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Women are Leading the Way as U.S. Population Continues to Rise

JUPITER, Fla.— More Americans are playing golf than ever before, and women are taking up the game in unprecedented numbers.

The latest study by the National Golf Foundation, *Golf Participation in The United States, 1988 Edition*, shows the number of golfers in the country rose in 1987 from 20.2 to 21.7 million ... a 7.4% increase.

It also shows that the percentage of females among new golfers has nearly doubled since 1983 when the NGF issued its first golf participation report. That year, women accounted for just 21% of those taking up the game. Of the two million who played golf for the first time in 1987, some 854,000 or 41% were women.

"Many women, particularly those in their twenties and thirties, are discovering the game of golf," says NGF President and CEO David B. Hueber. "They are attracted to the game for several reasons: It's a sport which offers socialization as well as challenge; it also can be combined with business in a relaxing setting; and it is enjoyable at any level of play.

"If women continue to begin playing golf in the same numbers as they have in our recent surveys, the total number of golfers in the U.S. will grow faster than previously projected," Hueber says. "And this increased demand will further widen the gap between golf course supply and demand, thus highlighting even more the need to accelerate the rate of new golf course construction."

Hueber noted that the potential shortage of golf facilities is one of the key agenda items for Golf Summit 88, scheduled for the Marriott at Sawgrass resort hotel November 15-17. More than 350 industry leaders will be discussing, among other things, how to deal with a U.S. golf population that is expected to skyrocket to 30 million by the Year 2000.

The report shows California currently leads the nation with 2.5 million golfers, followed by New York State, (1.5 million); Michigan and Illinois (1.3 million each); and Texas and Ohio (1.2 million each). Florida, which has led the last three years in the creation of new golf courses, became the seventh state to eclipse the million golfer mark. There are now 1.03 million golfers in the Sunshine State compared to 923,594 in 1986. Florida and California are joined by five other million-golfer states, including Texas (1.2 million); Ohio (1.2 million); Michigan (1.3 million); Illinois (1.3 million); and New York (1.5 million).

The NGF report also tracks participation rates, i.e. the percentage of people within a given population who play golf. On a nationwide scale, the percentage of golfers in the country has remained relatively stable, at between 9% and 10%. (The current national participation rate is 9.7%). However, these participation rates vary from state to state.

For instance, Wisconsin leads the nation in participation, with 15.9 percent of the citizens in the Badger state being golfers. Mississippi has the lowest participation rate with only 3.6 percent of its population playing golf.

Although the number of golfers in the country has increased, the study shows that the average number of rounds played dipped from 20.1 to 19.4 in 1987. NGF researchers feel the decrease is an indication that while there may be more golfers today, they are playing less frequently.