

# GB

GOLF BUSINESS

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STORY, HE'S LEARNED SOME  
LESSONS, AND TAUGHT A FEW.



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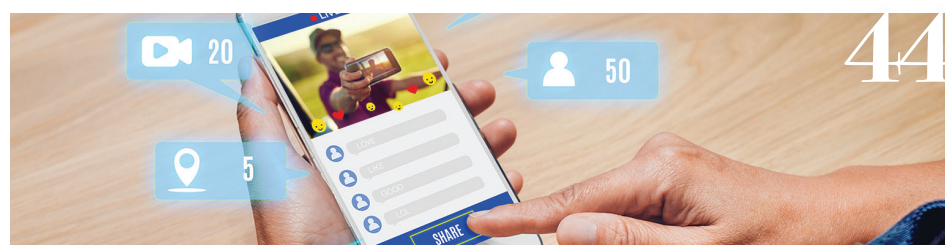
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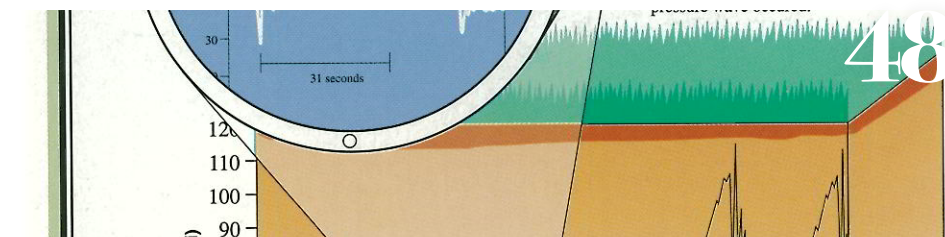
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## From the CEO Vantage Point

By Jay Karen  
CEO  
NGCOA  
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## No Crying Over Spoiled Milk

I'm going to throw a question out there that might seem counterintuitive to many of our readers. Should golf course operators learn to get comfortable with seeing holes on the tee sheet? My reason for asking the question is not due to some pessimistic outlook on the demand for golf. I'm far from Chicken Little when it comes to the possibilities for golf. Rather – and this is no surprise due to the recent merger of GOLFNOW and EZLinks – I've been spending a lot of time thinking about the woes and dangers of the barter economy in golf.

In my attempt to understand why so many operators agree to cede pricing control to OTTAs through their barter agreements, I keep going back to the fact that the dramatic rise in the bartered inventory happened simultaneously with the onset of the Great Recession. If 40 percent or more of tee times weren't being sold, while the weather forecast in our industry at the time was getting bleaker by the month, it's easy to see how course operators felt they could spare a tee time or two in exchange for some promised, robust services. A nagging discomfort with so much occupancy can underpin the decision to spare a bit of inventory that might spoil anyway. Discomfort with seeing empty spots on a tee sheet also causes many managers to look at price as the first lever to pull.

Even before the recession, the typical course always had tee times that spoiled. I would imagine one percent of one percent

of golf courses sell out nearly 100 percent of their available inventory. Highly rare, nay, I would say nearly mythical, is the restaurant that sells all tables, all the time, or the hotel that sells all rooms on all nights, or the airline that sells all seats on all flights on all days. And our natural instincts as business operators tell us to fill those empty tee times...fill those tables...fill those rooms...fill those seats...sometimes by any means neces-

## In the name of filling soft times, we often sacrifice brand and price integrity.

sary. In the name of filling soft times, we often sacrifice brand and price integrity.

I learned recently that a grocery store will trash or return to the producers the gallons and gallons of milk that reach their expiration dates on the shelf. Instead of lowering the price of milk that is about to expire in the next 48-72 hours, a grocer will let the milk "die." Grocers have gotten comfortable with letting some inventory simply expire, all in the name of price integrity. It's not even price "integrity" per se, but simply a pricing strategy that has proven to support a better bottom line for the grocers. They would rather let inventory go unsold than discount it and break the pricing model that works for them. We should take a lesson from this.

Should course operators get more comfortable with holes on the tee sheet? What do you think?

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## Addressing The Issues

By **Ronnie Miles**  
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## Farewell, 2019 — Hello, 2020

**H**appy New Year! Before we begin to look ahead, let's take a brief look back at 2019.

While the number of federal legislative bills impacting the golf industry was minimal during the 116th session, the administration made good on its promise to reverse two of the Obama administration policies. Rescinding the Overtime Rule and the WOTUS Rule were two critical policy actions that were welcomed by the golf industry.

The new overtime rule updates the earnings thresholds necessary to exempt executive, administrative or professional employees from the FLSA's minimum wage and overtime pay requirements, and allows employers to count a portion of certain bonuses (and commissions) towards meeting the salary level. Effective Jan. 1, 2020, the new minimum annual salary for exempt employees increased from \$23,660 to \$35,568.

One of the most controversial policy actions taken by this administration was to rescind and replace the 2015 Water of the United States (WOTUS) Rule. Members of the golf industry, through the WAG coalition, submitted our comments supporting the administration's proposed replacement rule:

"The golf industry appreciates the efforts of the EPA and Corps to create a definition of WOTUS that is not all-encompassing of water features and better defines which water features are subject to federal jurisdiction. This new rule will allow land managers and owners, like those in golf, the opportunity to do the right thing while achieving their goals. This newly proposed rule is a great step in the right direction that will help many entities in the U.S."

While numerous organizations have filed lawsuits challenging the new rule, we anticipate a final release in February.

That Washington has been relatively quiet does not mean our industry has not experienced political battles. As we have stated numerous times, some of the legislation with the most impact on our business does not have to come out of Washington, D.C.

The golf industry has always faced challenges from states and local taxing authorities attempting to create policies that unfairly tax golf and club properties. Cases in Maryland and New York were two most noted. Through the effort of industry members coalescing in their respective states, both were successful in preventing the passage of proposed taxing policy directed at the golf and club industry. But we know the sponsors of these targeted taxation policies will try again in 2020.

In California, they passed "AB-5 Worker status: employees and independent contractors." As written and signed into law, this bill severely limits golf courses' use of independent contractors and negatively impacts golf instruction professionals the flexibility they desire. A golf coalition, California Alliance for Golf (CAG), was formed and engaged with California legislators with a goal of making modifications to the law's language allowing continued use of independent contractors throughout the California golf industry.

We continue our support of the CAG and remain hopeful these changes will be realized in early 2020.

These are just some examples of the legislative and regulatory activity across the country that negatively impacts our industry. As an advocate for golf course owners and operators, NGCOA encourages readers to continue to follow these and other external influencers to your business's success or failure.



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## Coalition Concerns

By **Jared Williams**  
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## Speak Now Or Forever Hold Your Peace

**I**f you recall my last column, "Tee Time is Money," I revealed the state of Texas comptroller of public accounts had ruled against an online tee time agent for failing to pay taxes associated with barter tee times to the tune of \$1 million. Since then, I worked with the comptroller's office to find out which company, specifically, was the subject of this audit. The amount of this tax liability led us to believe this was a ruling against one of the larger online tee time agents, but the description of the vendor as Texas-based may have been a little misleading.

The company that must pay the penalty in this situation is GolfNow.

Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts' three-year audit of GolfNow resulted in an administrative law judge finding the OTTA was not entitled to a sales tax waiver on reservation fees because those taxes were never assessed.

GolfNow did not collect any sales tax on reservation fees from barter transactions that took place during the audit period (April 1, 2011 to September 30, 2014.)

So if you are a GolfNow client, now may be the perfect opportunity to ask them about this ruling and any changes they plan on making to this process going forward.

Speaking of changes. two have become one. The golf industry experienced a seismic shift in the online tee time space as GolfNow announced its acquisition of EZLinks/TeeOff.com.

For years, EZLinks has been the clear-cut No. 2 player in a space where GolfNow and EZLinks collectively controlled at least 75

percent of market share. GolfNow is certainly flexing its muscle in this acquisition.

Other companies have been put on notice, but it will be interesting to see how all of this turns out for both companies, their golf course clients and the industry in general. I imagine more details about this deal will be available in the coming months. EZLinks, as a software company, has successfully developed its own course management software and acquired a few software companies of its own. GolfNow, similarly, has tried to develop its own course management software, albeit with a few hiccups. But GolfNow has remedied this by continually acquiring other software companies.

This isn't unique to the golf industry, as many other software companies have been acquired, sold or are currently for sale. The sizeable market share that is the result of this acquisition is what makes this so remarkable. EZLinks CEO Gary Cohen had vowed to build EZLinks into a company that could and would eventually replace GolfNow as the number one OTTA/GMS in the industry. With this acquisition, that is no longer a possibility and GolfNow has an even stronger stranglehold.

But at the end of the day, the companies have to continue to work to deliver quality software and service to golf courses. If that doesn't happen, it doesn't matter how large the company is or how many courses it acquires. If the product doesn't meet the needs of its clients, there will be some defectors.

One thing I've learned in this industry is that quality always wins out over quantity. I'm anxious to see what becomes of this.

