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*Exclusive country club real estate usually is advertised by word of mouth and sold in mahogany-paneled offices. In Florida \$200,000 lots are advertised on billboards and sold out of mobile homes.*

## **Golf in Florida is a \$5 billion business**

**E**ventually, everything and everyone in golf comes to Florida.

And if they don't stay, at least they leave their money.

Golf is such a big part of Florida's economic picture that its Department of Commerce commissioned a study by the National Golf Foundation.

The finding: Golf is a \$5 billion industry in Florida, fully 20 percent of the gross national golf product.

Of that \$5 billion, less than \$400,000 is spent on equipment. The rest is on real estate, green fees, golf course construction and golf-related travel.

Nobody knows for sure exactly how many golf courses Florida has because we're building them as fast as they can pass cut the permits, sometimes faster.

As of Jan. 1, 1989, the NGF had counted 932 courses open for play in Florida. The 1990 data, scheduled for release in mid-to-late February, should show about 50 more. Another 89 were under construction or on the drawing boards as of Dec. 15, 1989 (See page 74).

More than 200 touring professionals call Florida home and, now that the LPGA has decided to give new meaning to Daytona Beach's old slogan "Where the girls are," that number is likely to climb significantly.

If Daytona Beach is where the girls are, Palm Beach is where the golf is. This one county of about 2,000 square miles and fewer than 700,000 inhabitants at the northern end of the Gold Coast supports more than 125 golf courses, all but half a dozen of them in the county's 500 square miles that are within 15 miles of the Atlantic Ocean.

If Palm Beach County were a state, it would have ranked 35th in the number of golf courses at the end of 1988, between Maine (116) and Maryland (143). By the time the 1989 data are published, it's entirely

possible for Palm Beach County to have passed Maryland and a few other states.

Palm Beach County is home to the PGA of America (which has located two and a half of its 43 sections, or chapters, in Florida), the National Golf Foundation, the Golf Course Builders Association and a handful of the world's greatest golf course architects, including one of the most prolific (page 65).

It is also home to Florida's oldest famous golf course, Donald Ross's Seminole.

It's not easy to build a great golf course in Florida, but the state has one of the largest and most varied collections of outstanding golf courses in the world (page 28).

The land is flat and generally uninteresting, the sandy soil won't hold water, which is in short supply (page 22), and the delicate ecosystem already is supporting more people than nature intended. In other words, the environmental laws are tough.

The one thing Florida golf developers have in their favor is OPM — Other People's Money or Older People's Money, take your pick. Florida has lots and lots of that.

