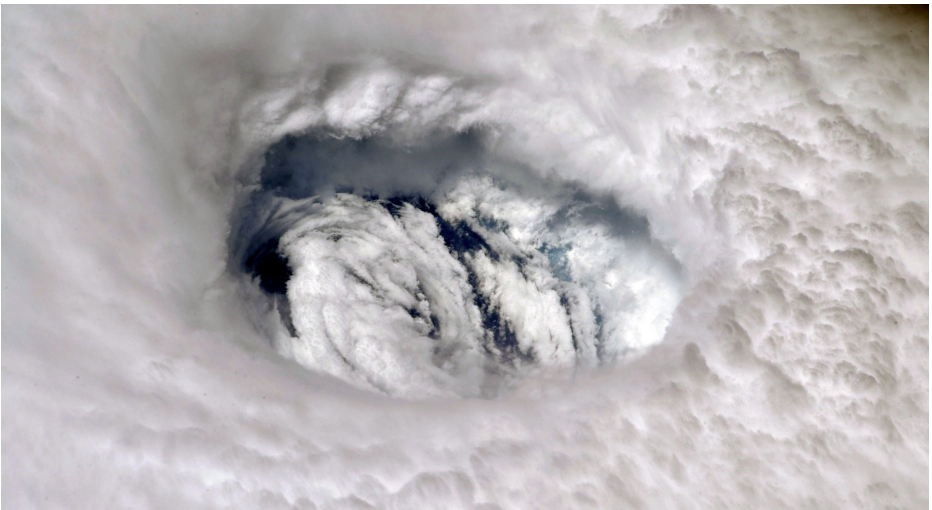
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**Responding to Hurricane Dorian**  
The golf industry wasted no time in extending a helping hand to the victims of Hurricane Dorian that ravaged the Bahamas and U.S. East Coast in September. Learn more from the National Golf Foundation on ways to get involved. [thengfq.com/2019/09](http://thengfq.com/2019/09)



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In My Shop



Cathy Goodrich • Director of Retail  
Woodmont Country Club • Rockville, Maryland



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Ryan McCarty is the general manager at Shaftesbury Glen Golf & Fish Club in Conway, South Carolina.



“Since that time we played 36,000 rounds a year and have had a grand total of one complaint. One guy didn’t like what we did. I consider that a win.”

- RYAN MCCARTY



© 2019 Photos by Ashley Homan

M

ost modern renovations, if they occur at all, are done piecemeal – plant a tree there, renovate a green here, take out those unsightly crossies that haven’t looked right since 1981. No matter the size of your operation, budgets demand that you do things a little bit at a time. A new pool, a revamped kitchen, and suddenly the irrigation and drainage projects get pushed back a couple of years.

By Steve Eubanks

# Going with the Flow

Shaftesbury Glen Renovations Improve Drainage Issues



Shaftesbury Glen Golf & Fish Club in Conway, South Carolina, reopened in mid-August after a massive renovation project.

“We wanted to do something different. So, we came up with the idea of building waste bunkers.”

When you finally do get around to renovating the bunkers, most operators make a point of softening some edges and taking a few out. The days of having 150 bunkers that are as deep as craters, along with 350 rakes that may or may not be used and two or three extra employees to rake, edge and refill them on a regular basis, went out with the bubble shaft and the balata ball. Ease, speed and fun are the renovation goals in 2019.

That is what makes the work done at Shaftesbury Glen Golf & Fish Club in Conway, South Carolina, so extraordinary. The club, which reopened in mid-August after a massive renovation project, not only did not take out bunkers, it added new ones – big ones – length-of-fairway waste bunkers, the kind that send hearts racing and drive many higher-handicap golfers off the course and onto the bowling alley.

But exactly the opposite happened at Shaftesbury Glen. According to club general manager Ryan McCarty, “We originally started these renovations back in 2016 and since that time we played 36,000 rounds a year and have

had a grand total of one complaint. One guy didn’t like what we did. I consider that a win.”

The renovations in question began as a creative fix to a problem that was costing the club a lot of money.

“We kept getting hit with more and more rainy, wet days. Because our course had a little age and didn’t drain as well as some others, there were a lot of days after a rain when players couldn’t get carts off the paths,” according to McCarty.

That situation coincided with a demographic shift in the customer base.

“The average age of the golfer is 62 now,” McCarty said. “Sure, people are healthier but that’s still older than ever. There are a lot of older golfers who won’t play or won’t play as much when they can’t get off the path. Sure there are still walkers and purists, but mid-60s is when you start having knees replaced. It’s not a function of money. Golfers have the money to

play. But we found that we were losing rounds on days when our course was wet and you couldn’t get off the path.”

A drainage project would have helped but water needs an area in which to drain. Retention ponds were an option but adding water hazards is a monumental and expensive task, one fraught with environmental dangers. Plus, you drive away players when you start adding water to a course.

“We didn’t want to put cart paths on both sides of the holes,” McCarty said. “And we wanted to do something different. So, we came up the idea of building waste bunkers.”

The concept was simple: Dig out

the wettest areas of rough and run waste bunkers the length of the holes along with some added drainage. Then the water from crowned fairways would run into the bunkers. From there the water would drain into the soil or leach into other aquifers.

“Initially we created waste bunkers on holes 1, 2, 5, 12, 13 and 16,” McCarty said. “Not only did that take out the wettest areas, it gave us usable cart areas on both sides of those fairways.”

Two years later, another capital project came due. “We had bent-grass greens and it was tough to keep them in the (sweltering South Carolina) heat,” McCarty said. “In the summer of 2018, we had four or five greens that did not do well. That was the first time that I found myself in a situation where I couldn’t say with an open heart that our golf course was in impeccable shape. We’ve always been known for our conditioning and our

service levels. Not being in top-notch shape was just not who we are.

“So, instead of getting into a situation where we might lose a few greens and be scrambling, we got ahead of the problem and changed all the greens out beforehand,” he said. “We went with a relatively new strand of Bermuda called Sunday Bermuda. We researched it for five months, did all our homework, and found that everyone who has it loves it. The thing we liked about it was the speed. You can cut it as low as you want, roll the greens, and it’s an incredible putting surface. So, we pulled the trigger and made the change.”

While the course was closed for updating the new greens, some additional mounding was added and the waste-bunker-cart-path system was integrated into the remainder of the holes, an additional 250,000 square feet of bunkers.

“Because of the time and location in which this course was built, we lacked a lot of natural features,” McCarty said. “So, having this renovation, gave the course a lot of the features it had been missing.”

It also solved a problem that had been vexing Shaftesbury Glen for years. According to McCarty: “We opened Monday, August 12, and on Sunday, August 11, we got 4 inches of rain. So, of course, on the grand reopening we were cart-path-only. But we had golfers coming in and telling us how much they loved being able to pick and choose which side of the hole they went down. And we were also off the paths the very next day.

“So, through this renovation, we knocked down a three-day cart-path situation to a single day. It has totally been worth it. Absolutely.” **RB**

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



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# Re-Imagined Course Tests 12-Hole Theory

by Steve Eubanks



Mike Miles is taking Oak Bridge Golf Course in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, in a new direction.

decade later, with 18-hole facilities being repurposed throughout the country, his idea is finally taking hold.

Enter Mike Miles at Oak Bridge Golf Course, the little-known, sadly-run facility in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, that sits a short walk from the PGA Tour headquarters and the grand clubhouse of the TPC Sawgrass.

"We are that typical 1985 Arnold Palmer-designed golf course that was built to sell homes," Miles said. "The developer, once all the lots were sold, tried to sell the golf course to the residents but they didn't want to own it. So it's been through three or four different owners from management companies to individuals. And it's gone belly-up every time.

"So, you have this story of, 'Wow, this place used to be great, it had 500 members, we were rocking and rolling,' and by the time I got here, the greens were dirt and the clubhouse should have been boarded up. We had 20 golfers a day. The place was a financial disaster."

It's hard to believe that the third course inside the gates near the TPC Sawgrass could toil in relative obscurity and go broke more than once with hardly a notice. But the Ponte Vedra market struggled mightily during the Great Recession. Marsh Landing, another real estate-driven course in the area, went through numerous financial woes and many of the development clubs between Jacksonville and St. Augustine are on their third or fourth owners.