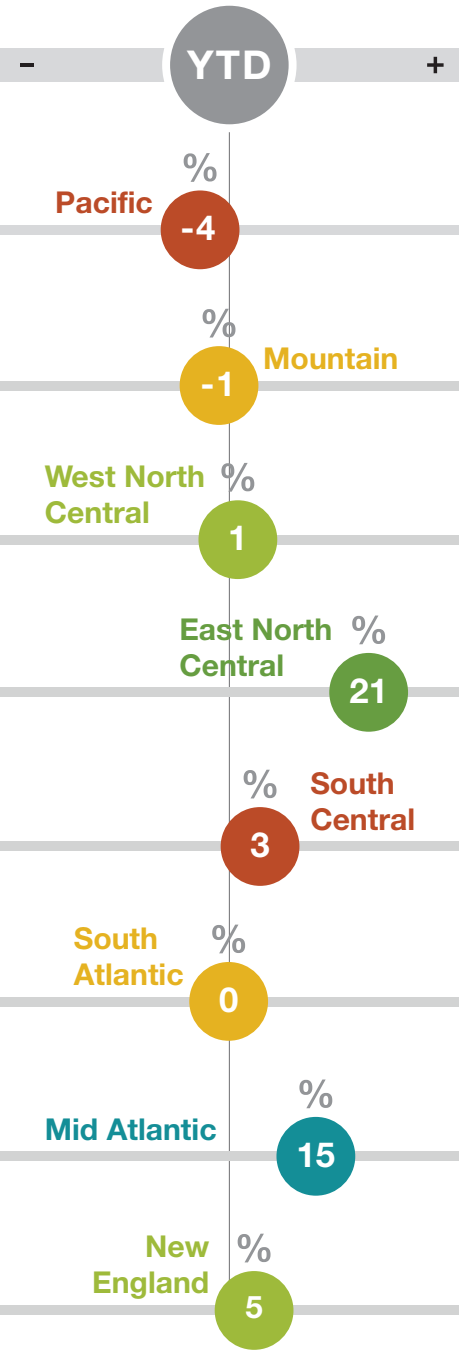
"If anyone sees any reason why these two should not be wed, let them speak now or forever hold their peace."

What are your initial reactions to this news? Please do not hesitate to contact me.

## Rounds Played

October 2019

Data percentage compared to same period last year.





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## Innovation Insights

BY SCOTT KAUFFMAN

### Secret Shoppers Get Tech Advantage

The secret shopper is getting more sophisticated. At least that's the case with 59club USA, a customer service-based management tool that officially made its North American debut a few months ago. Though 59club USA might be new, the namesake parent company – 59club – has been delivering sales analysis, benchmarking and employee training for 12 years in Europe. Since the growth of the internet, the company's services have become more innovative thanks to the power of cloud-based technology that allows 59club to utilize an endless stream of objective data points and images to measure, improve and ultimately help clients maintain custom-service standards.

And the age-old mystery shopper process is a perfect example of how 59club is leveraging the power of today's technology and 12 years of "industry input and experience under its belt," according to Mike Kelly, managing partner of 59club USA.

"What we've done is rather than just send somebody in to write down a long narrative about their opinion, every one of our shoppers goes in and benchmarks their experience against specific criteria developed for each portion of the operation over the last 12 years," explains Kelly, who has 30-plus years of upscale hotel and leisure club management experience. "So whoever our shopper is, opinion has very little room in what you're going to shop."

"Your job as a shopper for us is to benchmark the experience against the criteria we've established, and we have software on an app that does all of this for you. It sounds so easy but there's been millions of dollars spent on the software to make this happen."

After inputting findings to the cloud, everything is web-based and easily accessible for management to view and track

results versus the "long narrative form" of those shopping reports of old, Kelly says.

"Now, it's in a data format where they can see trends very quickly," Kelly adds. "After three, four or five shops, we're using the same set of criteria each time, so it doesn't matter who the mystery shopper was. With this consistency, you start to realize where you're really good in your operation and you start realizing where you're not so good."

The payback, according to 59club, is greater customer satisfaction, increased visitor and member retention and higher revenues. Indeed, in a competitive experiential economy, exceptional customer experiences have never been more critical to club or courses' long-term viability.

That might explain why 59club USA is already working with more than 30 North American golf and resort owner/operators, including 14 PGA Tour Tournament Players Club properties and Bobby Jones Links – a growing new golf management company.

The 59club was actually born out of a simple need by Simon Wordsworth, the former director of golf at The Belfry. Never one to rest on his Ryder Cup laurels, Wordsworth was keen on measuring his own guest service experiences and revenue streams, so he enlisted some of his fellow golf professional buddies to start secret shopping various aspects of his operations.

After a number of visits at The Belfry, and a tremendous amount of valuable actionable data collected along the way, Wordsworth's friends wanted it done at their clubs. What started as a side gig soon became a full-blown business with a couple of hundred European clubs using 59club services.

But it wasn't until a friend and high net-worth investor recognized the potential of Wordsworth's unique data rich services that 59club became global in scale.

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

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## THE START

NEWS & VIEWS TO PROPEL YOUR BUSINESS

### Protect Your Team

By David Gould

Off-Season Focus on Safety Pays Many Dividends

**T**his time of year is when course operators step back from day-to-day matters and conduct an overall reappraisal of business practices. One of the areas most worth addressing is safety and accident-avoidance, from one end of the property to another.

*Continued next page*

Sutee Nitakorn, PGA director of golf, Ka'anapali Golf Courses, takes a turn on a golf board. Safe usage of equipment on the course should be stressed by owners.

© 2020 Photos by Billy Casper Golf



Sandra Colareta, vice president of Risk Management for Billy Casper Golf, won the 2019 Chairman's Award.



Why make safety a priority? The reasons are multiple and interwoven. Study after study have shown that staff morale depends on your employees' belief that their workplace is a safe environment. When ownership puts strong emphasis on safe practices, it shows a concern for the wellbeing of workers and customers, meanwhile protecting the bottom line from financial losses associated with mishaps.

Consensus among experts is that programs for ensuring safe conditions should begin with a full-staff gathering to explore the subject. This by itself helps lift morale, for the obvious reason that workers value being listened to. Furthermore, even the most junior staff members are able to point out legitimate risks or hazards they have noticed, meaning everyone's voice gets heard.

A recent Gallup report showed

that high employee-engagement scores produced a dozen positive business results, and "reduction of safety incidents" was the most dramatic of them all: There were 70 per cent fewer of these costly incidents among businesses with high-engagement workers.

And "costly" is a key word here. Unsafe conditions can lead to missed work, large medical bills, lawsuits and other threats to profitability. Even when no incident occurs, your golf operation could find itself whacked with OSHA penalties ranging up to \$13,260 per offense when the inspectors come to visit.

"Good safety is good business," declares Bill Rehanek, senior vice president of operations for Billy Casper Golf. "Our company conducts annual safety audits of every property and we hold mandatory monthly safety

meetings, year-round. We have online courses our employees can take, and if a property is experiencing higher-than-average accident claims that property has to make a higher-than-average contribution to the annual coverage premium."

Even just talking about safety – in training sessions, via posters and in employee reviews or interviews – makes an impression with inspectors from the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Hazard Administration (OSHA). If you as an operator hold up your end of the bargain – developing policies, providing safety training and enforcing guidelines internally – even a fairly serious accident on your property may not bring reprisal. In other words, when an accident occurs despite management's concerted efforts to keep working conditions safe, OSHA can and will find fault with the

salaried or hourly employee whose negligence led to the event, and impose no fines on the employer.

Because golf operations involve many business segments – turf care, food and beverage, the driving range, on-course play, etc. – creating policy and procedures across the board can be daunting. Course maintenance alone is a complex safety-and-wellness proposition. Keeping tabs on the latest OSHA policies and best practices is an ongoing pursuit for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA), which regularly includes updates in its member publications. Your GCSAA-certified superintendent can and should be the key employee for safety in his or her department.

On the turf side of the business, there's also a for-profit company called Golf Safety that distributes safety-oriented materials and infor-



"A piece of turf equipment with no safety guard is quicker and easier to clean. A heavy object might get moved sooner if you don't have to find a fellow worker to make a team lift. Those are the shortcuts that might be tempting but in the end will cost you dearly."

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mation at no charge. These include a downloadable Poster of the Month, available on the golfsafety.com website, that comes in Spanish as well as English versions. Brief, to-the-point articles also are available on a regular basis, with titles like “15 Items That Should be In Your First Aid Kit” and “OSHA Violations – Who’s Fault Is It?”

While the superintendent should spearhead turf-related safety and your chef should do the same for food safety, training and motivating the whole staff is the best practice. A golf operation that’s serious about its “culture of safety” will respond to a kitchen worker who wants a promotion by assigning him to view and summarize the most recent food safety and inspection streaming videos available from the federal government’s Food Safety and Inspection Service. Requiring a step like this links safety to advancement in every team member’s mind.

Likewise, the assistant golf professional, who is primed to become first assistant, could be required to gain safety expertise via a no-charge American Red Cross course in first aid, CPR or use of an AED (automated external defibrillator). Associating raises and promotions with improved safety skills is a cornerstone of safety culture within an organization.

Whenever management wishes to develop high awareness of a company value, there’s the carrot-stick option of rewarding desired behavior or punishing undesired behavior. The safety-culture experts tend to favor positive reinforcement, but they see value in basically token penalties for slip-ups. One example is the \$1 fine jar for failure to comply with PPE (personal protective equipment) guidelines. So running a leaf blower without ear plugs or performing club repair without a pair of goggles on would require contributing to the jar.

“Part of educating the workforce is acknowledging that many tasks can be done more quickly if the safety factor is skipped over,” says Rehanek. “A piece of turf equipment with no safety guard is quicker and easier to clean. A heavy object might get moved sooner if you don’t have to find a fellow worker to make a team lift. Those are the shortcuts that might be tempting but in the end will cost you dearly.”

The best way to get started on a true safety culture is to understand that the same level of detail that makes your product and service excel is what’s needed to prevent unwanted calamities. And keep in mind that “safety first” is the one directive to employees that provides them peace of mind about coming to work each day. **TB**

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



# Themed Menus Build Sense Of Community

BY STEVE EUBANKS

**T**he term “overchoice” was coined by Alvin Toffler in his 1970 book *Future Shock*, which described the detrimental effects of too much change in too short a time frame. Toffler wrote about the anxiety and psychological paralysis of having too many choices. He had no idea what the next 50 years would bring, especially with the advent of the internet. But he did get the broad concept of overchoice correct. Do you get your diet-cafeine-free soda plain or with cherry, vanilla, orange, raspberry, sweet cream, mango, tangerine or lime flavoring? How do you choose from the 100 Cabernets with a 90 or above rating? Which shows do you binge-watch next when you have 2,000 options on various streaming services? The process can be maddening.