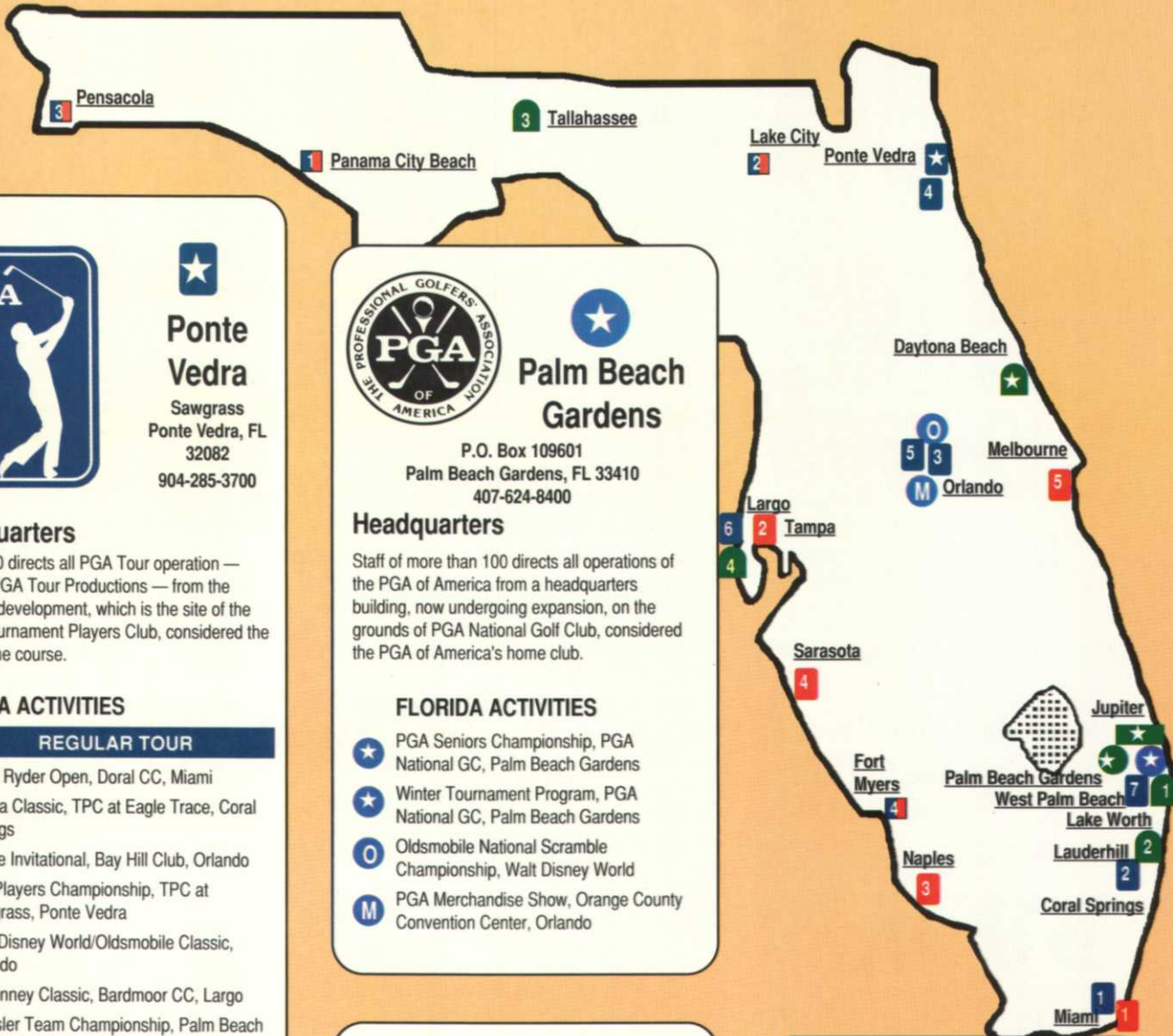
The state ranks seventh in total number of golfers and 22nd in participation — only 9.9 percent of the residents play golf — but first in senior golfers. And nobody else is in the Top Ten.

By themselves, Florida golfers raise the national average age of golfers by *two years*.

And when some very talented architects go digging after all that OPM buried in Florida's sand, it is amazing what spectacular golf courses are created by the spoils.

In most parts of the world, exclusive country club real estate is advertised by word of mouth and sold in mahogany-paneled offices.

*(Continues on page 24)*



  
**Ponte Vedra**  
 Sawgrass  
 Ponte Vedra, FL  
 32082  
 904-285-3700

### Headquarters

Staff of 350 directs all PGA Tour operation — including PGA Tour Productions — from the Sawgrass development, which is the site of the original Tournament Players Club, considered the Tour's home course.

### FLORIDA ACTIVITIES

#### REGULAR TOUR

- 1 Doral Ryder Open, Doral CC, Miami
- 2 Honda Classic, TPC at Eagle Trace, Coral Springs
- 3 Nestle Invitational, Bay Hill Club, Orlando
- 4 The Players Championship, TPC at Sawgrass, Ponte Vedra
- 5 Walt Disney World/Oldsmobile Classic, Orlando
- 6 JCPenney Classic, Bardmoor CC, Largo
- 7 Chrysler Team Championship, Palm Beach Polo Club, West Palm Beach