"PGA Tour Properties actually took a look at (Oak Bridge) and couldn't make the numbers work," Miles said.

But then the receiver who took the club back decided to finally put an old idea into practice.

"The reason I moved from California to work on this project was to repurpose this golf course, sell off some of the land to give us some capital and convert the remaining property into a 12-hole course with a little par-3 course woven in," Miles said.

"Of course, everyone who tries to sell off parts of their golf course meets resistance. There are lawsuits and all kinds of protests. But we worked hard to build goodwill, revamping the tennis facility and turning the restaurant into one of the better establishments in town. Then we got the HOA and the county to approve the zoning to sell six holes. The proceeds from that sale will allow us to rebuild."

If successful, Oak Bridge could be a model for golf in the future, a prime example of what can and should be done with struggling facilities throughout the country.

"People have done some 12-hole configurations here and there but never in this kind of high-visibility neighborhood, pulling off this sequence of events and designing it this way up front," Miles said. "The people at the tour are very excited. They're coming over and offering to help. We actually have a letter from Arnold Palmer, that he wrote just before he passed away, telling us that he thinks this was a great idea and wishing us luck.

"Of course, it takes discipline and building great relationships," Miles said. "The Big G golfers, of which I'm probably one, wanted to hang us from the nearest flagpole when they heard this idea. 'You can't go to 12 holes, that's not golf.' But it is golf. It's the kind of golf we need. It's golf you can play under three hours. It's golf where you can let the kids go out and play the par-3 course while you get in a quick nine or 12 holes. It's golf that doesn't beat you up like some of the tournament courses the tour guys play. It's affordable golf. It's, as Jack Nicklaus said, golf for the future."

**T**he concept has been around for more than a decade. But like most things in golf, tradition and a reluctance to change have kept it from becoming little more than a talking point.

As early as 2008, at a dinner at the Turnberry Hotel in Scotland, Jack Nicklaus said, "I truly believe the future of golf course design is the six-hole loop."

At the time Nicklaus advocated abandoning the idea of a front and back nine – out and back, as many links courses were originally designed – and instead building three six-hole loops.

"That way, your entry-level players, families or players with time constraints can play six holes, or you could play 12 holes and some people could play 18 holes," Nicklaus said. "I think the future growth in golf will be people playing 12 holes."

At the time, especially among the jacket-and-tie wearing crowd in Scotland, Nicklaus's prognostications were seen as "out there." But a

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## Neighborhood Visionary Rescues, Resurrects Skybrook

By Steve Eubanks

**I**t's the same old story, one that in hindsight seems so easy to spot. What were developers thinking? Why build so many championship-caliber golf courses, especially with debt service that could never be maintained? Now, they languish, sagging and grim like sad and disheveled faces on once tall and proud men.

When Skybrook Golf Club originally was built in Huntersville, North Carolina, a suburb of Charlotte, the plan was one repeated many times: Use a beautiful golf property to sell 1,153 homes. Once the real estate sold out and the riches of the development were extracted, the golf...well, that would be someone else's problem.

As time passed, Skybrook Golf Club's prospects grew bleaker. Despite the best efforts of a management team that did more with less than anyone expected, the course was still a sad shell of its once stately self and the clubhouse showed more than a little age.

Then came the inevitable: The owner attempted to sell the course and made it known that if there were no buyers, he would divide the land into eight parcels and sell it for future development.

This is a scenario facing operators throughout the country. Residential developers are, with few exceptions, not golf managers. Their expertise is largely limited to golf's value in driving lot prices. Once the last lot sells, most developers can't wait to dump the course, even if that means selling the land for some other use. But in the case of Skybrook, one local resident refused to let his community golf club go away.

Craig Sandhaus, who was president of the homeowners association, said, "When I saw that packet, I knew I couldn't let this happen to our community. Developing some of the golf course property and letting the rest go brown would be disastrous. So, I reached out to my 'Dream Team' and asked them if they could help."

He reached a couple of developers, D.R. Bryan and John Coley of Bryan Properties, as well as a couple of golf experts, Kim Worley and David Taylor, who

**SINGLES**

have decades of experience in the industry. With that team in place, Sandhaus formed Skybrook LLC. After months of negotiations, a sale price was agreed upon and Sandhaus's group bought the golf course.

But that wasn't the hard part. What makes the Skybrook story unique and an inspiration for clubs in similar distress was what happened next. After a decade of deferred capital improvements, the course needed more than a little TLC. In order to boost interest and get a membership drive going, Sandhaus needed capital. And he needed buy-in from the residents.

He brought a proposal to the homeowner board for an assessment that would total \$150,000 annually for 10 years. It was only \$130 a year, less than the cost of residential trash pickup in Charlotte, but approval would require a vote of 75 percent of the 1,153 homeowners. Unfortunately, the covenants stated that 865 votes was a hard target. Anyone who abstained from voting was counted as a "No."

Sandhaus put together a get-out-the-vote effort unlike any other. He assigned neighborhood monitors to go door-to-door in different sectors and talk residents through the proposal. Those monitors explained to residents who did not care about golf why keeping Skybrook was important.

Incredibly, in one month, Sandhaus collected 923 "Yes" votes, 80 percent of the total residents.

Susan Rouanzion, a property manager in the area who helps with the Skybrook HOA said, "I have never seen anything like what just happened at Skybrook. This entire community literally came together overnight to support the golf course."

With funding in place, the team began replanting the greens and revamping the clubhouse. The newly renovated Skybrook Golf Club opened on August 31 with a comeback story that should resonate throughout the industry.

Sometimes it requires having your back against the wall. Often it requires selling a vision. But almost always, rescuing a golf course requires a leader who can pull a community together. At Skybrook, Craig Sandhaus, a guy in the neighborhood, turned out to be just that.



Mike Hicks, general manager of amenities at White Bluff Resort, visits with players on the course, which has received a new lease on life.



## It Takes a Village

Renovations Invigorate White Bluff Resort

By Sally J. Sportsman

**White Bluff Resort has a new lease on life.** With new ownership, leadership and management, the destination, overlooking Lake Whitney in Whitney, Texas, is attracting visitors in greater numbers than ever. Renovations to the two golf courses as well as refurbishments to the restaurant, pro shops and lodging are ushering in a new era.

"It's a gorgeous property," says Mike Hicks, general manager of amenities at White Bluff Resort. "There's nothing flat in the Texas Hill Country," including the aura of excitement surrounding the new-and-





White Bluff Resort is a planned, gated residential community and destination resort on 3,450 acres, in Texas.

**“When the golf courses were closed, as many as 65 homes were for sale; now there are six.”**

improved version of this beloved resort.

Centrally located between the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex and Austin, White Bluff Resort is a planned, gated residential community and destination resort on 3,450 acres, with four miles of prime shoreline along Lake Whitney. The gently rolling hills and plentiful trees, along with roaming deer, extend as far as the eye can see. Complementing the golf courses and restaurant are a spa, conference center, marina, swimming pools, lodging and other amenities. RV parks and campgrounds also are part of the one-stop resort.

Developed and previously owned by Double Diamond Resorts, White Bluff Resort changed hands late last year, due to differences of opinion between the ownership and the property owners, who now own the property amenities. When the resort was closed down two years ago, Hicks says, the property owners coalesced, volunteering to try to take care of the golf courses. The sale of the amenities to the Property Owners Association was completed last December.

There are over 4,000 property owners, according to Hicks, representing 500 permanent homes – some of which are built on three lots – and some undeveloped lots. The ownership change is bearing fruit.

“Home values have gone up already,” Hicks says. “When the golf courses were closed, as many as 65 homes were for sale; now there are six.”



© 2019 Photos by White Bluff Resort

The Old and New Courses, designed by 13-time PGA Tour winner Bruce Lietzke, have been renovated extensively at a cost of \$1.5 million. They feature new greens, including total replacement to Tifeagle Bermuda, and new sand in the bunkers to improve drainage. A driving range, chipping green, practice bunker and putting green complete the golf facilities. The New Course reopened August 30, and the Old Course was expected to reopen in late September.

“Our customers include not only our homeowners, but many people who drive in from around Texas and surrounding areas to enjoy the resort,” says Hicks. “People also boat or water ski into the resort.”

