

## Harrison named director of Fla. golf association

DESTIN, Fla. — The Emerald Coast Golf Association (ECGA) has named Nancy Harrison as its new director.

Harrison is a native of Destin and has literally grown up with the modern Emerald Coast. She has an extensive background in advertising sales and special event management. Her bachelor's degree is in communication arts with an emphasis in public relations from the University of West Florida.

Prior to returning to UWF to pursue her degree, she worked three years in the Golf Operations Department at Sandestin Resort.

The ECGA is a marketing/advertising/public relations organization with golf course and lodging establishment members.

The objective of the association is to promote the Emerald Coast and ECGA members as a major golf vacation destination.

Current members include: Abbott Realty, Holiday Inn/Okaloosa Island, Bluewater Bay Resort, Emerald Bay Golf Club, Seacape Resort, Sandestin Resort.

Sandestin Beach Hilton, Santa Rosa Golf and Beach Club, Edgewater Beach Resort and the Hombre Golf Club.

## World Woods

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December morning, the relief apparent in his voice. "We spent no money on advertising. None. We returned to a regular, 18-hole price schedule this month. And you know what? This weekend we're sold out."

A full house was only a dream when World Woods first opened last spring. Fazio designed a massive facility consisting of two regulation, 18-hole courses named Pine Barrens and Rolling Oaks; a 22-acre practice range; a two-acre, 36-hole putting course; a nine-hole, short course; and three prac-

tice holes — a par-3, par-4 and par-5.

But Cooke knew quality and the Fazio name alone weren't enough, initially at least, to attract golfers to a facility located 90 minutes from any large metropolitan area, in a state many believe is over-saturated with golf courses.

What Cooke did was offer generous group discounts for *unlimited* play at all World Woods facilities. The larger the group, the bigger the savings for individual golfers. Prices included range balls and golf carts and were as follows:

- Groups of 13 or more — \$50 per player.
- Groups of nine to 12 — \$60 per player.
- Groups of four to eight — \$80 per player.
- Groups of one to three — \$100 per player.

"We felt if golfers experienced all the different areas for a single day, they would want to come back. This was designed to give them that opportunity," Cooke explained.

World Woods tried the promotion from April through November, typically the slow season in West Florida. Anywhere from 100 to 1,200 golfers took advantage of the program every month, yielding thousands of dollars in added revenue.

"We had 14 groups of 120 or more," he said. "The only thing we asked of the largest groups was they come on our slow days — Monday and Tuesday. The others fit in whenever they wanted to play."

Cooke spent nothing advertising the program or the course. Faxes were sent to people inquiring about the group discount. Word-of-mouth did the rest.

"A new facility like this could easily spend \$250,000 to \$1 million on advertising," Cooke said. "Golf Digest gets something like \$30,000 for a quarter-page ad."

The only problem arose when groups neared cut-off points, Cooke said. For example, if four people intended to play at \$80 apiece, but only three showed up, they were charged \$100 apiece. The extra \$20 set off occasional fireworks.

"We had to make sure they understood that when they made the reservation," Cooke said. "We tried to be very clear about that up front."

Now that the busy season has arrived, World Woods has instituted an 18-hole price of \$60 weekdays and \$75 weekends at both regulation courses. The price includes range balls. An additional 18 holes is \$25.

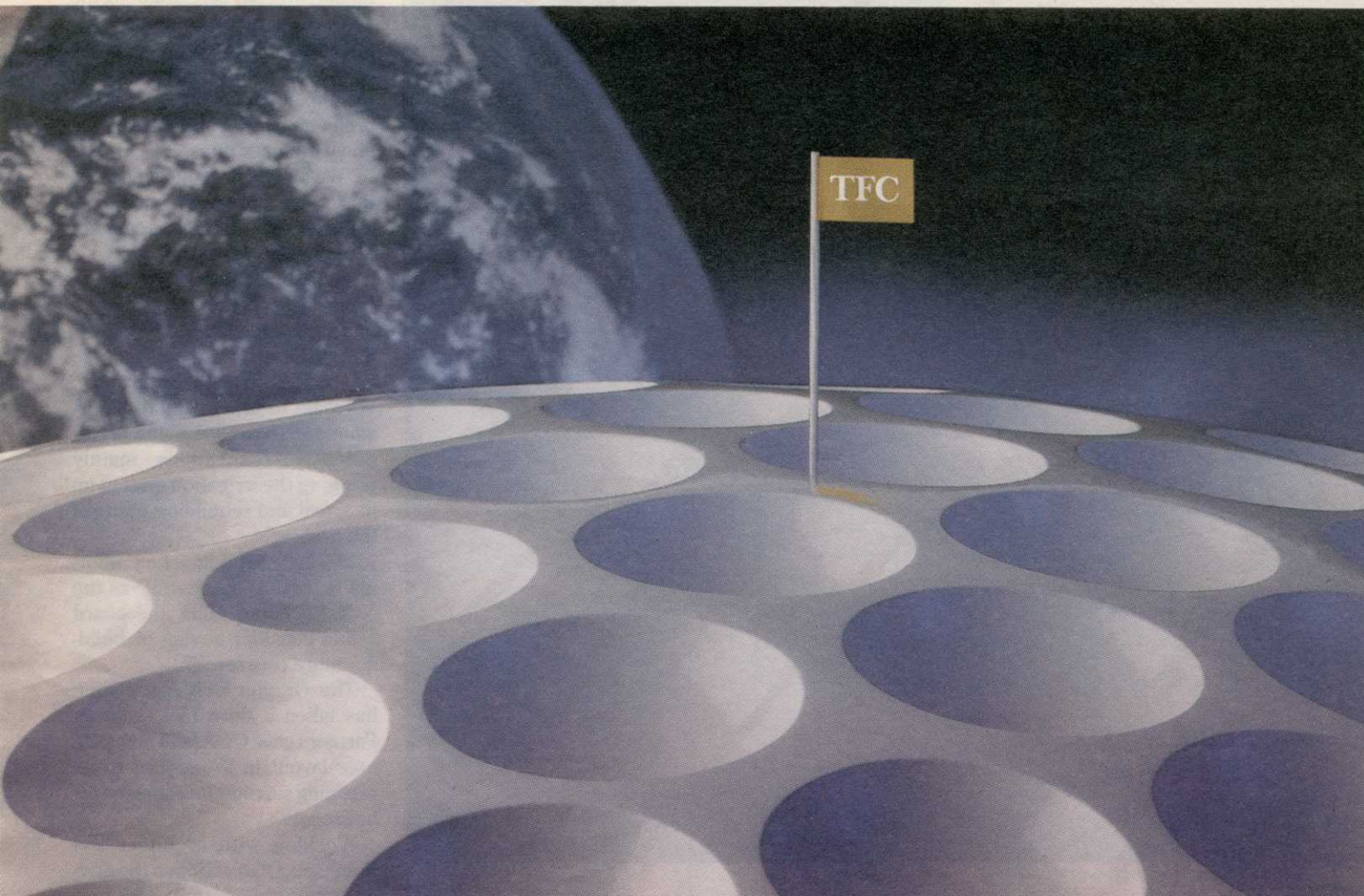
"The discount program helped us gradually test the market and establish the 18-hole fees," Cooke said.

Would a similar discount program be effective in other, non-urban areas?

"The fact that we have a world-class facility here was the key," Cooke said. "Tom Fazio has created something special here. That's how we were able to get by."

"If we were in the middle of the country with a mediocre golf course, it wouldn't have worked. I give all the credit to Tom Fazio."

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