Club operators might not use the term “overchoice,” but they know the concept better than most, especially when it comes to food and beverage. Specialty restaurants have become ubiquitous, even in smaller markets. Whether it’s Westchester, New York or Windermere, Florida, the options and turnover rate in the food industry, make it possible for a person to eat every meal in a different restaurant without ever going to the same place twice.

In order for clubs to compete, operators have to offer more than standard post-round sandwiches and beer. They need to develop a sense of community within the club, something that goes beyond just menu items. To borrow from the old television show “Cheers,” people want to go where everybody knows their name.



Themes are a great way to start.

“We create themes around golf events and adjust that to the audience we expect to be at the club on any given day,” said Jason Trujillo, the executive chef at Santa Lucia Preserve, a private club just a few miles inland from Pebble Beach, California. “Like for the men’s golf day, we have cooked pigs outside in the ground, just to give them a feeling that they’re out with a group of friends, something different that they can’t find anywhere else.”

The concept is the antithesis of elaborate. Trujillo and his staff dig holes in the dirt and build fires with mesquite. Then they wrap a pig in native fronds and bury it in the ashes and embers. Between 12 and 20 hours later (depending on the size of the pig) they pull it up and have it ready to serve as players come off the course.

“We are there to cut and serve it, which is about the only difference between what we do and the traditional ‘pig pulls’ that you had in the old days,” Trujillo said. “Neighbors used to come together and roast pigs like this. And then all the families would come over for a meal. We’re trying to recreate that same feeling.”

The themed menu concept doesn’t necessarily have to coincide with an event. At Boot Ranch in Fredericksburg, Texas, executive chef Casey McQueen rotates Thursday-night themes. The club then markets those events to the membership early in the week, generating buzz about the theme for the week. A “Texas Barbecue Night” includes brisket, fried chicken, trout, corn chowder and okra and beans. And a “Comfort Food Night” includes fried catfish, black-eyed peas, cheese grits and greens.

“The results are huge,” said Barbara Koenig, marketing director at Boot Ranch. “(We have) a full dining room (60-80 guests) on Thursdays, which used to be dead. Year-over-year F&B revenue is up 12%.”

“It’s not just golfers and it’s not just men,” Trujillo said about designing themes to create a sense of community. “We know that the ladies at this club have a lot of options so we create specialized menus that cater to them. Fruits, salads, lighter items that have a broad appeal to the women here. It’s been a huge success, not because they can’t get those same items elsewhere but because we build events around those menus, around belonging at Santa Lucia Preserve. It’s part of the community.”

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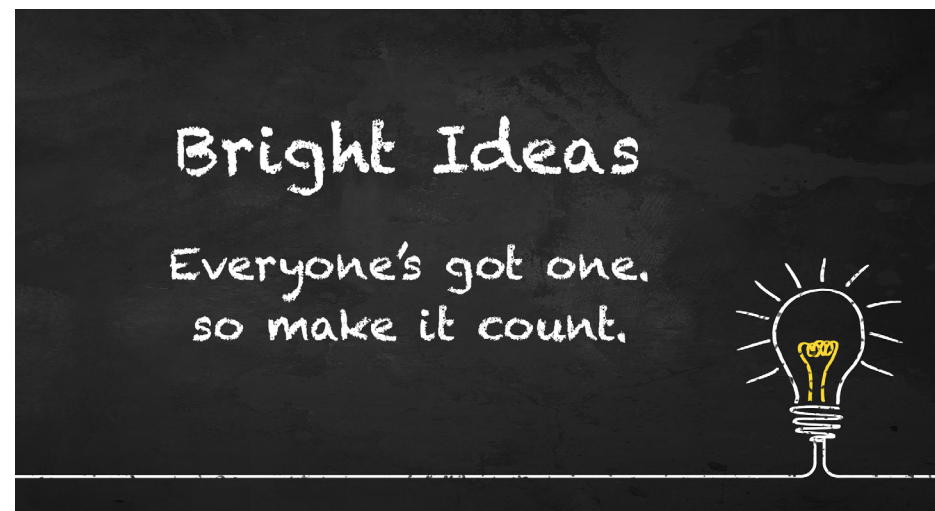


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### **GBC20 this month**

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### **Golf & AI**

If you missed this feature from the December edition of Golf Business magazine, check online at [golfbusiness.com](https://golfbusiness.com) to learn about understanding golf mechanics with artificial intelligence.



## Athleisure Trend Breaking Traditional Golf Molds

BY STEVE EUBANKS

**I**n the old days (which, in many cases, was not too many days ago), you couldn't walk to the first tee wearing leggings, sweatshirts or other athletic or leisure clothing because it violated the club's dress code. Slacks, collared shirts, skirts or shorts of a certain length (along with a few mid-thigh dresses that covered the shoulders and back) along with socks of a civilized height were considered acceptable golf attire. Anything else earned you a harsh rebuke and plenty of down-the-nose stares.

Now, athleisure wear – a new term that melds the words athletic and leisure – is the most popular category in the many mid- to high-end golf shops.

“Club shops, whether it's golf shops, tennis shops and, as we're finding now, one retail outlet at a club for all activities – golf, tennis, pickleball, swimming or the gym – they're mirroring what you're seeing in society,” said Karen Gleason, the founder and CEO of Glove It, a Scottsdale, Arizona, supplier of golf and racquet apparel and accessories. “We have a leisure lifestyle now. Women live in leggings. It used to be that they would never wear them outside the gym but you see them in clubhouses and restaurants now, even in the airport. We in golf need to listen to what everyone is asking for. People want something that's functional and crosses over into different lifestyles and activities.”

The trend started at resorts where golf shops transformed into sports shops for everything from swimsuits to logoed tennis bags to multipurpose athletic shoes. Now, private and public golf courses are realizing that



Arcis Golf shops have brought in more styles of athletic wear.

combining shops and adding multi-use athletic wear not only cuts down on labor, but it also increases the retail dollars generated per square foot.

“You have to look at what is happening in the retail world across the board, not just in golf,” said Linda Garland, the national retail manager for Arcis Golf. “People are wearing athleisure for all aspects of their lives. Making it conveniently available in the golf shop just makes sense. At a private club, for example, there are social or fitness members who may not play golf but we have created a reason for them to buy from our retail shops.

“We have numerous lifestyle amenities and activities for our members and guests,” Garland said. “So we've expanded our retail selection to more than just traditional golf products. This trend transcends gender and age. The market is both men and women with a broad age range.”

One of the lines Garland has added at Arcis is lululemon, which offers casual, athletic wear – the kind that, in the past, you would see at a high school football game, not a golf club.

“We have a great digital marketing platform and on-site activation that allows us to alert our membership when a new line like lululemon is arriving in the stores,” Garland said. “From there, word-of-mouth spreads very quickly around the clubs. In fact, several traditional golf manufacturers – adidas, Nike, FootJoy – now have offerings in the athleisure niche.”

“We're bucking the system,” Gleason said. “We're pushing the envelope and showing a little style, not just your typical country club standards. But you have to do that. If a member can do multiple things at the club without changing, that can't be bad. It keeps them at the club longer. And it makes it easier for younger people, millennials, to partake and enjoy the club. There is a lot of crossover.”

Whether it's pickleball bags next to Titleist balls or a rack with leggings next to the TaylorMade caps, clubs are having to rebrand their golf shops as something above and beyond golf. Customers demand it. And retail success turns on it.”



Kevin Baker is Kingwood International corporate director of golf and membership, who manages Reunion Resort & Golf Club in Kissimmee, Florida.

“We now  
are going  
aggressively  
to the local  
market,  
especially  
in summer.”

-KEVIN BAKER

© 2012 Photos by Gregory Griffith

# Orlando Links Abound

The City’s ‘Other’ Attraction Thrives

BY SALLY J. SPORTSMAN



While much of Florida has been a golf magnet through the years, Orlando endures as a resort destination of choice for many golfing groups and families. There is plenty of good, year-round golf to be found at resorts in and around the growing city. Like the ever-expanding theme park attractions, golf resorts in Central Florida are amplifying their features and amenities, drawing new and repeat guests to their facilities. Reunion Resort & Golf Club in Kissimmee, just outside Orlando, is a prime example. Reunion’s three golf courses, signature designs by three of golf’s all-time





greats – Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer and Tom Watson – offer varying styles and difficulty, so golfers can choose the playing experiences they prefer during their stay. An array of new amenities is drawing guests from around the country and the world.

“We recently got into multi-passenger golf carts for guests to drive around the community, allowing internal access without depending on cars. It’s a fun thing for families and groups to do and it’s a good revenue source for us,” says Kevin Baker, Kingwood International corporate director of golf & membership, who manages Reunion.

Of Reunion resort guests, Baker says, an average of 20 percent play golf, a figure that rises to 40 percent in the winter. One key amenity involves players’ golf clubs when shipped to the resort.

“We have them ready for you when you come in,” says Baker, “and you never have to touch them the rest of your stay. You’ll find them on the golf cart at the next course you plan to play.”

Rounds at Reunion have remained steady, according to Baker: 95,000 in 2019. The three courses are nearly always at capacity, so the focus is on getting travelers to stay longer for other pleasures, too, beyond golf.

Summer is a downtime for golf at Reunion, as is the case throughout Florida.

“We now are going aggressively to the local market, especially in summer,” Baker says. “When Florida courses close for renovation, we have a ‘golf escape maintenance’ program, inviting golfers to come stay at Reunion for a few days of golf and fun.”