Pricing is more affordable now than previously. For example, the weekend rate for either golf course, including cart, is \$55, whereas before it was \$85. White Bluff Resort does its own social media program and email communications, and maintains its own website through its corporate office. A marketing company is contracted for advertising and other initiatives. White Bluff

is managed by Arcis Advantage, the management division of Dallas-based Arcis Golf.

Floods, droughts and a fire have been part of the history of White Bluff Resort, says Hicks, but the future looks bright now.

“This is my second stint at this beautiful place,” says Hicks, who arrived at White Bluff in 2000 as director of golf and departed in 2004 as general manager. “Arcis and the property owners brought me back.”

Marshall Snyder, who has owned a home at White Bluff Resort since 2014, says the new ownership arrangement “is a good marriage. The POA is focused on its constituents: property owners and homeowners.

“We intend to continue operating the resort, because as a nonprofit, we see it as a way to fund our development and activities. We know that reinvestment is required, and we have committed to that.

“The future looks rosy.” **RB**

*Sally J. Sportsman is an Orlando, Florida-based freelance golf writer.*

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# Sand Valley Gets Into the Swing of Things

By Sally J. Sportsman

As a choice golf destination, Wisconsin boasts a number of well-known golf resorts with sand dunes, attractive vistas and activities aplenty.

None, though, has a choice of amenities quite like Sand Valley Resort in Rome. With three golf courses and a fourth under development, Sand Valley Resort is known for its fine golf. But that's not all.

"Our owner said some of our fairways were so wide that tennis could be played on them," says Glen Murray, general manager of Sand Valley Resort. "We thought about it and noticed an unused, perfectly flat driving-range tee.

"We tested it for tennis in 2016, and it didn't take long to convert it to a tennis court. We now have a full-fledged tennis program."

The owner is renowned golf course developer Mike Keiser, along with his two sons. And the full-fledged tennis program quickly has gained recognition. With 15 grass courts, located near the golf practice center, Sand Valley Resort has one of the largest such tennis facilities in the country. In fact, there are not many grass courts at all in the U.S., and most of them are found at private clubs. Sand Valley Resort is changing that dynamic.

"Tennis is building momentum here," Murray says. "This year we've conducted clinics and received recognition from tennis writers."

Five of the grass courts were opened last summer, 10 more this past spring. There are three banks of courts, five in each bank, all surrounded by sand dunes and pine trees, a kind of natural fence.

"It makes people think of Wimbledon," says Murray.

The Sand Valley Resort tennis pro,



Rob Wright, is part of the Cliff Drysdale Tennis program. The grass-court concept is garnering attention for the resort. The number of visitors who play both golf and tennis is small but growing, according to Murray. It's under 5 percent now but on an upward trajectory. Golfers say they enjoy trying something they've never done before.

"Tennis started as a novelty for us," Murray says, "but we are seeing how people react to it. Our objective was a certain amount of court time this year, which we are attaining."

Plans are still evolving, perhaps to include a separate tennis pro shop. The courts are fully public. Tennis is complimentary for resort guests and \$20 per hour for public players, who are asked to call a few days in advance to reserve court time.

"The golf is what has made it possible to do the tennis. Otherwise, it would be too risky as a standalone.

"The two experiences are complementing each other. It's not our goal for golf and tennis to compete."

The grass courts were constructed efficiently, according to Murray, as all the equipment already was on site for golf course construction and maintenance. The courts have other uses, too, such as lawn bowling and soccer.

"It's okay as long as you don't impede the tennis players," Murray says.

The objective of the Sand Valley Resort ownership and management is to get people outside to enjoy the unique landscape of what formerly was a tree farm covered in rows and rows of red pines, not native to the area. At the resort, 9,000 acres of land have been restored to sand dunes and their natural ecology.



In addition to golf and grass-court tennis, Sand Valley Resort offers hiking and biking trails, farm-to-table dining, swimming, fishing and other activities. Lodge, cottage and suite accommodations are available for resort guests. Golf is the most popular resort activity, but tennis is coming along nicely.

"We are betting that enough people will say they want to experience our grass-court tennis," says Murray.

It seems a safe bet.

*Sally J. Sportsman is an Orlando, Florida-based freelance golf writer.*

# Montana Encourages, Statewide 'Staycation'

By Sally J. Sportsman

It's no secret that avid golfers love to travel to play. In-state travel is of great appeal, saving time yet offering enjoyment for players of every skill level.

Traveling in-state to play is increasingly appealing to golfers in Montana. Summer golf passes are one way courses in the state are banding together to entice Montana golfers to discover the beautiful golf courses within their own state, including at luxurious resort properties.

"Golfers seek out our mountaintop course, with its picturesque, memorable holes," says Mikal Harpster, PGA head golf professional at Fairmont Hot Springs Resort Golf Course in Fairmont, Montana. "The 2019 Golf 'N Go Summer Pass has brought us new players who might not have the chance to see the resort otherwise."

The 18-hole golf course at Fairmont Hot Springs Resort was upgraded last year. It was a \$2 million project, Harpster says, that included reworking the bunkers, greens and tee boxes on many holes, and installing a completely new irrigation system. The changes, he says, have produced a noticeable difference in the course, resulting in "the best conditions we've ever had. The course is fair and fun, but offers plenty of challenge; a mid-handicapper can really enjoy it."

For golfers, having a historic resort like the Fairmont as one of the courses they can play on a summer golf pass is a dream come true. At a cost of \$99, the Montana Golf 'N Go pass allows players to choose from among 51 venues, with permission to play each course one time. Golfers travel from all over Montana to experience the Fairmont, with over 100 players each year coming on their summer pass, according to Harpster.

"We sit down every year to talk about if we think the pass will be beneficial, and we always find that it's very beneficial," Harpster says. "We get a lot of outside revenue from pass holders."

The Fairmont, as is customary for most courses on the golf pass, places certain restrictions on play. Pass players must make reservations two or three days in advance, and are offered tee times late in the day.

Revenue from pass holders comes in the form of cart fees, pro shop purchases and food and beverage, Harpster says. The average extra revenue from each pass holder

## DESTINATIONS

who plays the Fairmont course is about \$30. Most importantly, though, these players might return in the future.

"Pass players come from all over Montana to come check out our resort," says Harpster. "Some spend a night – they might go to the hot springs or have dinner.

"Many Montana players make a trip out of every course on the pass. It gives them a reason to travel!"

This was the first year that Big Sky Resort Golf Course, in Big Sky, Montana, has participated in summer golf pass programs. The facility is publicized on KTZZ, out of Bozeman, as a pass-play option.

"The pass was good for our entire season, mid-May through the end of September," says Mark Wehrman, PGA head professional and general manager at Big Sky Resort. "It's a good marketing opportunity for us.

"I did my due diligence. There's no cost to the course, but we determined that we received \$1,600 worth of advertising in the newspaper and in commercials."

Pass players at Big Sky are required to rent a cart for \$25, representing guaranteed revenue for the course. Restrictions state that the pass is good any time after 2 p.m. About 75 rounds had been redeemed on the pass by last August – a good number but not too many, according to Wehrman.

"It's been a good trade," Wehrman says. "Most of our pass players are from the Bozeman area, about 40 miles away, so they often want to come back.

"We'll run some numbers again next year, but if it continues as it is now, it is worth it, in my opinion."

Big Sky Resort Golf Course requests contact information from pass players, so that the marketing team can follow up with communication and advertising to them. Enticements are offered to return to the resort to play golf or ski.

"Big Sky Resort has the most skiable acres under one lift ticket in the U.S.," Harpster says. "It encompasses four mountains."

The golf is good, too.



Jim Hajek, general manager at Fossil Trace Golf Club in Golden, Colorado, says, "When we took all the municipal restrictions off the operations and simply ran it as a business, it was amazing what happened."

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# Survival Tactics

## Managing Expectations Leads To Municipal Success

By Steve Eubanks

**I**t's easy to be bleak. It's even easier to jump to conclusions; to extrapolate the data in one or two markets and blanket an entire segment of the golf industry with a permanent layer of soot. It's easy to look at cities like Louisville, Kentucky, Stockton, California, and Indianapolis, and come to the conclusion that municipal golf is a hapless, helpless money pit – a business from which governments should extricate themselves as quickly as possible. City council members hear it all the time. Get out. Cut your losses. Sell the munis to strip-mall developers or turn them into public housing. Anything but golf.