#### SENIOR TOUR

- 1 Royal Caribbean Classic, Key Biscayne GC, Key Biscayne
- 2 GTE Suncoast Classic, Tampa Palms CC, Tampa
- 3 Aetna Challenge, Club at Pelican Bay, Naples
- 4 Chrysler Cup, TPC at Prestancia, Sarasota
- 5 Fairfield Barnett Spacecoast Classic, Suntree CC, Melbourne

#### BEN HOGAN TOUR

- 1 Panama City Beach Classic, Hombre CC, Panama City Beach
- 2 Lake City Classic, Lake City CC
- 3 Pensacola Open, Pensacola CC
- 4 Gateway Open, Gateway CC, Fort Myers



  
**Palm Beach Gardens**

P.O. Box 109601  
 Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410  
 407-624-8400

### Headquarters

Staff of more than 100 directs all operations of the PGA of America from a headquarters building, now undergoing expansion, on the grounds of PGA National Golf Club, considered the PGA of America's home club.

### FLORIDA ACTIVITIES

-  PGA Seniors Championship, PGA National GC, Palm Beach Gardens
-  Winter Tournament Program, PGA National GC, Palm Beach Gardens
-  Oldsmobile National Scramble Championship, Walt Disney World
-  PGA Merchandise Show, Orange County Convention Center, Orlando



  
**Daytona Beach**

2570 Volusia Ave., Suite B  
 Daytona Beach, FL 32114  
 904-254-800

### Headquarters

Staff of about 20 administers both the touring and teaching divisions from temporary headquarters at Indigo Lakes CC while a new headquarters building and home golf course is being built "across the road" (I-4).

### FLORIDA ACTIVITIES

- 1 Oldsmobile Classic, Wycliffe G&CC, Lake Worth
- 2 Phar-Mor Inverrary Classic, Inverrary CC, Lauderdale
- 3 Centel Classic, Course TBD, Tallahassee
- 4 JCPenney Classic, Bardmoor CC, Largo



  
**Palm Beach Gardens**

4361 Northlake Blvd  
 Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410  
 407-694-2977

The builders retain the executive services of Don Rossi, retired executive director of the National Golf Foundation.



  
**Jupiter**

1150 South U.S. One  
 Jupiter, FL 33477  
 407-744-6006

A staff of about 35 coordinates the NGF's research, consulting and promotional activities from just north of Palm Beach Gardens.

## FLORIDA'S NUMBERS

Category	Number	(Rank)
Number of golfers .....	1,171,635	(7)
Participation Rate .....	9.9%	(22)
Rounds per year per golfer .....	36.0	(2)
Golfers who are women .....	22.1%	(26)
Golfers age 50 and older .....	42.6%	(1)
Average age of golfers .....	45.6	(1)
Total facilities .....	765	(1)
Daily Fee .....	369	(4)
Municipal .....	76	(6)
Private .....	320	(2)
Par-Three .....	43	(3)
Executive .....	100	(1)
Total Courses .....	932	(1)
Daily Fee .....	431	(2)
Municipal .....	89	(6)
Private .....	412	(1)
Par-Three .....	53	(3)
Executive .....	119	(1)
Nine-Hole Facilities .....	105	(17)
Percentage of total .....	14%	(50)
Daily Fee .....	63	(14)
Municipal .....	13	(21)
Private .....	29	(25)
Total Holes .....	15,300	(1)
Daily Fee .....	6,930	(1)
Municipal .....	1,413	(5)
Private .....	6,957	(1)
Population per 18 Holes .....	14,300	(6)
Population per 18 Public Holes .....	26,200	(16)
Golfers per 18 holes .....	1,378	(8)

Source: National Golf Foundation, Jan. 1, 1989

(From page 16)

In Florida \$200,000 lots are advertised on billboards and sold out of mobile homes!

But residents aren't the only ones who get a good deal.

Collectively, Florida's golf resorts so completely dominate the industry that half its resort courses could be distributed to all the other resort areas of the world and a case could be made that what was left still comprised the world's best collection.