There was a 5-7 percent increase in the number of local and regional golfers who came to Reunion in 2018, according

to Baker. The goal for 2020 is to increase summer business by 10-15 percent as a result of this program. During summers, Baker says, 75 percent of Reunion golfing guests are regional, mostly from Florida and Georgia, and 25 percent are from abroad, mostly the United Kingdom, Brazil and Iceland.

To continue drawing new golfers and repeat guests, an 18-hole mini putt-putt course, lit for night play, will open at Reunion in January, a “player’s course” with long holes and plenty of challenge.

Arnold Palmer’s Bay Hill Club & Lodge, a classic Orlando golf resort, also is making changes. On many golfers’ bucket lists, it is home to the Arnold Palmer Invitational Presented by MasterCard, a PGA Tour event, founded in 1979, which will be contested March 5-8, 2020. Visiting a resort that plays host to a professional tournament is a special lure to golfers, who enjoy “walking in the footsteps of legends.” Since Arnold Palmer’s passing in 2016, Bay Hill has embraced the idea of keeping his memory alive while continuing the level of excellence he called for and expected.

“Arnold Palmer is with us every day in how we treat our guests and the relationships we build,” says Don Emery, president and general manager of Bay Hill. “We consider our club and lodge business one of those relationships.

“We are constantly reinvesting. In 2018, we built a 2½-acre short game area, a new driving range and a new irrigation system on our championship golf course.”

More than 90 percent of Bay Hill guests are golfers. The resort features three 9-hole courses: the Challenger and Champion, which combined host the Invitational, and the Charger.

## DESTINATIONS

Palmer, who owned Bay Hill since 1974, occasionally greeted visitors personally, a touch that many returning guests remember with nostalgia and pride. All staff members at Bay Hill, many who knew Palmer, receive ongoing training so they can interact with visitors, relate resort history and tell stories about Palmer.

“We’ve had an increase of almost 8 percent in people wanting to stay at the lodge during 2018 and 2019, despite the competitive Orlando landscape,” Emery says. “With our 70 lodge rooms, the scale of Bay Hill is small enough that personalized experience works.”

Many people who attend conventions in Orlando choose to stay at Bay Hill. Reaching out to convention attendees is a smart strategy for resorts, suggests Emery.

Buddy groups visiting Bay Hill usually number 12-16 in size. Business groups – the resort’s “sweet spot” – usually number 30 to 50 people. Some visitors request off-site experiences, which Bay Hill is glad to arrange, such as guided fishing trips.

One new initiative, introduced last summer with a limited number of spots through mid-January, is “Perfectly Palmer.” It includes a two-night stay, a round of golf on the championship course with lunch at the halfway house, daily breakfast and custom amenities curated for participants, including a keepsake gift of official Arnold Palmer merchandise and a special rate on shipping golf clubs to the site.

Facility upgrades are also part of what’s new at Bay Hill.

“This winter we have been working on our lodge with exterior work,” Emery says, “and all of our rooms are being renovated over the next two years.

Many other Orlando-area golf resort destinations also are implementing changes, upgrades and new guest amenities. There’s always something new in Orlando golf.

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

## Boar’s Head Resort Enters New Era of Golf

By Sally J. Sportsman

The historic Boar’s Head Resort in Charlottesville, Virginia, is writing a new chapter in its story. Owned

and operated by the University of Virginia Foundation, the resort, which traces its roots back to Thomas Jefferson, has launched a redesign of its Birdwood Golf Course. The project is part of a multiyear improvement plan for Boar’s Head Resort, the University’s golf team facilities and the Birdwood Mansion.

“Work on the golf course started officially in August of 2018 on land that previously had no golf holes on it,” says Russ Cronberg, general manager of Boar’s Head Resort. “The reimagined 18-hole Birdwood golf course is expected to open this summer or earlier, based on turf conditions.

“Everyone looks forward to playing the new course.”

Located at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Boar’s Head Resort, a member of the Historic Hotels of America, is in close proximity to the University of Virginia campus. Birdwood Golf Course, home to the University’s men’s and women’s golf teams, is open to Boar’s Head guests and the public. The close working partnership between the resort and the university includes shared athletics facilities and special rates for university students, employees and alumni.

“We are not a typical destination resort course,” Cronberg says. “We want to play a role in the local community as much as we can.

“We cherish our role as a resort, but we have to figure out the balancing act of number of



rounds allotted to resort guests.”

The golf course project consists of constructing a new layout on the site of the existing one. Extra property behind the resort, also owned by the foundation, allowed for relocation of some golf holes. The new par-71 course, with six sets of tees, will play to approximately 4,000 to 7,200 yards. Love Golf Design has undertaken the golf course redesign; the firm was founded by PGA Tour player Davis Love III and his brother Mark.

“Very few holes on the new golf course will be played in the same vein as before without alteration,” says Martin Winters, director of golf at the resort. “It is essentially a new golf course; it’s hard to categorize it as a renovation.

“A handful of holes are in the same corridor as before, going in the same direction, but the majority of them are in a new routing.”

The impetus for the major golf course alterations was related to some infrastructure issues, according to Winters, such as the need to refurbish greens, perform extensive irrigation work and clear some invasive tree species.

“We had \$5 million of work we needed to do,” Winters says, “so we decided to make it a full-scale change, to elevate the golf facilities to the same caliber as the rest of the resort.”

The driving range also has been renovated and is now open, with a reduction in elevation for more accurate ball flight readings. A new chipping green accommodates a higher volume of golfers, and the new bunker design allows players to practice long shots into the driving range.

There also will be a new, six-hole par-3 course and a putting course, aimed at the resort business, says Winters, to draw golfers and increase rounds. New state-of-the-art golf carts have been ordered, and an improved level of personal service is planned for golfers. Another amenity is a new indoor swing studio inside the sports club, offering instruction, training or virtual play.

The resort itself was closed for renovation for 15 months, including the main lobby, signature restaurant and 35 of the 168 guest rooms. A temporary front desk location was used, and the sports club served as the restaurant during that time. The resort saw only a three percent reduction in occupancy during the closing.

“We were transparent and forthcoming,” Winters says, “and were able to make 90 percent of our resort guests happy, with reduced room rates and other considerations. We didn’t lay off any staff.”

The cost of the new golf course will be just under \$15 million, according to Winters. Funding came from a variety of sources: deferred maintenance reserves, philanthropy and ownership at the UVA Foundation. The resort renovation will come in at about \$16 million, funded completely through capital reserves, cash flows from operations and ownership at the UVA Foundation. No bank loans were secured.

One special part of the entire renovation project is the new Boar’s Head Drive, an internal connecting road that means resort guests no longer have to take the highway to get to the golf course. They can drive their golf carts throughout the resort.

“Boar’s Head Drive reinforces our brand, with the message that we are one property, together,” says Winters.



# ‘Course Within a Course’ Opens at Mission Inn Resort & Club

BY SALLY J. SPORTSMAN



Mission Inn Resort & Club in Howey-in-the-Hills, Florida.

The adage “Don’t do business with family” certainly doesn’t apply at Mission Inn Resort & Club in Howey-in-the-Hills, Florida. Three generations of the Beucher family continue to harmonize in pre-serving and expanding the venerable year-round resort, located about 40 miles northwest of Orlando. The latest example of the family’s vision is El Dorado, an 18-hole executive, or short, golf course that opened last fall and was created by placing additional tees within the already-existing Las Colinas golf course. El Dorado already has proven a success with resort guests and members.

“We listened to our customers,” says Bud Beucher, co-owner, vice president and general manager of Mission Inn. “They were telling us that as they age, the passage of time and sports injuries are forcing them to make the decision to give up the game.”

“We decided that by creating an executive golf course on property, we could provide them with the chance to continue playing. We’ve also found that it gives guests an opportunity to play an additional 18 holes, after playing our two full-length courses, without the stress,

pressure and time of a full-on championship golf experience.”

Many golf resorts are constructing executive courses to complement their championship layouts. Most of the short courses are built completely separately from the existing courses. El Dorado at Mission Inn is an exception. Placing new tee boxes within the already-existing 18 holes of the Las Colinas golf course formed the new option. Golf course superintendent Danny Parks oversaw the work.

“We wanted to make sure that guests would have a playing experience on El Dorado that would be enjoyable, have some level of challenge to it and be safe,” Beucher says.

When contemplating how to build El Dorado, according to Beucher, the family considered creating it on separate ground, but ultimately decided to place it within the confines of Las Colinas.

“We are conservative people,” Beucher says, “and the decision was easily made. Let’s put our toe in the water first, we thought. Let’s build these tees first and see what the reaction is. If possible, we can go the next step and build (a separate) nine or 18 holes. We have 1,000 acres here.”

The El Dorado executive course cost

about \$50,000 to build, says Beucher, including materials and labor: moving some sprinkler heads, dirt and sod; adding yard-age markers; and printing scorecards.

The par-58 executive course, which plays to 3,063 yards and has its own scorecard, is popular with a variety of resort guests, including juniors, seniors, hickory club players, families, corporate outings, charity fundraising groups and golfers seeking quick-game options. As guests play El Dorado’s 14 par-3 holes and four par-4 holes, they enjoy the rolling hills of Las Colinas, a feature that’s rather rare in Florida. Green fees to play El Dorado vary by time of day and day of the week.

So far, Beucher says, all signs are positive.

“We don’t have any separate measure for revenue; it’s intuitive based on the pro shop experience,” Beucher says. “We think we will get incremental gains.”

Beucher notes that 50 percent of Mission Inn resort guests are repeat visitors and 25 percent are referrals. He anticipates that the new executive course will help enhance these numbers. Resort guests enjoy taking lessons at the facility’s golf schools, and El Dorado will be a good tool for playing lessons.

Rounds played at the resort increased during 2018, with the trend expected to continue.

“We saw a 17.8 percent increase in the number of rounds played during the first half of 2018,” Beucher says. “By projection, if we pick up three or four percent more as a result of El Dorado, that’s a lot of rounds.”

