Golf's gotta get going...

By JOSEPH F. BEDITZ, President/CEO, National Golf Foundation

Although the game of golf continues to flourish, it has, in fact, been standing still for the past six years with regard to two important measures of growth: 1) the number of golfers and 2) course visits.

On the other hand, new facilities are being developed at a record rate and golfers are spending more than ever each year for equipment and playing fees.

Golfer demand

Over the past 10 years the number of golfers and course visits have both increased. The number of golfers has increased from about 20 million to 25 million, and the number of course visits from about 400 million to 500 million. All of this growth occurred between 1985 and 1990. Since 1990 the number of both golfers and rounds played have remained essentially level.

Prospects for growth

The single most important trend affecting golf's future is not related to the game itself, but rather with America's changing demographics. Our population is aging at an unprecedented rate. Research shows that golfers play more and spend more as they age. All things being equal, we expect golf demand to increase steadily as a direct result of the aging of the baby boomers.

To ensure golf's future, we must see to it that the full spectrum of cost alternatives remains available so that golf can justify its claim that it's not a game for the privileged few, but rather a game for all.

—Excerpted from remarks by Mr. Beditz at the 1997 International Golf Conference, St. Andrews, Scotland.

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