For some context, Louisville loses money on seven of its 10 municipal golf courses with no turnaround in sight. According to the city's parks and recreation director, Dana Kasler, Louisville lost \$673,480 at the munis in 2018.

"We had revenue decreases exceeding 15 percent at five of our courses," Kasler said. At the Bobby Nichols Golf Course in Louisville, for example, the city loses \$13.80 for every round played. There is currently no plan in place to turn those losses around.

But the mayor of Indianapolis would dance down Capital Avenue to have those numbers. Rounds played in the Indy golf market have decreased by 21 percent in the last seven years. Golf revenues across the board have fallen almost 10 percent (more in the municipal sector). And net revenue from the 13 Indy Parks golf courses is only \$471,000, with almost all of that coming from four courses. Unfortunately, 60 percent of that revenue goes to service debt on past capital improvements. Future capital needs are estimated at more than \$27 million in the next 20 years, while projected demand for public golf is expected to plummet 20 percent by 2025 and 40 percent after 2035.

Numbers like these are just as bleak in other areas. It's enough to lead the casual observer to conclude that all munis

are black holes.

But there are many munis proving that theory wrong. Look at San Antonio, with a thriving stable of eight municipal courses that are in good condition and thriving economically.

"We have been fortunate to be in a good scenario," said Andrew Peterson, the CEO of Alamo City Golf Trail, a 501c3 that manages all the San Antonio golf properties. "You can have good people and a good plan but if the market conditions are not right, you don't have a chance. So, a lot of it is location and a little of it has to do with luck."

Even though Peterson took over the courses in 2007, the worst possible time to be in the golf business, the conditions in San Antonio were ripe for success. The market was far from oversaturated. And the demographics seemed perfect for a good operator to make a difference.

As Jim Keegan, one of the premier municipal golf consultants in the nation, said, "If the question is: can municipal golf courses be successful, the answer is a qualified yes. Within a major metropolitan area where demand exceeds supply, municipal golf courses can thrive. Think Bethpage, Brown Deer, Crandon Park or Torrey Pines.

"In the hinterlands, the type of golf course experience needs to match the



attitudinal behavior and demographics of the residents. Demand for golf needs to be closely monitored. If the facility is an entry-level golf course that serves as the entry door to the game and is funded gently by the general fund, there is justification for that municipality to be in the golf business. But to attempt to compete against a daily fee course offering activities that compete against private enterprise, probably not.”

Knowing your course and your customer sounds easy. But far too many operators get it wrong.

“I would love to say that the answer to all municipal ills is a damn good operator, but that’s not the case,” said Del Ratcliffe, who manages the municipal courses for Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, which is Charlotte. “Every market is different. Sure, there are basic fundamentals. But the key is answering some simple questions: What is the demographic of the market that you’re serving? What are the current levels of service in that area? And do the (municipal) courses match up to the demand in that area?”

“You have to match the product to the market that exists, not the one

you hope exists; not the one you think might exist at some point in the future. You have to provide a product for the people who are there.”

Keegan has evaluated the best and worst municipal courses in the country. “Based on an analysis of 44 variables, the best 100 municipal courses all share these characteristics,” he said. “They are located in 16 states in 20 core-based statistical areas where demand vastly exceeds supply. They average 7,831 golfers per 18 holes within a 10-mile radius (of the golf course.) And the average spending on golf per 18 holes within that 10-mile radius is \$9.4 million.

“Contrast that with the bottom 100 where supply vastly exceeds demand. They average only 488 golfers per 18 holes in a 10-mile radius. And, as logically follows, the average annual spending on golf in a 10-mile radius is also far lower: only \$356,740.”

Operators can’t change the neighborhood. You can’t magically change the demographics of a town. But you can match the product to the market you serve.

“You have to manage to a certain expectation,” Ratcliffe said. “Mecklenburg County has taken a business-centered

approach to their golf courses. We are efficient with the money we spend and we work to make a profit. But there are instances where municipalities are not geared toward a profit philosophy. They’re in golf because they’ve always been in golf and they don’t approach it as a business. When that happens, you’re going to have problems.”

That was the case with the San Antonio courses before Peterson came in. Rates were low because they were set by politicians and parks managers, not golf operators. Expenses were high because of a citywide pay scale. Once an independent operator broke that cycle, the entire golf dynamic changed.

“Taking the bureaucracy out so that you run the operation without any government influence allows you to maneuver rates,” Peterson said. “We’re also able to staff in a way that pays people a working wage but not a city wage. We’re not subject to the city pay structures.

“It’s a lot easier for us to buy equipment and food and beverage, merchandise and fertilizer. We don’t have to go through the city procurement process, which makes it a lot easier for us to do those things.



Fossil Trace Golf Club in Golden, Colorado, uses dynamic pricing to improve revenues.

“Our success stems from keeping the city **at arm’s length.**”

JIM HAJEK

“Now, I’m not going to tell you that’s easy. There is no silver bullet. You have to roll up your sleeves, get to work and get everyone drinking the same water. You also have to have the right city leadership. In our situation we had golf courses that were losing between \$750,000 and a \$1.5 million a year. They were in deplorable shape, falling apart at the seams. For the city, knowing that they weren’t going to have to subsidize that anymore was pretty palatable.”

Peterson’s group eliminated more than a \$2 million deficit while servicing debt and making more than \$20 million in capital improvements in 12 years, all because he was free to run the business as a business.

That doesn’t always work. If a course is in a poor neighborhood or an aging population has no interest in golf, turning a profit might never be an option. But there are other considerations. As Ratcliffe said, “Cities and counties are torn between the need to provide green space and open space and the costs of keeping and maintaining a golf course.”

The politics of losing money on a golf course might not be great, but the idea of selling the golf course to a condo developer could lead to riots at city hall.

Colleen Henry, who manages the 9-hole Rancho Del Pueblo Golf Course in San Jose, California, understands that dynamic. “At a recent council meeting, the parks department made a presentation where they said that the cost of keeping an area as green space was about \$15,000 an acre,” Henry said. “And that’s just as a park or a nature walk or some other use. Soccer fields or some other things that were proposed are even more expensive. So, from the city’s perspective, it’s cheaper to have a 9-hole

golf course operate at a loss than it is to convert it to something else.

“We are the best deal in town,” Henry said. “But we’re also not in the best area of town. So we’re fighting perception. When people get here they can’t believe how beautiful the facility is. The condition of our golf course is amazing. The greens crew has created a mini country club out here. And having that (oasis) in this part of town is worth it for the city, worth it for the community.

“The cost of doing something (else with the property) is more than the money you’re losing as a golf course. And now you’re providing an activity for seniors and other groups. People who can’t go to the skateboard park or whatever can still come out to the golf course. We’ve made the facility a community resource, not just a golf course. We have bingo nights and social gatherings. Across the street are a line of basketball courts, so we have those kids come over and get Gatorade after they play basketball. You don’t have to be a profit center. You just have to be an invaluable part of the community.”

Some mayors and city councils buy into Henry’s vision of golf as a community resource, while others are more bottom-line oriented. Either way, the key to successful municipal management is transparency.

“The key to any successful partnership, whether it’s full management or a consulting arrangement, or something in between, is to be up front with the municipality about expectations, about the market, and about what the agreed-upon goals and objectives of the municipal golf courses are and should be,” said Alex Elmore, president of Billy Casper Golf, which manages 90 municipal golf facilities.

“Many municipalities want to make sure that they remain beneath a certain price threshold because the objective is to keep golf affordable for the public. That’s a worthy goal and one a solid, professional management team can help (a municipality) achieve. But you have to be up front about what that means to the bottom line.

“Another worthy objective, and one of the overlooked benefits of a city or county golf course, is the entry point for starting the game. Where else can you bring a child who might have an interest in taking up golf, hand them a club and introduce them to the game? Municipal courses are the place where that happens every day.”

Ratcliffe agreed. “Golf is a challenging sport,” he said. “It’s important to provide pathways for the beginners that are accessible and appropriate for their abilities. If you put a beginning skier on a double-black-diamond slope, you’re not going to convert that person into a skier. But that’s what we do with golf. Many of the bunny slopes in our business have been closed. They typically struggle more financially and they’re usually worth more if developed for other things rather than golf. That’s where a municipality has an opportunity to provide a service to their residents and to the game.”