**“They were telling us that as they age, the passage of time and sports injuries are forcing them to make the decision to give up the game.”**

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Golf course ownership and management often results in spending too much time with administrative responsibilities, leaving less time to interact with customers and grow your business. NGCOA partners with industry-leading companies that can save you money and reduce office tasks and effort—so you can focus on building your golf business—and have one point of contact for each partner.



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Claude Pardue has become one of the most successful owners in the Myrtle Beach area with The Witch, Man O' War and the Wizard.

“A lot of people are searching for that magic pill that will save them.”

- CLAUDE PARDUE



© 2012 Photos by Kathy Strauss



BY STEVE EUBANKS

# Going Green

Claude Pardue Goes Old-School, Overseeding To Bring In Business

S

ometimes going back to what worked in the past is the right formula for the present and the future.

When Claude Pardue, who began his professional career working in his grandfather’s financial services firm in North Carolina, decided to get into the golf business, he took a risk by making a big investment in winter conditioning.

“I was intrigued with the golf industry because I saw a business that had millions of customers, but wasn’t run very professionally,” Pardue said about the golf industry in the early 1980s. “So, a partner and I bought a golf course in Southern Pines, North Carolina,



## “I regret cutting back on the rye after 2008 and I’m glad we have it back.”

- CLAUDE PARDUE

called Highland Hills, in 1984. It had a lot of foot traffic so I knew people liked it. You don’t want to buy a course that has no traffic because that means the market doesn’t like it, doesn’t want to play it. But (Highland Hills) only grossed about a half a million dollars a year. I knew we needed to separate ourselves in a crowded market, so the first thing I did was invest in (overseeding) with rye wall-to-wall (in the winter). Nobody in Pinehurst was doing that in the early ’80s. I thought it was the only thing that would take a course on the low end of the market and make customers say, ‘Wow, this is the nicest golf course here.’

“We covered the whole course, tees, fairways and roughs (in the winter), in rye. Within six years we were grossing \$1.75 million. That’s how much the customer likes that look. That’s where I learned about the popularity of doing it.”

Pardue sold his Southern Pines property in 1999, but has become one of the most successful owners in the Myrtle Beach area with The Witch, Man O’ War and The Wizard. And just as he did 35 years ago, he has separated himself by promising his customers green grass year round.

“We’re laying rye wall-to-wall,” Pardue said. “Our basic grass is Bermuda and it goes dormant in the winter. So in the Carolinas, Georgia, Alabama and throughout most of the South, golf courses go brown in the winter.

“For years resort golf courses have not ryed at all or if they did, they put rye down on tees and fairways only and let the roughs go brown. We did that too, going to tees and fairways only after

(the recession of) 2008 and the dramatic impact it had on the golf business. It seemed like an easy expense to cut.”

Pardue said, in hindsight, that was a mistake.

“I regret cutting back on the rye after 2008 and I’m glad we have it back,” he said. “When things get bad, you have to be better for your customer, not worse. Too many people in our industry, when the economy went south and they were looking for expenses to cut, they made cuts in maintenance. That was a huge mistake. It’s far more important to do what your customer wants.

“When you see the Masters, as most amateur golfers do, it’s unbelievably green not because the weather is different at Augusta National than it is in the rest of the South but because they put down tons and tons of rye. We have decided to make the investment so that when a customer comes down here in January, February or March, he will see total green just like he would if he went to Augusta National over the winter.”

It’s not a small investment. Not only is rye seed expensive, it is an annual plant. Once it dies in the summer, it’s gone forever. Plus, you have to fertilize, water and mow it. So labor, chemicals, water and equipment maintenance cost more in the winter. It’s easy for an owner to justify doing away with rye or, as an alternative, painting dormant Bermuda green in an attempt to keep costs down.

“We do not and have never believed in painting,” Pardue said. “It’s a quality issue. We believe in spending the money for that customer experience. Plus, we’re in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. My busiest time is from the first of February until the middle of April. That’s when customers come here from all over the world and pay my highest rate. If I was at a public course around Atlanta that was going to be dead regardless, I’d probably save the money and not do it.”

In addition to cost, the arguments against overseeding include how wet and soft overseeding makes a golf course – winter players want the ball to roll on firm, dormant Bermuda – and there is a

transition period when the rye dies and the Bermuda hasn’t filled in. Courses in June might look sparse because the Bermuda has been competing with the rye for sunshine and nutrients.

Pardue doesn’t say “poppycock” out loud, but he dismisses both of these arguments as complete nonsense.

“Pros might like the tight lies they get from dormant Bermuda but amateurs want a lush playing surface,” he said. “As for the transition argument, that’s a complete fallacy. If you remember two years ago when a lot of people were painting their greens, there was a tremendous amount of winterkill. But we had no problem because overseeding is like covering Bermuda with a blanket, only better. Frozen moisture is what kills Bermuda. The (overseed on our greens) was sucking up the water during the winter because it needed water to live just like any plant. So I would argue that you’re better off overseeding than not.

“When you get to the middle of June, you might have seven days when it’s a little thin, but the Bermuda is growing so fast that you shouldn’t have problems for more than a week. As for fairways and rough, I’ve never had a customer complain about the transition when the rye dies out in the summer.

“Those excuses are all made because owners don’t want to spend the money.”

It’s not as though Pardue spends over and above most operators. He is as frugal as anyone. He just has different priorities.

“A point of sale system isn’t going to get me more customers,” he said. “I have a customer database of 20,000 customers that we email. But I find that most of those (point-of-sale) systems slow down customer service. I can buy a computer register for \$1,500 that does everything I need. People are selling point-of-sale systems for \$15,000 a year.

“I don’t get it. Do something else. Fix your traps, repave your cart paths. Do something that your customers will see and enjoy.” **TE**

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



## Wynn Melds OLD WITH NEW

By Steve Eubanks

A lot of owners believe that the key to effective marketing is to always present your course as new and fresh. Come see the new bunkers or check out the new tee box, which totally changes the strategy of the hole – that sort of thing. But a lot of times the best way to advance what’s new is to stay rooted in the history of the land.

Pinehurst does this better than most. No matter what renovations take place – and the courses there have undergone everything from mild facelifts to massive redevelopment – resort owners will never let you forget the venerable history of the place. Donald Ross abounds, even at courses he wouldn’t recognize. The owners even named their newest short course “The Cradle,” a nod to Pinehurst being the spot where American golf climbed out of the crib and learned to walk.

Another example of this “old is new” thinking can be found at the newly opened Wynn Golf Club behind the eponymously-named casino hotel on the Las Vegas strip. The Wynn sits on the site of the old Desert Inn and the Wynn Golf Club is where the old Desert Inn Golf and Country Club used to be. That original course hosted both the PGA and LPGA tours and was a playground for Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Bob Hope, Buddy Hackett and a slew of other celebrities in the finger-snapping, tuxedo-wearing heyday of the desert city.

Back then the Desert Inn was at the far end of the strip, a mile

and a half from Caesars Palace but at the edge of the world in Vegas terms. Even in the days when the PGA Tour held its Tournament of Champions there (1953-1966) and the LPGA put on the Desert Inn Classic in the 1970s (JoAnne Carner and Sandra Palmer both won that one), the course was an oasis in the middle of a rattlesnake habitat.

Now, a monorail runs along a couple of holes on the front nine and the 16th tee sits next to the newest 12,000-seat entertainment complex going in on the Strip.

“If you look at the comps, this golf course sits on a billion-dollar piece of property,” said Brian Hawthorne, executive director of golf operations.

The new course was designed by Tom Fazio and bears no resemblance to the old Desert Inn G&CC. But that hasn’t stopped the folks at Wynn from capitalizing on the history. Photos of Sam Snead and Ben Hogan line the hallways near the locker room, as well as shots of Bob Hope, Dean Martin and a slender and young Jack Nicklaus wearing Sansabelt slacks and leather golf shoes.

“It was such a great environment and a great setting,” Fazio said. “And personally for me, some of the great memories in creating it, because I go back to in my career, my uncle (George Fazio) was a tournament golfer in the Ben Hogan and Sam Snead era. So all those players that played on that original golf course on that property, the old Desert Inn, I knew many of them personally. Although I was a youngster, I knew them.

“I’m sure there are people who remember the old Desert Inn, remember the old buildings inside and the old casinos and the hallways and lobbies and kind of had some feelings of nostalgia,” Fazio said. “They liked it and they felt good.”

The Wynn Casino looks nothing like the old Desert Inn, a cylindrical obelisk jutting out of the desert like a squatty thermos bottle. And the new golf course looks nothing like the old. There’s even a giant waterfall behind the 18th green, a reminder that with house money, anything is possible.

But the connection between old and new is conspicuous and played to the hilt. And why shouldn’t it be? Nostalgia sells. And in a tradition-rich game like golf, if you have it, use it.



# Designers Adapting To Golf's New Reality

By Steve Eubanks

Jack Nicklaus says, "I see a lot of things different. I see the way the game is played as you get older."



cheated a little bit, given myself a few putts and got myself a handicap. I'm about a 6 now. And as you get older and don't play as much, you realize what a humbling game it is. People of all walks of life and all skill levels want to play. As an architect, you want them to enjoy it."

He is among a growing list of architects who are revamping their older designs in an attempt to soften the game for an older population.

As owners enter the new year with goals for increasing business, softening your golf course should be somewhere near the top of the list.

"Why create a golf course with forced carries?" LPGA Tour player Amy Olson said of the need to make golf easier. "I play in pro-ams on tour every week and average players simply can't get around without losing a ton of balls. You have to give them a path, a way to play. They aren't going

to make pars but they don't expect that. They want to play without losing balls and embarrassing themselves. And they want to enjoy the game. So, cut the rough in front of tee boxes, give players a fairway path to the green – it might not be a direct path, but a path – and soften the greens so that the average player doesn't four- or five-putt. That's how you grow golf."

