Industry gets its act together

In one brief meeting in the middle of July, Florida's golf industry got its act together.

And the show goes on Oct. 11-13.

"You can't afford to miss it," touts the postcard mailed to industry leaders at the end of August. "Please mark your calendar for what may possibly be the most important meeting you'll attend this year."

Despite the hyperbole, the postcard is probably correct.

The inaugural Florida Golf Summit at the Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress in Orlando will offer a solid day-and-a-half of meetings and discussions sandwiched between golf and social events at the beginning and more golf at the end.

The meat is in the middle.

For the first time, the owners, operators, designers, developers and builders of golf courses will meet with government officials and environmental terrorists and everybody is supposed to be on the same side: protecting the environment while nurturing one of the state's largest industries (Florida golf weighs in at $5.5 billion, according to a year-old study by the National Golf Foundation).

Theme of the meeting is "Government Relations." Major topics include water resources and restrictions, government permitting process, environmental protection, golf course design and developmental financing. A complete schedule and preliminary speakers roster accompany this story.

"Everybody who has a financial interest in golf should attend this meeting," said golf course designer Jan Beljan, one of the organizers of the event.

Perhaps even more significant than the Summit — and certainly more interesting — is the birth of its sponsoring organization: The Florida

Mission Statement

- Provide a clearing house for technical information and research
- Educate members and the public as to the benefits of golf through conferences and research dissemination
- Form alliances with special interest groups
- Develop a public relationship program and communications medium
- Establish an advocacy position with local, regional and state government
- Promote innovative design for environmental protection
- Provide a broad base of services for members of the organization
Golf Council. Jump-started in Palm Beach July 13-14 at a “Florida Golf Leaders Conference” called by Ron Safford, director of sports promotion for the Florida Department of Commerce, the organization’s gestation was so short that it was off and running under its own power before the PGA Tour, golf’s major entertainment entity headquartered in Ponte Vedra Beach, could grab control of it.

“The PGA Tour is willing to assist the Florida Sports Foundation in the formation of the above-referenced program,” sniffed Deputy Commissioner Tim Finchem a week after the meeting, apologizing for his absence from it because of a prior commitment. “However, we are curious as to the short notice and not having an opportunity to discuss this subject with you prior to the meeting. In our view, such an important program should be developed with PGA Tour involvement.”

Florida’s golf course superintendents were represented at the leaders conference by FGCSA Public Relations Chairman Mark Jarrell.

Keynote speaker at the conference was Bill Sutton, Florida secretary of commerce.

“We’re proud to have a thousand golf courses in Florida and we don’t think it’s enough,” he said. “We think it’s a great industry. We certainly don’t want to do anything wrong ecologically in Florida, nor do we want to be on the other side like the darter fish a few years back who kept some needed economic development from happening.”

Among the facts considered by the leaders:

- Golf is the only industry anywhere near its size without a single lobbyist in Tallahassee. Even state agencies have lobbyists.
- The 16-mile “Grand Strand” around Myrtle Beach, S.C. outspends the en-
tire State of Florida in attracting golf destination visitors.

Several pieces of legislation with potential impact on the industry have been considered without substantial input from the golf industry because no centralized organization represents it.

Regarding the latter situation, the leaders virtually unanimously decided that a broadly-based umbrella organization was needed and an organizational committee at the conference later recommended that the organization be a "positive, accurate, factual, unified, environmentally sensitive voice for the entire golf industry."

Its mission statement also accompanies this story.

The original focus of the organization should be "oriented toward promoting better governmental relations, public opinion and preserving the quality of the game and business," says the committee report.

The committee also recommended that the organization be led by a board of 40-60 with operational power vested in a much smaller executive committee. Composition should be one third representatives of associations and government, one third golf course owners, operators and developers, and one third consultants, technical staff, attorneys, etc.

A board meeting is scheduled for the first day of the Summit, although the Florida Golf Council had not announced who the directors are or how they were selected.

The committee foresaw an annual budget of $250,000 to $500,000.

### Summit Schedule

**Hyatt Regency Grand Cypress, Orlando**

**Thursday, Oct. 11**
- 10:00 a.m. - Noon: Florida Golf Council Board of Directors Meeting
- 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.: Inaugural Florida Golf Tournament
- 5:30 - 8:00 p.m.: Registration
- 8:30 - 10:30 p.m.: Cocktail Reception

**Friday, Oct. 12**
- 8:00 - 8:30 a.m.: Continental Breakfast
- 8:30 - 9:00 a.m.: Welcome
- 9:00 - 9:30 a.m.: Keynote Speaker: "The Golf Industry in the 90s"
- 9:30 - 10:45 a.m.: Inter-coordination among agencies
- 10:45 - 11:00 a.m.: Break
- 11:00 - 12:15 p.m.: Concurrent Sessions
  1. Water Resources in the 1990s
  2. Regulations & The Approval Process
  3. Communications & Marketing
- 12:15 - 1:15 p.m.: Buffet Luncheon
- 1:15 - 1:45 p.m.: Keynote Speaker
- 1:45 - 2:30 p.m.: Concurrent Sessions
  1. Water Resources in the 1990s
  2. Regulations & The Approval Process
  3. Communications & Marketing

**Saturday, Oct. 13**
- 8:00 - 8:30 a.m.: Continental Breakfast
- 8:30 - 9:00 a.m.: Keynote Speaker
- 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.: Roundtable Discussions
- 11:00 - Noon: Wrap-up session.
- 1:00 p.m.: Golf (optional)

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