As lofty and inspiring as those goals may seem, most parks managers and city council members have trouble wrapping their heads around taxpayer subsidized golf. They don’t necessarily want their courses to make money, but they certainly don’t want them to lose it.

“That’s where you have to move on rate,” said Jim Hajek, general manager at Fossil Trace Golf Club in Golden, Colorado. “Having the city out of the busi-



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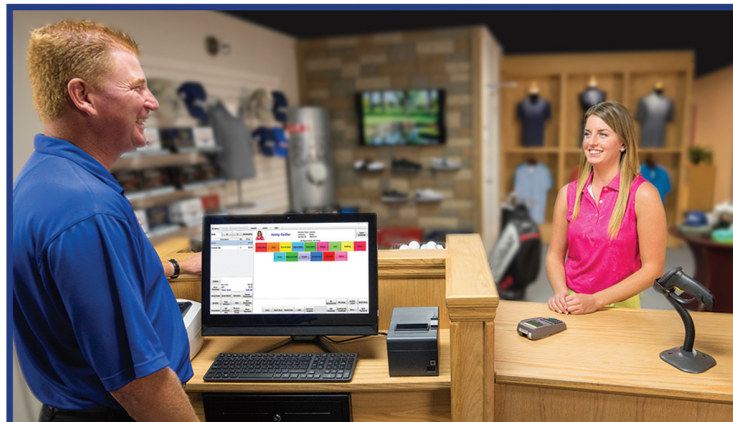
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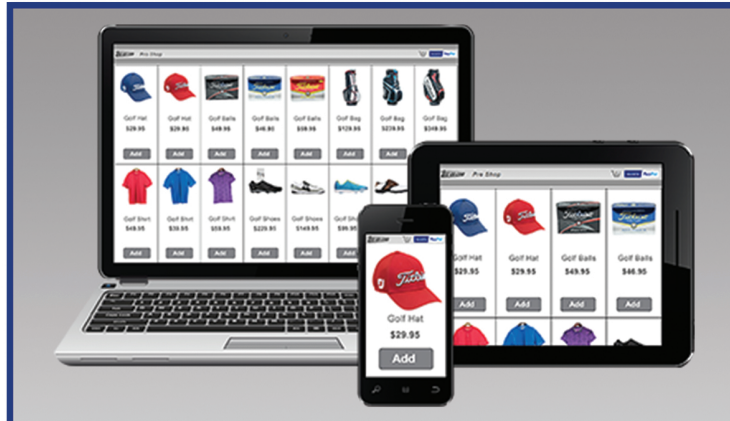
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The 9-hole Rancho Del Pueblo Golf Course in San Jose, California, brings important green space to the community.

“We’ve made the facility a **community resource**, not just a golf course.”

COLLEEN HENRY

ness of pricing is a must. We dynamically price all the times. We get a lot of buddies who come out and make our facility a standard part of their trip to the area. We call them the ‘brosomes,’ a foursome of friends who are in town for whatever reason and want to play quality golf. We price the times accordingly for them. They want to play at a specific time on a specific day because they have other activities. So we charge a premium. And we get it. The old model of one rate on weekdays, another on weekend and a twilight discount – that’s a dinosaur way to doing things and a money loser. You price for demand. It’s the only way.”

Like Peterson, Hajek also had found that getting government out of management is also a must to achieve positive cash flow.

“Our success stems from keeping the city at arm’s length,” Hajek said. “I’ve told all of our operators and those we are dealing with in the city that nothing good comes from the city being involved. We are experts in what we do and the experience we have created here is exceptional. There is nothing about this business that a city can do that we can’t do more efficiently.

“Any time the municipality has gotten involved, it has cost the operation money. They decided we shouldn’t sell cigars. That was a political decision. Okay, that cost us \$20,000. But when we took all the municipal restrictions off the operations and simply ran it as a business, it was amazing what happened.”

In many cases that is easier said than done. Getting a politician to cede control is like taking a pork chop away from a hungry dog.

“Some communities, quite frankly, aren’t ready,” Ratcliffe said. “They aren’t ready for the public-private partnership. At that point the question is, is losing money on a golf course worth the public benefit and the service that is provided to the community? If so, fine, continue to operate it as you always have. But if that model isn’t working, you have to eventually turn to the experts.”

The mechanics of the business don’t change at a muni. You have to control costs, especially labor, and maximize rates at every turn, putting enough cash aside for future capital improvements while matching the experience with the expectations. Historically, municipalities have done an abysmal job in one of those areas: price.

“The vast majority of municipal golf courses offer rates far below the experience provided,” Keegan said. “The best illustration is season passes, which are offered by over 80 percent of municipal golf courses. They’re typically priced at 60 percent below their fair market value. That error is often compounded by municipalities issuing punch passes (pay for 10 rounds, play 12), loyalty cards (offering discounts of 10 percent to 40 percent depending upon the initial premium paid) and offering a plethora of rates based on the type of golfer (senior, regular, junior), time of the day, day of the week, time of the year.

“On an hourly basis, the opportunity to play 18 holes of golf may be the least expensive recreational sport in America, if measured in the cost per hour.

“The median 18-hole fee with a cart in America is \$48 or \$12 per hour (that is high for most municipal courses). Have

you been to a concert, professional sports event or even Top Golf recently? I paid over \$100 per person per hour to attend a rock concert (Goo Goo Dolls and Train) and \$80 per person per hour to attend the Colorado Rockies vs. the Baltimore Orioles. Even Top Golf with my grandkids averages over \$30 per hour per person when food is included.

“Municipal golf course rates are like a buoy in the ocean. Rates in the industry are set by the bottom feeders. To enhance the financial performance of municipal golf courses, rates must go up.”

Peterson couldn’t agree more. “We have been around for 12 years. Our rounds have increased about 5 percent since 2007. But our rate has increased drastically,” he said. “We’re doing a few more rounds but at a significantly higher rate.

“You have to be steadfast that you are raising rates for a reason, to provide a better product. And if you get these government officials who don’t have that relationship yet, you have to get them to understand that the rate increase will lead to better turf conditions, cleaner golf carts, better staff and a much better experience for everyone.

“Sure, there is some low-hanging fruit out there where you can trim fat. But you have to raise rates. That’s where so many municipalities get into trouble. They’re afraid to raise rates because of the constituency, even though they’re still going to be the cheapest golf in town. But you have to wear your big-boy pants. You have to do what needs to be done.”

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



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## New App Making Big Marketing Push

By Steve Eubanks



"Having protected the product and its concept entirely, the future is exclusively wide open for expansion into private clubs," New said. "We have had numerous members at various clubs ask if the product is available at their private course."

The mechanics of how that would work remain unclear, but New and his partners are betting heavy that an app focusing on speed instead of price will be a hit. The owners have invested more than \$500,000 of their own money and they went wide with an investor call, placing an ad for seed money on ESPN's finale of the World Series of Poker on July 16.

"Bold sells," New said. "And sometimes paying the price of admission to attract the right investor is worth it. High net-worth individuals watching poker are our ideal partners."

The commercial featured the founders playing poker on the first tee of Denton Country Club in Argyle, Texas, when a fifth person walks up to New, shows him his phone and says, "Let's go, the course is wide open." To which New replies, "Wide open! I'm all in."

Then, New says, "As a start-up, we're looking for an angel investor to join us on the course."

The patent for the app is pending, but New is confident that with the right partner

Wide Open Golf will be winner.

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

Golf apps are nothing new. In fact tee-time booking apps have all but reached critical mass in terms of number. TeeOff, GolfNow, GolfBook, SupremeGolf, Golf18Network. There are more. But a new one that launched in June just might have carved out a workable, differentiating niche.

Wide Open Tee, which is still in the beta stages of development, allows you to book a time, just like the others. But this app isn't about discounting. It's about accessibility. Wide Open Tee shows subscribers how busy or how open nearby golf courses are in real time and color-codes those courses based on how quickly you could conceivably play.

More than 7,000 public courses are within Wide Open Tee's system offering and CEO Tyler New has plans to add some private club offerings once the app has a track record.

**"Sometimes  
paying the  
price of  
admission to  
attract the  
right investor  
is worth it."**





By Dr. Steve Yacovelli

## Hidden in Plain Sight Identifying and Mitigating Unconscious Bias in Yourself and Your Workplace

Three fun facts for you to ponder:

- **Studies show that résumés with “white” sounding names** (like “Greg”) were 50 percent more likely to get a callback for an interview by potential employers than more stereotypically African-American sounding names (like “Jamal”), even when the résumés were identical aside from the name.