"People take a lot of pride in where they play and where they live and they don't want the game to pass them by," Nicklaus said. "You want to make sure that as people get older you include them

in what you're doing. But you also know that time moves on and you have young people are who want to join so you have to have a balance.

"I try to make sure golf courses are playable for everybody but also attract the better players who want to come out."

**T**hank goodness nobody asked him to play it. When Jack Nicklaus recently renovated the Great Waters course at Reynolds Lake Oconee in rural Georgia, the 79-year-old legend looked at the land a lot differently than he did a quarter-century earlier when he designed the course.

"I see a lot of things different," Nicklaus said late last year at the grand re-opening of Great Waters. "I see the way the game is played as you get older. I have tell you, I don't see memberships anywhere getting younger. And as you get older, you appreciate more and more the addition of forward tees. I've spent the last 20 years at Bear's Club putting in forward tees and I hope to take a bite at Muirfield Village next year putting in forward tees there. I've put in some forward tees (at Muirfield Village) but I'm going to put in a lot more."

Nicklaus doesn't play much golf now. "I really haven't played 18 holes in the last 17 years," he said. "I play but I haven't put a ball on a tee at the first hole, holed every putt and said, 'I shot this score,' in a long time. I've

**"I really haven't played 18 holes in the last 17 years."**

*Jack Nicklaus*

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From 25 years ago in Golf Business magazine (inset) to today, Gary Schaal has kept his eye on the golf industry's future.

# GARY SCHAAL'S LOOKING BACK, & AHEAD

SINCE THE 1995 COVER  
STORY, HE'S LEARNED SOME  
LESSONS, AND TAUGHT A FEW.

A quarter-century ago he posed for the cover of Golf Business magazine's inaugural issue, tall and smiling, shoulders back and head high, handsome and confident in his early 50s, a titan standing at the forefront of an industry on the rise. Gary Schaal, former president of the PGA of America and one of the leading voices in the game, has learned a lot since then. In fact, his experiences in the last 25 years have taught him more about golf, life and the intersection between the two than anything in his first 25 in the game.





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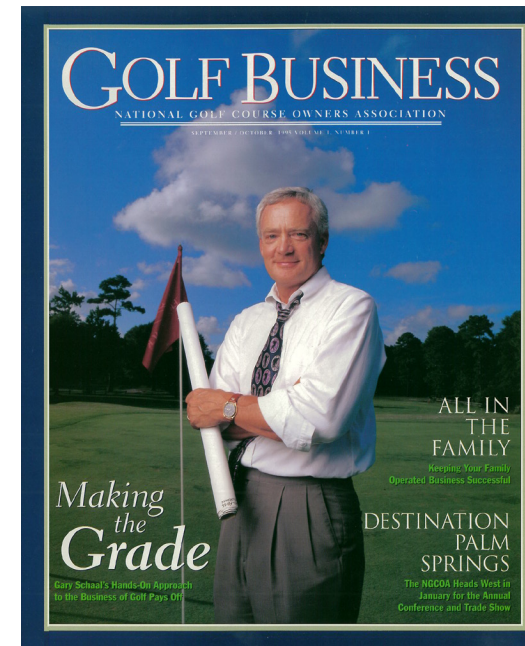
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Today, at age 78, Schaal has climbed to mountaintops and tumbled into valleys in the golf business. He has done it all and seen even more. From getting his first head golf professional job in 1976, when Gerald Ford was wearing bell bottoms and Johnny Miller was winning major championships, to today where he serves the game and a grateful nation in a noble cause, Schaal is a renaissance man, a revivalist, the scion of Myrtle Beach and a sober student of a business in flux.

"The golf model right now is still upside down in many areas," Schaal said, shouting a warning he wishes someone had given him a few decades ago. "A lot of courses are still closing and will continue to close. At one time not that long ago we had about 125 golf courses in Myrtle Beach, (South

Carolina), depending on where you draw the boundaries. Now we're under 100 and I'm not sure we're at the right number yet. We expect a few more to close. Several are still closing for housing."

Two of those courses are in a project called Deer Track Resort where Schaal worked. They've been shuttered since 2006 and tied up in legal battles for a decade. Only now are the former courses giving way to residential development.

It's a painful story that has been repeated hundreds of times throughout the country with more on the way.

Schaal had another course called Wicket Stick in Surfside Beach, South Carolina, a Clyde Johnson and John Daly design. He pulled that project together as an owner in 1994 but sold it to a residential developer in 2015. The course closed that September and is now the site of homes and commercial properties.

Schaal also had a good run in Dallas at a beautiful property called Dallas National and did some consulting work at a course in Michigan owned by the United Auto Workers. In the early 2000s, he worked with former PGA Tour commissioner Deane Beman and golf course designer Bobby Weed on a project in Fredericksburg, Virginia, called the Cannon Ridge Golf Club, a stunning property near the site of an historic Civil War battlefield. "It was one of those classic designs with small square tee boxes that were only a few paces off the previous green," Schaal said. "We had a lot of fun with that one."

Cannon Ridge opened in 2003 but closed in 2012, as did so many courses during the height of the Great Recession.

"We went nuts in the '80s and '90s," Schaal said. "Everybody who was around and in the business remembers

**"WE GOT CRAZED. AND IT CAUGHT UP WITH US."**

that statement that came out in the '80s by the National Golf Foundation that said we needed to open a golf course a day, every day until the year 2000 to keep up with demand. The year 2000 seemed a long way off at the time. Well, I got caught up in that. I was building golf courses without feasibility studies, without projections. I'd go into the bank and say, 'I want to build another golf course,' and they'd say, 'How much do you need?' We got crazed. And it caught up with us."

After being swept up in projections that were, in hindsight, obviously crazy and succumbing to the lure of cheap and easy financing, Schaal is now the measured voice in the room, the man with enough scars to warn the next generation away from the pitfalls of seeing only what you want to see.

"We spent all day, 12 hours, (at the PGA of America annual meeting in West Palm Beach back in November) talking about the state of the industry with



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# “THE GOLF MODEL RIGHT NOW IS STILL UPSIDE DOWN IN MANY AREAS.”



(PGA Tour commissioner) Jay Monahan, (PGA of America CEO) Seth Waugh, (LPGA commissioner) Mike Whan and (PGA of America president) Suzy Whaley. To a person, they were very positive. They all think golf's in a good place and the future is bright. But as an owner-operator, I'm still pretty guarded. Sure, there are some courses and clubs that are insulated – those brand-name clubs like Cypress Point and Kiawah Island where people can't wait to play those golf courses; places like Bandon Dunes, for example, which is doing great – but that's not the case for the rest of the country. Or at least I don't see it, yet.

“At this meeting I heard a couple of people say they were starting to see improvement in rounds. But when I hear someone say, ‘We're up from last year,’ I have to ask, ‘Well, how was last year?’ and ‘What was the yield?’ Those are the real questions you need answered.

“The truth of the industry is that the margins are thin and getting thinner. Labor costs are going up, insurance is always going up, capital improvements are more expensive than ever, the cost of a golf cart and maintenance equipment is higher than ever. But the yields are pretty much where they were 10 years ago. In



some markets, yields are lower.

“So, when your margins keep getting thinner, you look to cut expenses. You start with payroll. You tell yourself things like, ‘We won't clean the parking lot quite as much,’ or ‘We can let those cart paths go for another year.’ So, the service suffers. And in the end, the owner, the operator and the customer all get the short end.

“It will be interesting when things do eventually completely turn around and we get back to (equilibrium in the market) where we should be. I'm curious to see if people will actually do all those capital improvements they've been deferring.”

In the meantime, Schaal is not all doom and gloom. Far from it. He sees the future of the game in many of the nontraditional outlets. “Our daughter was going to take kids to TopGolf,” he said. “They called ahead of time to reserve a bay and they were told, you can come but it's a three-hour wait. That's happening everywhere.”

He's also still active with the PGA of America, as a member of the properties committee, which puts him at the center of the sale of the association's Port St. Lucie property.

But the thing that drives his passion and perks him up like a kid again is also the



Gary Schaal says he sees the future of the game in many of the nontraditional outlets.

# “OUR MISSION AT PROJECT GOLF IS TO GIVE THESE VETS THE FUNDAMENTS, THE STARTING POINTS, THE TOOLS TO GO THE NEXT LEVEL.”



most important project Schaal has been involved with in his life.

“It’s an initiative called Project Golf,” he said.

But it is more than a project. It’s a mission and a calling.

“A landowner reached out to me a couple of years ago with a hypothetical. He said, ‘I have this neat little par-3 (course). What would you do if we leased it to you?’ I thought about it for a minute and told him I would create of golf rehab center for veterans. That wasn’t a unique idea. I got hooked up with Salute Military Golf Association and Walter Reed Medical Center and I was helping provide PGA professionals and golf instruction to wounded veterans. And while I wasn’t very good at it, it was a wild success.

“So I hooked up with SMGA, and PGA Reach and the South Carolina Golf Association as well as our local university and we created Project Golf in Myrtle Beach. We just closed on a piece of property and I’ve committed some time to bringing



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all the partners together to make this thing happen. The market is veterans. I'm working with Walter Reed (Medical Center) and with the command at Fort Bragg (in North Carolina).


"There are 6,000 veterans in our county alone. It doesn't have to be a physically challenged vet. We want to provide services through golf for all vets. Golf is a great way to bring them back into the community, to help integrate them into the new normal of their lives. Some of them don't know anything about the game, so we want to help them become part of the golf family.