And we cannot emphasize the word "collection" too strongly. Nobody seriously claims that Florida resort courses surpass all others in quality. It's just that there are so many "world-class" resort courses in the state that they tend to get lost in the shuffle:

What is mundane here would be labeled "spectacular" almost anywhere else.

That's the sunny side: golf is booming. People plan their whole lives around the fact that they can move to Florida and play golf year-around on

outstanding golf courses whose quality somehow seems to improve every year.

The down side, so far as superintendents are concerned, is that people plan their whole lives around the fact that they can come to Florida and play golf every day of the year on what they expect to be the best golf course in the world.

If you have to, read those last two paragraphs again. The subtle differences between them have led to a profession littered with heart disease and ulcers.

In an unguarded moment, ask a Florida superintendent to name his biggest problems and most likely he'll respond, "Mole crickets, members' egos, the #%&i\* (fill in your regulatory agency of choice) and I need a day off."

Mole crickets are a serious problem in Florida (page 56), as are parasitic nematodes, but turf managers all over the world must battle pests with a declining arsenal of chemical weapons.

Nor has Florida cornered the mar-

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ket on politically-charged regulatory agencies.

What makes Florida unique is its combination of tropical climate and easy accessibility to hordes of wealthy egos who insist, "I want things as good as they were up North, only better."

Only God has not yet revealed how to grow things "as good as they were up North" in a tropical climate with lots of traffic and no dormant season.

And that's where the tine meets the turf.

The problem is peculiar to private clubs, but nearly half of Florida's courses are private.

In guarded conversations, most golf-playing superintendents will admit that properly maintained bentgrass under optimum conditions provides a better putting surface than the best hybrid bermudagrasses.

The differences are subtle, and should not make a bit of difference to any but the lowest handicapper, but fact has a way of disappearing in the face of ego.

Members know that bentgrass is best and, "We want the very best course in Florida, bar none. That's why I come here every winter and that's why you have a job."

End of discussion.

Most superintendents use the strategy of overseeding — planting bentgrass, or various combinations of bentgrass, rye, fescue and poa trivialis in the fall as the bermudagrass goes dormant — but that creates another set of problems: the greens are nearly unplayable during the two transition periods. Furthermore, overseeded greens generally don't reach peak quality until late February.

Most private club members are seasonal residents: they return north in March and April, meaning a lot of work goes into providing only a few weeks of superior putting surface.

So a few clubs are now experimenting with keeping the bentgrass greens year-around.

Bentgrass will stay alive — barely

— in Florida's long, hot, humid summers, but not if it gets any significant traffic.

How much traffic is significant?

"Anything more than two four-somes a day and I've got trouble," said one superintendent.

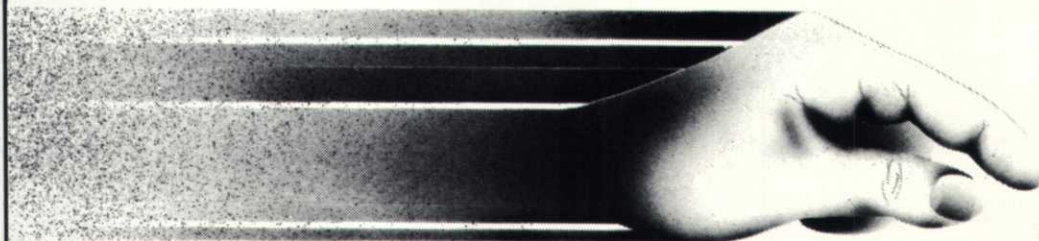
Furthermore, the amount of care required to keep the grass alive is extraordinary. Frequent syringing, sometimes around the clock, is required to keep the grass cool. And all that water leads to fungus problems and...

The whole world saw what can happen when PGA National GC in Palm Beach Gardens lost its greens the week before it hosted the 1987 PGA Championship.

And the spectre of those brown, lifeless greens on international television, created by relentless pressure to have "the best course in the world, bar none" hangs over every superintendent's head.

Perhaps that's why the typical Florida superintendent rarely stays at one place more than five or six years. 🐢

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