- **Brunette and redhead women’s salaries** are approximately 7 percent less than their blonde counterparts.
- **And almost 60 percent of corporate CEOs are over six-foot-tall;** a large disproportion compared to the fact that less than 15 percent of American men are over this height. In a popular political television show, one character says, “Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln. Tall men make great presidents.”

What do these three factoids have in common? They are examples of what is called “unconscious bias,” and actions taken because of those unconscious or hidden biases. But what specifically are these hidden or unconscious biases, and more importantly how can you start to manage them so you’re making the right decisions in your workplace and our world? Let’s explore.

### What is “Unconscious Bias”?

Hidden or unconscious bias is the preference for or against a person, thing or group held at an unconscious level. This means you don’t even realize your mind is holding onto this bias of, say, that person on the phone who is speaking English as a second language, or that effeminate man in front of you at the restaurant who isn’t what you were taught as “masculine.” In contrast, an overt – or explicit – bias is an attitude or prejudice that one endorses at a conscious level; it’s obvious and blatant.

Research on hidden bias shows that, regardless of the best intentions, most people hold deep-seated resistance to the “difference” of others, whether that difference is defined by evident factors as race, gender, ethnicity, age or physical characteristics, or more subtle ones such as background, personality type, experiences or even sexual orientation. But bias can also exist in a positive sense: You may favor your family, your community and people with whom you feel a connection based on shared characteristics or experiences (like

people who work for the same company or went to the same university as you).

These hidden biases aren’t purposely or consciously created; they are products of your brain’s self-generated definition of normal, acceptable or positive, and they are shaped by many factors: from past experiences to your local or cultural environment, to the influence of social community and the impressions from media. You don’t consciously create these definitions of “normal” versus “different,” “good” versus “bad,” or “acceptable” versus “unacceptable.”

In fact, conscious and unconscious biases are often divergent; your hidden biases may exist in spite of our sincere desire to be bias-free and in direct contradiction of the attitudes you believe you have.

### Why Do We Have These Biases?

Well, we can blame having unconscious bias on our cave-ancestors. Back in the day a cave-person had to quickly decide if the big-furry-sharp-toothed-animal at the cave-door was friend or foe; and those quick ascertains of safety were processed in their cave-brains. Science has shown that we receive 11 million bits of information every moment, but we can only consciously process 40 bits of data at any time. How do we manage that 99.9999996% gap? Through our unconscious brains. So, as humans it is perfectly natural for us to create these “cognitive shortcuts” to help us be safe and survive and manage all this data input.

But in 2019 we aren’t cave-folk; and that wiring sometimes goes against how we want our “auto systems” to work. Think about yourself at work: Do you want your cave-wiring impulsively taking over who you should work with, the feelings you have toward hiring someone, or defining how you act towards a new co-worker or customer? No, you don’t. You want to have your conscious brain be prevalent, and that’s not always easy to do. But it’s something you should do.

### “Microinequities” & Why They Matter in our Workplace

OK, you’re at work and someone says to you, “For a woman, I’m really surprised how well you accomplished that task. Nice job.”

Some would call this a backhanded compliment: a compliment that’s really an insult. The better term for this is a “microinequity.” These are unconscious biases that come to life where people act or say things that “tip the hand” on their respective (most likely unconscious) biases.

Why does it matter for you to identify and mitigate these microinequities in your workplace? For several reasons, actually:

- Microinequities are a form of punishment for being different and occur in the context of work without regard to performance or merit.
  - Microinequities undermine the effectiveness of the recipient.
  - Microinequities take up workplace time and energy and undermine interpersonal trust and relationships.
- Studies have found that over 71 percent of the workforce has experienced some form of workplace incivility or microinequity in the last five years. Incivility is evidenced by disrespectful behavior (Zauderer, 2002). What happened to these folks? According to this study:
- 28 percent lost work time avoiding the instigator of the incivility/microinequity.
  - 53 percent lost time worrying about the incident/future interactions.
  - 37 percent believed their commitment at work declined.
  - 22 percent have decreased their effort at work.
  - 10 percent decreased the amount of time that they spent at work
  - 12 percent actually changed jobs to avoid the instigator.

### How Can We Start to Mitigate our Hidden Biases and Limit our “Microinequities”?

So, what do you do about manag-

ing this unconscious, cave-selves? The first step is accepting that you DO have unconscious biases and become aware of the ones you specifically hold.

One of the best ways you can start to explore what unconscious biases you have is through Project Implicit, or the Implicit-Association Test (IAT). The IAT is a free online assessment that will measure the strength of your hidden bias between various groups. Check it out – in a safe and judgment-free way – see what hidden biases you may have. [implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/]

Second, share and discuss the concept of “unconscious bias” with others in your workplace. Share the Project Implicit website with them. Talk (if you’re comfortable) about what results you had on the site. Encourage co-workers to hold each other accountable when those unconscious biases turn into microinequities.

Third, look at the bigger picture within your workplace. What are the biases that exist within your organization, and how can you start to challenge them?

For example, look at your organization’s hiring practices. Does it tend to hire the same types of people or recruit from the same places? Are your marketing messages pretty non-inclusive? Think about your typical business practices and think as a team to ensure your collective unconscious biases aren’t impacting your business success.

So, we all harbor and exhibit unconscious bias to some extent. And that’s OK; that simply means we’re human. But it’s taking that step to identify which biases we have, take steps to “debias” ourselves, share that action with others, and really look at how we do business that is the key to change.

*Dr. Steve Yacovelli is owner and principal of TopDog Learning Group LLC, a learning and development, leadership, change management, and diversity and consulting firm based in Orlando, Florida. For more information visit topdoglearnign.biz.*





## NGCOA Members: You Now Have Exclusive Rates for Health Insurance. Get Your Free Quote by November 30th!

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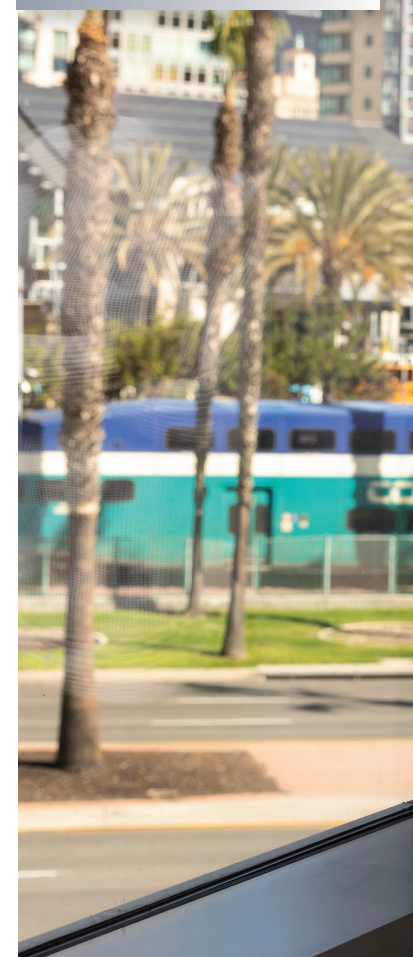
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## Final THOUGHTS

**Erika Mason**

Head Golf Professional  
Old Edwards Club  
Cashiers, North Carolina



### Since Old Edwards is more than a golf club, but also a resort and spa, does that change the demographics of your golfers?

We have a good mix of members and resort guests. The majority of our members are here seasonally, May-October, and the resort guests will stay anywhere from a night to a week.

### As part of a destination resort, what is the biggest travel trend impacting your business?

People are trending towards quick weekend getaways and two-to-three night stays instead of the traditional week-long vacation.

### With many of your golfers at Old Edwards for more than just golf, how do you package activities for guests?

We offer a variety of different golf packages. Packages are available for a single golfer, couples, wedding groups and corporate groups. We also offer spa and dining packages for those with a group who aren't interested in playing golf, but still want to enjoy the rest of what Old Edwards has to offer.

### What options do you offer for the non-golfer in the family visiting Old Edwards?

As mentioned above, we also offer spa and dining packages for the non-golfers.

### Marketing for a destination golf course is different than local courses. What has been your most successful marketing effort?

