Women's issues a major concern

By Mark Leslie

Shifts in the workforce will "dramatically" increase the spending power of women, the golf industry must address some major shortcomings in order to attract this huge number of potential clients, according to various experts.

Ladies Professional Golf Association President Judy Dickinson, LPGA/Teaching Division Director of Education Betsy Clark, professional Shirley Englehorn, Market Facts Inc. Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Verne Churchill and others agreed at Golf Summit 90 that the industry has failed to effectively draw women into the sport.

Women could bring 'tens of millions of dollars into golf courses' pockets if some crucial needs are met, the experts told the 600 attendees at the Palm Springs, Calif., event.

Speaking on a panel on women's golf, Dickinson said: "The U.S. is about to undergo a dramatic shift in the composition and quality of its workforce... The prediction is that two-thirds of the workforce will be women starting or returning to work. It is also projected that only 9.3 percent of all new workers will be male, white, non-Hispanic and U.S.-born men from whom traditionally nearly all our top corporate managers have sprung."

She said more women will be moving up the corporate ladder. "Consequently, we believe women will not only have a larger portion of the economic pie and increased spending power, but will also have a greater political influence."

Churchill, whose firm surveyed 1,300 women golfers for the LPGA, found that though women play only 18 percent of the total rounds in the country, frequent women golfers play more, travel more and spend more than frequent male golfers.

The shortfall, he said, is that while women constitute about 40 percent of all new golfers each year, three of four new female starters have failed to stay in the sport. Whereas 4 million women have taken up golf in the last five years, he said, the net growth has been only 1.4 million because so many have dropped it.

"For the good of the game and the industry, it's important to find out why and what we can do," Churchill said.

He and other panel members had their own suggestions on how to attack the problem.

Churchill recommended:
• Helping women improve their performance. "Three of five are dissatisfied with their game"

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