"We're learning a lot," Schaal continued, becoming more animated as he described Project Golf. "We're doing introductory golf classes of 20 to 25 people and realizing that it's a

group that we, as an industry, haven't paid much attention to. I mean, some of them are saying things like, 'Do we bring our own range balls?' or 'What does bag drop mean?' There was one course where we were hosting an event that was in a gated community and they said, 'We can't drive in there.' That's a veteran mindset. A guarded gate means no trespassing. We had to explain to them that, sure, all you have to do is drive to the gate and tell them you're coming in for golf. Some others were saying 'Do you rent clubs or buy them?' and 'Where would you buy them?' We were like, holy smokes, we really have to start with the alpha here.

"But it's important and we're having fun with it. At first, we were ner-

vous about getting the word out too soon. We didn't want to promote that we're teaching veterans only to have the local pros say, 'Excuse me, we do that. Are you taking our customers away?' No, that's not what we're doing at all. So, we met with the pros, explained the project and got total buy in. Our mission at Project Golf is to give these vets the fundamentals, the starting points, the tools to go the next level. Then we will be handing them off to the golf pros.

"There are a lot of us involved and hopefully a lot more on the way. We have high hopes for Project Golf," Schaal said. "So far, it's been just great." 

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

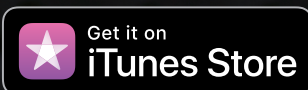
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## Being Social Influencer Marketing in an Overcrowded Social Landscape

*By Spencer Hadelman*

**B**rands from every vertical have dabbled in the recent trend labeled by our tech-savvy society as “influencer marketing” or, according to Traackr, the process of identifying, researching, engaging and supporting the people who create high-impact conversations with your customers.

The marketing strategy quickly surged to the forefront of our social media platforms, as brands saw the immense opportunity in using an individual they feel embodies their brand to reach and resonate with a large body of people with similar tastes and interests. At first, the tactic seemed to be the key to reaching a well-defined audience with a high appeal in specific brands. However, as more advertisers catch on to the tactic, users found their feeds flooded with highly curated, blatantly scripted sponsored posts.

A generation that grew up with a mass amount of advertised content, both on social media and through other avenues, has learned to navigate the clutter. This audience also is highly skilled in detecting authentic, trustworthy content. This might explain the recent drop in influencer marketing performance – specifically from those with large followings. According to Mobile Marketer, “While influencers with more than 10,000 followers may help to reach a broader audience, marketers may see better engagement by working with multiple “nano-influencers” who have a smaller reach among highly dedicated followers.”

Brands are turning to “nano-influencers” to tap into a niche set of trustworthy followers, rather than paying large amounts for a disengaged audience among top influencers. This may seem counterintuitive for dominating brands to work with micro- and nano-influencers – which can have as few as 100 followers – yet the strategy behind the shift has a logical explanation. According to Business Insider, working with these smaller influencers means, “The potential engagement is a lot stronger...those influencers will be much more aware and in tune with their immediate following because they’ve grown them, they’re still small enough for them to be able to engage well with and also potentially know on some level.” This falls in line with

a recent distaste in overly curated content, and a need to resonate using raw, trustworthy content to connect easily with people.

Both Millennials and Gen Z have become accustomed to a virtually curated world. Watching people’s seemingly picturesque lives from a mobile screen has become second nature; however, with the rise in mental health issues among these generations, many have started to take a step back and analyze the effects of countless hours of scrolling. Younger generations are more self-aware than ever, as we see trends of moving offline and users taking part in “digital detoxing.”

With a greater sense of self-awareness on digital platforms comes a shift in engagement across content. As the social scene becomes more populated, both by macro and micro influencers, younger generations seek to find trustworthy content from individuals they truly feel like they know. As a result, many influencers are taking their voice to more conversational platforms such as TikTok and YouTube. Through video-focused platforms influencers are able to express a more authentic, less-curated version of themselves. The audience is able to pick up on personality and genuinity. TikTok has specifically found its unique place among GenZ. One user describes the TikTok community as, “Super supportive... it’s not like Instagram, where everyone is more singular, kind of just posting pictures and occasionally videos.” (Vice)

Younger generations have been bombarded with one-sided social content, and as a result are turning towards platforms that provide more conversation and a greater sense of community. Both advertisements and sponsored content are still present across both TikTok and YouTube, but are expressed in a less invasive, trustworthy manner.

What we can take from this is no

matter the platform a social media influencer utilizes, they should strategize the content to express their genuine self. Furthermore, brands now need to realize that followers do not equate to success when it comes to effective influencer advertising. Instead, tapping into niche networks and communities that emulate their brand in the most authentic way is a far better strategy.

Take Glossier, for example, a digitally focused makeup and skincare brand that credits its strong sense of community for its success. “We are always focused on how we can use our customers to bring their other communities into our communities” for CEO Henry Davis said. “We are making our customers into stakeholders. If we make them stakeholders they help us create better products, but they also become our sales channel” (Forbes)

This is just one example, but brands at large are finding that their actual fans are the most effective influencers, and community in itself can create an everlasting channel of trustworthy influence.

Does this transition mean the end of social media influencers? The reign of influencers is certainly not over, but we are seeing an evident shift in the way brands utilize influencers, and more importantly, how these influencers converse with their audience through social platforms. It also pulls into question how brands can effectively utilize influencer marketing. Trends in audience behavior from younger generations give clear evidence to brands that more emphasis now needs to be given to authenticity and a sense of community rather than popularity if you want to stand out in our modern, heavily crowded social landscape.

Spencer Hadelman is CEO of Advantage Marketing. You can learn more at [advantagemrkt.com/](http://advantagemrkt.com/) Hadelman will be conducting an education session on social media marketing at Golf Business Conference 2020 in Orlando, [golfbusinessconference.com](http://golfbusinessconference.com).

A generation that grew up with a mass amount of advertised content, both on social media and through other avenues, has learned to navigate the clutter.



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**January 25-30**  
**Golf Industry Show**  
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**February 8-12**  
**CMAA World Conference**  
Grapevine, Texas  
[cmaa.org/conference/](https://cmaa.org/conference/)

**May 5-6**  
**National Golf Day**  
Washington, D.C.  
[wearegolf.org/national-golf-day/](https://wearegolf.org/national-golf-day/)

**July 21-22**  
**MCOR20**  
Charleston, South Carolina  
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**September 30-October 1**  
**RevCon20**  
Las Vegas, Nevada  
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**October 15-17**  
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## A Look Back

BY BOOTS GIFFORD



**I**n 1995, then National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) Executive Director Mike Hughes introduced the first issue of Golf Business magazine with these words:

"We are launching this magazine for a number of reasons. ... *Golf Business* will be the foremost publication for the golf course operator because it is designed to meet their unique needs. It will address a broad range of issues affecting the golf course as a business. It will cover virtually every significant area of operation including the pro shop, golf course maintenance, food and beverage operations, marketing, insurance, legal liability and human resources, just to name a few. The reader will get plenty of practical information on how some of the best operators overcome hurdles and make the most of their business. You will also learn about the latest operational methods and technologies that will keep you one step ahead."

Twenty-five years later, *Golf Business* has stayed true to that mission of delivering golf industry news that provides owners and operators with the tools they need to be successful.

Along with the inaugural cover story on Gary Schaaf, which is revisited in this issue's cover feature, the 1995 first-run addressed a number of



topics that still resonate with our readers in 2020.

The Business Advisor section focused on preparing to sell your golf course. Written at the time when owners were still selling because they wanted to, not because they had to in the post-Recession years, the article shared tips on document preparations, membership transfers, employee contracts, and more, stating, "with proper preparation and the structuring of an 'exit strategy' early in the acquisition and development of the golf facility, numerous sale issues and costly offsets and reductions in the purchase price can be avoided." Succession planning also was raised, which Golf Business will again address in 2020, as exit strategies continue to be tricky in a family dynamic if not executed properly.

The liability risk factors in the hiring and firing process were the subject of another business column in 1995. The article addressed concerns amid "the recent explosion of claims alleging discrimination in the workplace that stems from increased public knowledge and awareness as well as new laws that expand both the coverage and remedies for violations.... these laws are intended to protect both applicants and employees who are members of a 'protected class' from discrimination in the terms and conditions of employment." In 2020, employers may feel confident they understand the discrimination laws implemented more than 25 years ago. But in the wake of the "Me Too" movement, workplace discrimination and harassment is being viewed through a new lens. So, labor issues will remain an important topic.

In 1995, the top issues addressed in "The Latest Legislative Rulings Concerning Course Operations" were Clean Water Legislation, Fair Labor Standards Act Reform, Health Care Reform and Independent Contractor laws. Today, these are some of the same topics NGCOA's Director of Advocacy Ronnie Miles investigates in his regular column "Addressing the Issues."

Features on the spring buying season for pro shops (Nicklaus for Women was a hot item), Palm Springs golf culture (where NGCOA would hold its national conference that year), an architect's take on tips for sculpting fairways and a piece on avoiding drainpipe fitting failures rounded out the stories.

Throughout 2020, as Golf Business strives for continued excellence in bringing readers today's hot topics – from gamification and simulators, to artificial intelligence applications and online tee time companies, to food truck rodeos and games after dark – in each issue we'll continue to take a Look Back over the last 25 years, and share some blasts from the past.

*Boots Gifford is the editor in chief of Golf Business magazine and the director of education for NGCOA. Do you have a favorite story from the last 25 years of Golf Business? Let her know at [bgifford@ngcoa.org](mailto:bgifford@ngcoa.org) and it may be featured during our 2020 celebration.*

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"Our data shows that when we core aerate and topdress in early September we see about a \$30,000 drop in revenue over the next two weeks. But when using DryJect® we have only one day of lost revenue. We estimate a \$19,000 savings using DryJect over core aeration."