We market the facilities in a variety of different ways from the traditional print ads in magazines and billboards in some of our target markets like Atlanta and Charlotte. Also, over the past couple of years we've been more involved on social media sites like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

### Are there any unique activities you offer your golfers beyond traditional play?

We're really excited we're getting ready to open a new 12-hole, par 3 course next month. There's definitely been a movement in golf to make the game more enjoyable for people of all playing abilities. That includes making courses that are easier and quicker to play without sacrificing the experience of being out on the golf course, playing.





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#### Bar Harbor Golf Course Trenton, ME

18-hole open membership golf course on 180± acres on scenic Frenchman Bay in Bar Harbor. Clubhouse, two equipment storage buildings and golf carts convey. Contact Story Litchfield, LandVest, Inc., 207-276-3840, slitchfield@landvest.com

#### Creekside Plantation Golf Course Seymour, TN

63+/- acre 9 Hole Golf Course Par 35, 3295 Yards. Practice area includes Driving Range, Practice Green, Chipping Green. Bent Greens, Bermuda Fairways. 9000 sq.ft. Clubhouse with 25x50 swimming pool. \$1,595,000.00. Contact William Fox, 865-577-4653, creeksideplantationgolf@gmail.com.

#### Cleveland Country Club Shelby, NC

Just 40 minutes west of Charlotte, private, 1926 championship course with large southern style house with pool, tennis, etc. **JUST SOLD** for more. \$1,350,000. Possible lender financing available. Contact Brett at Miller Management Associates, Inc. 828-775-7765, brett@mmagolf.com.

#### Hazelden Country Club Brook, Indiana

Historic 18 holes built in 1910, country setting, 100 Acres, 10,000 Sqft Clubhouse, Restaurant/Bar, Apartment and house on property, turn-key opportunity \$925,000 mike@hazeldencountryclub.com 219-275-7771

#### Linville Falls Golf Club Linville, NC

BACK ON THE MARKET! Championship 18-hole layout designed by Lee Trevino with functional pro shop, grill, attached cart shed, driving range, Bent greens Bermuda fairways, with highway frontage on 221 to the tourist destinations of Boone, Banner Elk and Blowing Rock. OWNER FINANCING AVAILABLE, \$795,000 Contact Brett Miller at Miller Management Associates, brett@mmagolf.com, 828-775-7765.

#### Mount Mitchell Golf Club & Condos Burnsville, NC

LEGENDARY MOUNT MITCHELL GOLF CLUB AND CONDOS - One owner(almost 50 years) and first time on the market. This stunning mountain classic sits at the foot of the largest peak in the eastern US and has the beautiful Toe River trout stream flowing beside it and just off the Blue Ridge Parkway. Bent grass greens and fairways, this championship course has always been in the rankings and on

everyone's must play list. Clubhouse, restaurant, bar, grill, meeting room, 10 condos building site. Owner financing available. Call us for more information. \$3 Million. Miller Management Associates, Inc. Brett D. Miller, brett@mmagolf.com, 828 - 775-7765. In conjunction with Hilda Allen Real Estate.

#### New Listing Carolinas

Class facility in turn key condition by known architect. Beautiful clubhouse with dining and meeting facilities, bar, grill, pro shop, offices , perfect practice facility. PROFITABLE and in a great location that continues to grow with new commercial and residential. Contact Brett at Miller Management Associates, brett@mmagolf.com 828-775-7765.

#### Silver Creek Plantation Morganton, NC

Western North Carolina, 18 hole championship design, rolling terrain with Bermuda fairways and bent grass greens. Includes excellent clubhouse, NO deferred maintenance.

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#### Skyland Lakes Golf Club Fancy Gap, VA

Beautiful, rolling 18 hole course located ON the Blue Ridge Parkway near the VA/NC state line Includes pro shop, snack bar, rec room and 6 lodge rooms in clubhouse. Also, 39 lots included!! Separate maintenance facility, includes equipment. Great owner operator option and owner finance option available. Only \$750,000. Contact us for more information. Brett Miller at Miller Management Associates, brett@mmagolf.com; 828-775-7765 In conjunction with Hilda Allen Real Estate.

#### Swan Lake Resort and Conference Center Plymouth, Indiana

Swan Lake Resort and Conference Center, awarded the 2018 Indiana Golf Course of the Year in addition to being named the 2018 Midwest Region Golf Course of the Year, is available for purchase. A long-time favorite of Chicago Stay & Play golf groups, Swan Lake is unique in offering two 18 hole championship golf courses. Contact Kevin Smith, 574-935-5680 x 711, ksmith@swanlakeresort.com, www.swanlakeresort.com.

#### Waynesville Inn Resort and Spa Waynesville, NC

NEW LISTING: The iconic 1926 Waynesville Inn Resort and Spa. Located in the Blue Ridge Mountains just outside of Asheville, NC is this historic, 27 hole Donald Ross (first nine) player friendly course with 114 rooms, 6 meeting rooms, 2 restaurants, outdoor pavilion tent, spa and more. This facility has hosted Presidents, professionals, celebrities and guests from across the world. 144 gentle acres that have water, sewer, zoned R-1 grandfathered as commercial, so endless development possibilities. Additional acreage available. Proof of funds and CA required for private showing. \$10,000,000. Miller Management Associates, Inc. Contact Brett at 828-775-7765 or brett@mmagolf.com.



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Are you a current member of the National Golf Course Owners Association?

☐ Yes ☐ No

1) Do you wish to receive/continue to receive *Golf Business* FREE?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Signature  X  Date \_\_\_\_\_

2) Which one option best characterizes your organization? (check one only)

01 ☐ Golf Course Facility/Group of Facilities

02 ☐ Off-Course Golf Retailer

03 ☐ Golf Industry Manufacturer/Vendor/Distributor

04 ☐ Golf Course Consultant

3) What one option most closely matches your job function/title? (select one only)

01 ☐ President/CEO

02 ☐ Owner/Operator

03 ☐ Chairman of the Board

04 ☐ CFO/Financial Manager

05 ☐ General Manager

06 ☐ Club Manager

07 ☐ Director of Golf

08 ☐ Executive/National/Regional Director/Manager

09 ☐ Purchasing Manager/Buyer

10 ☐ Golf Professional

11 ☐ Golf Superintendent

12 ☐ Member, Board of Directors

13 ☐ Marketing/Sales Manager/Director

15 ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4) Which one best describes the nature of your organization? (select one only)

10 ☐ Private

11 ☐ Privately-Owned Daily Fee

12 ☐ Semi-Private

13 ☐ Resort

14 ☐ Municipal/State/County

16 ☐ Military

17 ☐ University/College

18 ☐ Driving Range/Practice Facility

20 ☐ Development Company

28 ☐ Golf Course Builder

21 ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

21 ☐ Not Applicable

5) Are you affiliated with a golf course management company?

01 ☐ yes 02 ☐ no

6) How many facilities, in total, are you personally responsible for?

80 ☐ less than 2

81 ☐ 2 - 4

82 ☐ 5 - 9

83 ☐ 10 or more

99 ☐ Not applicable

82 ☐ 5 - 9

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7) What is the average greens fee for a typical round of golf at your facility? If you work at multiple facilities, please indicate the average greens fee across all facilities.

01 ☐ nothing/private

02 ☐ o less than \$25

03 ☐ \$25 - \$49

04 ☐ \$50 - \$74

05 ☐ \$75 - \$99

06 ☐ \$100 - \$149

07 ☐ \$150 or more

08 ☐ not applicable

8) What is the total annual budget or expenditures for which you are responsible?

50 ☐ less than \$99,000

51 ☐ \$100,000 - \$249,000

52 ☐ \$250,000 - \$499,000

53 ☐ \$500,000 - \$999,000

54 ☐ \$1,000,000 - \$2,499,000

55 ☐ \$2,500,000 or more

9) In which ways are you personally involved in your organization's purchasing decisions?

