

Golf industry economic forecast validates Tiger's impact

CHARLESTON, S.C. - The National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) annual survey of U.S. golf course owners gives definitive information on the impact Tiger Woods has made on introducing juniors and minorities to the game of golf, and provides a forecast for 1998.

According to the survey, published in the association's *Golf Business* magazine, increases in play by junior golfers as well as golfers of black and Asian ethnicity contributed to one of the best years ever for course owners.

Michael K. Hughes, NGCOA's executive director, said: "Virtually every golf course that has a junior program has reported significant growth in participation this past year which can now be directly attributed to Tiger Woods. It is encouraging to see that his appeal cuts across many demographic groups."

According to the survey, junior golfers played approximately 36 percent more rounds in 1997 than they did in 1996. Course owners reported the number of juniors playing their course increased by 14 percent while the number visiting the driving range increased by 19 percent. Rounds played by juniors increased from 6.1 percent to 7.7 percent of total play in one year. A number of courses with strong junior programs increased junior play by 100 percent.

A breakdown by ethnicity shows that more than 85 percent of golfers are white. This percentage is down from almost 88 percent two years ago due to the increased play by minority groups. The most significant change occurred in 1997, when black players increased from 4.4 percent of the golfers to 4.9 percent, and Asian/Pacific Islander players increased from 4.5 percent to 5.6 percent.

Women are also figuring prominently in the increased demand. Approximately 10 percent more women were playing golf in 1997 than in 1996. Female play increased in all age groups, with juniors playing 221 more rounds per course, seniors playing 395 more rounds per course, and adult non-seniors playing 610 more rounds per course.

The aging population is also very favorable for golf demand. Because older golfers play more golf, and because the population is aging, the demand for golf will increase. The survey respondents indicated that seniors played 8 percent more golf in 1997 than 1996. Over the next five years, the population aged 10-69 will grow 0.97 percent per year, but the demand for golf will grow 1.28 percent per year. This is because the average person plays 2.7 rounds per year

during their fifties and 3.9 rounds per year during their sixties, but only 1.7 rounds per year during their thirties and 2.1 rounds per year during their forties.

Baby boomers are causing a 1.28 percent annual increase just due to aging, the increased popularity of the sport at the professional level is helping drive a 10

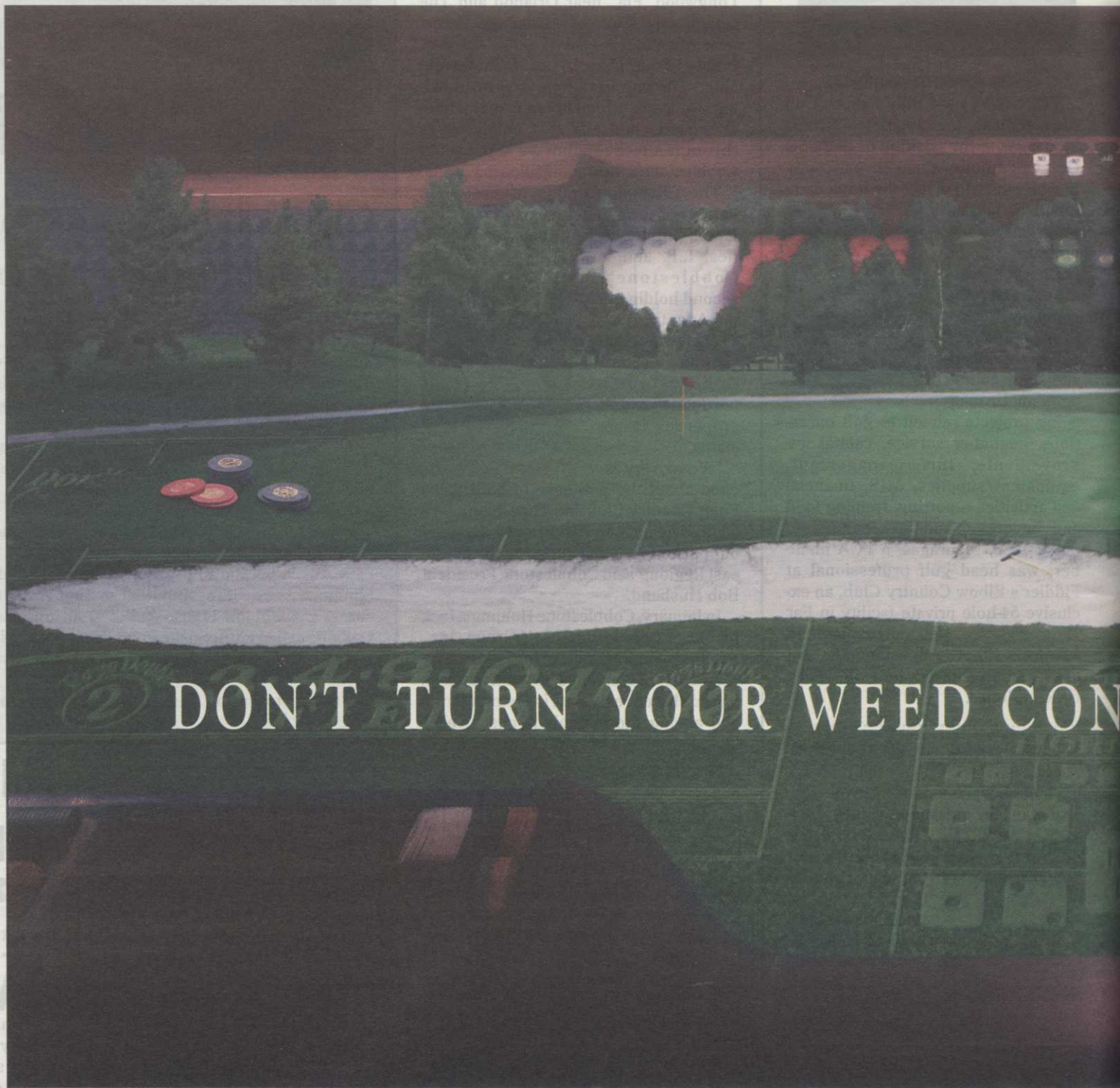
percent increase in play by women, and the publicity generated by Tiger Woods is significantly increasing play among junior, black, and Asian golfers. The survey was distributed to all members of the NGCOA in the United States. Almost 46 percent of the respondents were daily-fee courses, 24 percent pri-

vate, 22 percent semi-private, and 8 percent resort courses.

All information and data were compiled by the golf consulting division of The Meyers Group, John Burns, senior managing director. Burns can be reached at The Meyers Group's, Irvine, Calif., office at 714-263-8755. For copies of the final report, contact Golf Business at (803) 722-6400 or fax (803) 722-7022.

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