— Justin N. Smith, GM, Olde Homestead Golf Club

## Another daily fee course GM showed us how DryJect Aeration adds \$7,500 to his bottom line. How?

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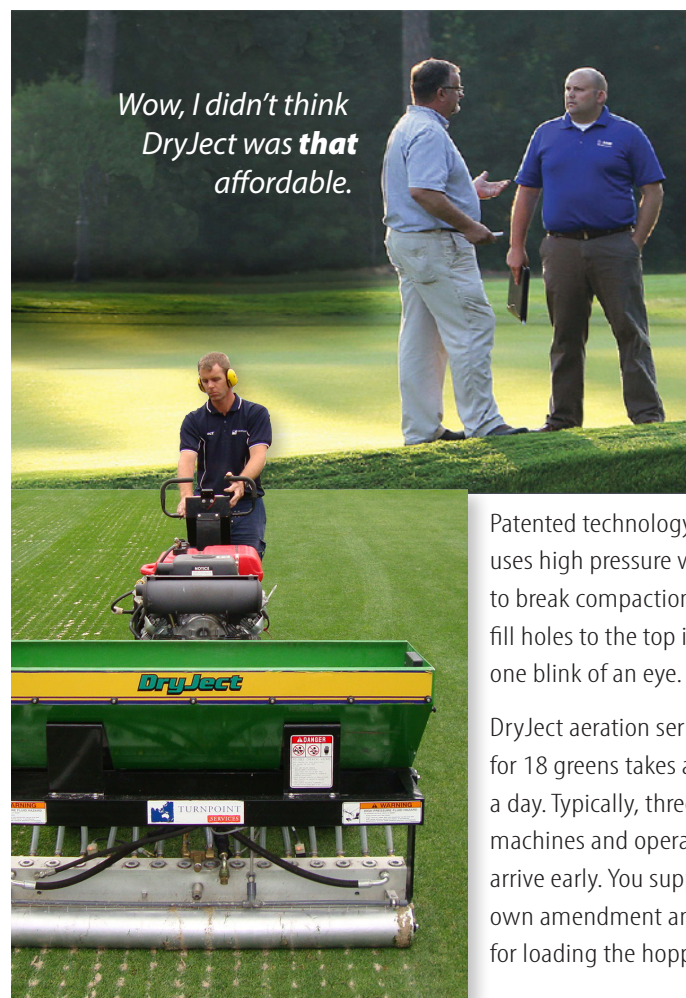
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### Bar Harbor Golf Course

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

### Cleveland Country Club

Shelby, NC  
Just 40 minutes west of Charlotte, private, 1926 championship course with large southern estate style clubhouse and pro shop. **JUST SOLD** 100± acres and more. Home lender financing available. Contact Brett at Miller Management Associates, Inc. 828-775-7765, brett@mmagolf.com.

### Creeside 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, creeksideplanation-golf@gmail.com.

### Cross Creek Country Club

Mt. Airy, NC  
Cross Creek CC, Mt. Airy, NC (Mayberry!). Beautiful semi private club at the foot of the Blue Ridge mountains of NC. 18 hole championship course, pool, tennis courts, practice facilities, majestic clubhouse with grand ballroom, meeting rooms, pro shop, bar, grill, dining, locker rooms and outdoor pavilion with fireplace. Great asset for many uses. \$1,600,000 Call us for more information, Miller Management Associates, Inc. 828-775-7765, brett@mmagolf.com in conjunction with Hilda Allen Real Estate.

### 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 includes ten condos. Miller Management Associates, Inc. Brett D. Miller, brett@mmagolf.com, 828 – 775- 7765. In conjunction with Hilda Allen Real Estate.

### Silver Creek Plantation

Morganton, NC  
Western North Carolina, 18 hole championship design, rolling terrain with bermuda fairways and bent grass greens. Includes excellent practice facility that is golf school ready, practice green, pavilion, spectacular clubhouse. NO deferred maintenance. Contact Brett at Miller Management Associates, 828-775-7765 or brett@mmagolf.com additional lots and land available. PRICE REDUCTION NOW \$1,150,000 Owner Financing Possible.

### 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 8 lodge rooms in clubhouse. Also, 39 lots included!! Separate maintenance facility, includes equipment. Great owner operator option and owner finance option available. Only \$575,000. Contact us for more information. Brett Miller at Miller Management Associates, brett@mmagolf.com; 828-775-7765 In conjunction with Hilda Allen Real Estate.

### Swap 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.

### The Club at Brookstone

Anderson, SC  
NEW LISTING: GREAT OPPORTUNITY! 18 hole championship design with new Bermuda greens, renovated capillary concrete bunkers, clubhouse renovations, new rest stations on both nines and more. Clubhouse not over built, bar, pro shop, dining area, meeting room, offices. Practice facilities. Keep growing the new model of public fee. Easy Interstate 85 access to all of the booming Upstate and new industry of 1000 opened next door. Sky's the limit, owner says sell now \$975,000. Call Brett at Miller Management Associates Inc. 828-775-7765 or brett@mmagolf.com.

### Twin Brooks Golf Course

Waddington, NY  
18-hole serves northern NY and southern Canada. Shorefront St. Lawrence River, 30-min drive Massena, Potsdam, Ogdensburg, Canton. 50+ year old, 100 acre, irrigation, potable, sewer. Contact Kevin Kitzman, 315-382-5712, kevin.kitzman@arconic.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 83 ☐ 10 or more  
81 ☐ 2 - 4 99 ☐ Not applicable  
82 ☐ 5 - 9

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

- 01 ☐ nothing/private 05 ☐ \$75 - \$99  
02 ☐ o less than \$25 06 ☐ \$100 - \$149  
03 ☐ \$25 - \$49 07 ☐ \$150 or more  
04 ☐ \$50 - \$74 08 ☐ not applicable

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

- 50 ☐ less than \$99,000 53 ☐ \$500,000 - \$999,000  
51 ☐ \$100,000 - \$249,000 54 ☐ \$1,000,000 - \$2,499,000  
52 ☐ \$250,000 - \$499,000 55 ☐ \$2,500,000 or more

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

- 60 ☐ Determine annual budget expenditures  
61 ☐ Authorize final purchases  
62 ☐ Determine needs of the operation  
63 ☐ Specify/recommend vendors or suppliers  
64 ☐ Specify/recommend specific brands  
65 ☐ Evaluate brands for purchase

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

- A ☐ Golf Cars  
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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NAME: Allison George

TITLE: Wizard of Fun

COURSE: Toad Valley Golf Course

LOCATION: Pleasant Hill, IA

NGCOA MEMBER SINCE: 2007

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# NGCOA In Action

## EVENTS



### There's still time to register for Golf Business Conference 2020

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## ADVOCACY



### In 2020, Resolve to Get More Involved! Join 100s of Your Golf Industry Peers at National Golf Day 2020

Make your voice heard! Attend the 13th annual National Golf Day on Capitol Hill on Wednesday, May 6, 2020, with the annual Community Project scheduled for May 5 (so plan to arrive early!)

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.

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)



## SMART BUY SPOTLIGHT



### NGCOA Executive Partners Offer Deals Through the NGCOA Smart Buy Marketplace

These top-tier partners offer NGCOA members outstanding discounts and rebates on items golf courses use every day. Learn more at [ngcoa.org/smartbuy](http://ngcoa.org/smartbuy).



NGCOA members converting from a competitor receive \$50 per car for purchase or lease. Members renewing their fleet receive a free registration for NGCOA's annual Golf Business Conference or Golf Business TechCon.



NGCOA members receive a 1.5% rebate with the purchase of Rain Bird Golf Irrigation products during contract terms.



NGCOA members converting from a competitor, or equipping a newly-constructed course, receive a 1% rebate on new and/or .5% rebate on used Toro branded turf maintenance equipment



NGCOA members receive valuable rebates on Pepsi post-mix fountain products, Pepsi bottles and cans products, and Gatorade. Pepsi also offers members a compelling and valuable equipment and service program for Fountain equipment and Bottle and Can Coolers.

## 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 RevCon/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!



#### Increased Wage Costs

I am trying to get some estimates for budgeting purposes of how much the tight labor market has added to the wage category for the 3 main categories: Pro Shop, grounds crew and F & B.

#### Response to Merger of GOLFNOW and EZLinks

As you may have seen in today's news, the purchase of EZLinks by NBC Sports Group merges the two largest online tee time agencies (OTTAs) into one entity. This puts into one set of hands the lion's share (some estimate now over 90%) of the golf industry's aggregated, online tee time inventory.

#### Extra Revenue

I am an 18 hole semi private course and looking at ways to generate more revenue. I don't want to undercut our current membership with lower dues but looking for ideas to help generate more.

#### POS Selection Documents

Does anyone have a competitive comparison document on Golf POS systems?



### Let's connect!

NGCOA is sharing a lot of valuable content on our social media channels to help your business succeed and grow... please follow us for Association news, event info, industry articles, partner discounts, and much more!

Remember to tag **@NGCOA** and **#NGCOA** in your important and fun course updates so we can follow you, and share your news!



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# NGCOA In Action

START  
SAVING  
NOW

## NGCOA Smart Buy Marketplace

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



### Golf Cars & Utility Vehicles

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



### Communication, Commerce and Booking Platform

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



### Human Resources & Payroll

Up to 50% on HR and payroll costs.



### Golf Simulators

5% discount off MSRP.



### Television Programming

Up to 60% savings on programming.



### 401(k) Program

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



### Food and Beverage

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



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Discounted rates and special incentives on payment processing fees.



### Performance Reporting & Benchmarking

30%-50% discount on all reporting packages.



### Alternative Golf

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



### Beverage Supplier

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



### Flood Protection Solutions

20% discount on customized products and solutions to mitigate the damage from flooding.



### Customer Experience Solution

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



### Pre-Owned Turf Equipment

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



### Irrigation Solutions

1.5% rebate on Rain Bird Golf irrigation products.



### Automotive Vehicle Manufacturer

Significant factory direct fleet discounts on 2019 GM products.



### Hospitality Training and Resources

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



### New and Used Turf Maintenance Equipment

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

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