60 ☐ Determine annual budget expenditures

61 ☐ Authorize final purchases

62 ☐ Determine needs of the operation

63 ☐ Specify/recommend vendors or suppliers

64 ☐ Specify/recommend specific brands

65 ☐ Evaluate brands for purchase

10) Which products/services listed below do you specify, recommend, buy or approve the purchase? (select all that apply)

A ☐ Golf Cars

B ☐ Turf Equipment

C ☐ Course Design/Construction/Renovation

D ☐ Irrigation & Drainage

E ☐ Chemicals, Fertilizer & Seed

G ☐ Clubhouse Design/Construction/Renovation

H ☐ Financial Services

T ☐ Legal Services

F ☐ Course Accessories

J ☐ Insurance

U ☐ Marketing Services

L ☐ Pro Shop Apparel

M ☐ Pro Shop Equipment

P ☐ Food & Beverage

R ☐ Computers/Technology

V ☐ Furniture/Fixtures

W ☐ Human Resources/Staffing

K ☐ Consulting

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News from the National Golf Course Owners Association

NGCOA In Action



# NGCOA In Action

## EVENTS



### REGISTER TODAY for Golf Business Conference 2020 Located at the PGA Merchandise Show January 20-22 at the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando

The Golf Business Conference (GBC) is the largest annual meeting of golf course owners and operators, and beginning this year will be located at the 2020 PGA Merchandise Show. GBC welcomes owners and operators of golf courses of every size and type to register now for this valuable and meaningful event, now in its 40th year.

GBC20 will be held at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando from January 20-22 (overlapping the PGA Merchandise Show, January 21-24). Your GBC20 full conference pass will include all GBC20 education and networking activities, PLUS full admission to the 2020 PGA Merchandise Show's extensive and impressive exhibition hall where approximately 1,000 leading golf companies and brands will take up nearly one million square feet of interactive exhibit, product demonstration and industry presentation space.

As in years past, Golf Business Conference will cast a bright spotlight on education and networking: multiple tracks comprised of 20+ expertly-led education sessions over 2 days; a pre-conference Master Class; the annual Yamaha Golf Outing; and the annual Celebration & Awards Dinner where NGCOA recognizes the most outstanding members and industry professionals of the past year. Learn more and register today at [golfbusinessconference.com](http://golfbusinessconference.com).

All GBC20 education sessions will be eligible for continuing education units (CEUs) for Professional Golfers Association of America (PGA), Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA), Club Management Association of America (CMAA), and Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA).



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## ADVOCACY



### Give Your Golf Business a Voice on Capitol Hill! Attend National Golf Day 2020

The golf industry will return to Capitol Hill on Wednesday, May 6, 2020 to celebrate the 13th annual National Golf Day. Coordinated by a coalition of the game's leading associations and industry partners under the banner of WE ARE GOLF, National Golf Day brings together more than 300 industry leaders from across the U.S. to support the game's \$84.1 billion economy, nearly \$4 billion annual charitable impact, close to 15,000 diverse businesses and two million jobs impacted.

At NGD19, golf industry leaders participated in a record-high 244 meetings with members of Congress representing 41 states to discuss the game's economic, social and environmental contributions to the United States during today's 12th annual National Golf Day on Capitol Hill.

The 2020 schedule of events is being finalized, but the annual Community Project will be held on Tuesday, May 5, so plan to arrive on Monday, May 4. We will share information as it becomes available. If you have questions, or would like to join other NGCOA members at this critical event, please email Ronnie Miles, NGCOA's Director of Advocacy at [rmiles@ngcoa.org](mailto:rmiles@ngcoa.org).



## AFFILIATE EVENTS



#### North Carolina Golf Course Owners Association

##### Annual Meeting

October 8-9  
Pine Needles Lodge and Golf Club  
Southern Pines, NC  
Contact David Norman, [dnorman008@gmail.com](mailto:dnorman008@gmail.com) or 804-708-9760



#### California Golf Course Owners Association

##### CGCOA Annual Meeting / GCSASC Election Meeting (Joint Meeting)

October 30  
The Ranch at Laguna Beach  
Laguna Beach, CA  
Contact [info@connerlyandassociates.com](mailto:info@connerlyandassociates.com) or 916-485-6361



#### Ohio Golf Course Owners Association

##### Buckeye Golf Association Annual Conference

November 4-5  
Embassy Suites/Muirfield Golf Club  
Dublin, OH  
Contact Ken Guenther at [keng@buckeyegolf.com](mailto:keng@buckeyegolf.com) or 614-563-5551



#### Midwest Golf Course Owners Association

##### 23rd Annual Conference and Trade Show

November 19  
Brackett's Crossing Golf Club  
Lakeville, MN  
Contact Curt Walker at [mwgcga@aol.com](mailto:mwgcga@aol.com) or 952-854-7272



#### Golf Course Owners of Wisconsin

##### GCOW Fall Meeting & Awards Luncheon

November 13  
Grand Geneva Resort  
Lake Geneva, WI  
Contact [jeffs@gcow.org](mailto:jeffs@gcow.org)



#### New England Golf Course Owners Association

##### Annual Meeting and Conference

November 21-22  
The International  
Bolton, MA  
Contact Elaine Gebhardt at [egebhardt@negcoa.org](mailto:egebhardt@negcoa.org) or 774-430-9031





# NGCOA In Action

## SMART BUY SPOTLIGHT



### The ORCA Report is Now the Benchmark Report

The ORCA Report, now the Benchmark Report under Sagacity Golf, has been an NGCOA Smart Buy Marketplace benefit since January 2016. NGCOA members receive 30%-50% off all reporting packages, as well as key performance indicator reports to improve data intelligence at the course.

Benchmark focuses on four Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Occupancy, Revenue per Available Round, Channel Mix, and Average Revenue per Round. It's the golf industry's only independent, trusted, confidential rounds and green fee revenue benchmarking platform utilized by over 800 courses nationwide.

The Benchmark report helps golf course owners and operators explain performance in the context of competitors, manage third-party barter relationships, and manage revenue forecasting and pricing.

For more information about this valuable member benefit please contact Dave Barton, NGCOA Director of Programs, at [dbarton@ngcoa.org](mailto:dbarton@ngcoa.org) and learn more at [sagacitygolf.com/products/benchmark](http://sagacitygolf.com/products/benchmark).

# Benchmark

By **SAGACITY GOLF**

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Visit [ngcoa.org/smartbuy](http://ngcoa.org/smartbuy) to discover how you can save money on products and services your course needs every day.

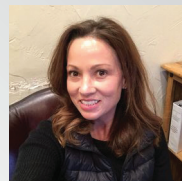


Through NGCOA's Smart Buy Marketplace and communicating with other members, I've saved on our credit card processing, labor, accounting, payroll system, and food and beverage purchasing.

Thanks!

**Sandra Weckerly**  
General Manager

Redlands Mesa Golf Club, Grand Junction, CO



**NGCOA Smart Buy Marketplace**



## COMMUNITY



### What are Other NGCOA Members Talking About on Accelerate?

Did you know there are Accelerate Members-Only Communities you can join, based on your interests, needs and engagement with NGCOA? **Visit [accelerate.ngcoa.org](http://accelerate.ngcoa.org) to read more about and add to the discussion of critical issues in golf business.**

- Accelerate (General) Community for all NGCOA members
- Supplier Community for NGCOA's Corporate Members
- Advocacy Issues & Alerts
- Golf Business TechCon and Golf Business Conference for event attendees
- Trading Post where members can buy and sell used equipment

Here is a sample of recent discussions; reply to these, or post your own for member feedback!

#### POS Systems

“ We are in the process of looking at a new POS system for 2020 and have narrowed it down to EZLinks, ForeUp, Chronogolf, and GolfNow. We'd like the pro and cons of anyone who uses any of these companies or have a recommendation on one of them versus the other(s). ”

#### On-Course Credit Card Processing

“ Am looking into an on-course credit card machine for my beverage cart. Any suggestions? Connectivity issues? ”

#### The Economics of Golf Leagues

“ Can you tell me what percentage of golf revenue (that is greens fees, carts) can be attributed to leagues? Can you also tell me if this is higher than it was 5 years ago? ”

### NEW! NGCOA Video Series



#### Part 3: How to Plan, Script and Distribute Your Videos

NGCOA and Momentum Video developed a three-part series to help you produce in-house videos that will increase customer excitement and engagement!

In the third and final episode, you'll learn how to develop a plan for producing and releasing videos, how to create scripts, and how to distribute your videos to get the best results.

View the series at <http://bit.ly/PlanScriptDistributeYourVideos>.

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# NGCOA In Action

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#### Irrigation Solutions

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#### New and Used Turf Maintenance Equipment

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