

## NGF Conference set for early Jan. in West Virginia

WHEELING, W.Va. — Reservations are now being accepted for the 11th annual National Institute of Golf Management to be held Jan. 9-14 at Oglebay Park Resort and Conference Center here.

The event is co-sponsored by the National Golf Foundation.

During the five-day program, students cover all aspects of golf facility management including: clubhouse and golf shop merchandising; course maintenance and security; food, beverage and range operations; personnel, customer and press relations; publicity and promotions; golf car economics; rules management and tournament play.

Students must attend for two years to complete the program. Those who do receive five continuing education credits from North Carolina State University.

For each year, PGA of America members earn three certification credits, GolfCourse Superintendent Association of America members receive two-and a-half CEUs. The LPGA offers certification credits to members. Program completion also entitles students to attend specialized graduate seminars held each year.

The faculty includes authorities from the USGA, PGA of America, GCSAA, American Society of Golf Course Architects and NGF, as well as members of the Board of Regents, course owners and operators, developers, and manufacturers.

The registration fee is \$325.

For further information, contact Oglebay's Department of Continuing Education at 800-624-6988, ext. 278 or the NGF at 800-733-6006.

## Deer Creek Golf Club reopens following \$3 million facelift

DEERFIELD BEACH, Fla. — South Florida golfers and visitors alike will have the chance to play a new course on an old site. The Deer Creek Golf Club, host of the LPGA's Mazda Classic season opener in past years, reopened late in 1993 after a \$3 million face-lift by designer Arthur Hills.

One of Hills' jobs was to design new greens to USGA specifications and redesign all approaches and bunkers surrounding the greens. The new greens average 5,800 square feet, providing about 500 to 1,000 additional square feet per green. The new course includes the addition of "gold" championship tees, offering more than 7,000 yards of play and four sets of tees.

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In a related move, Boca Raton Resort and Club, winner of the AAA Five Diamond and Mobile Travel Guide Five Star hospitality awards, is joining forces with Franklin Golf Properties, Inc. which owns and operates Deer Creek.

Under a lease agreement signed in Au-



Deer Creek reopened in November after a six-month, \$3 million renovation.

gust, the Boca Raton Resort and Club will operate the clubhouse facilities and all food and beverage operations at both golf clubs, including the restaurants, lounges, outdoor cafes and meeting and banquet facilities.

Franklin Golf Properties will continue to use its own team of professionals to run the golf courses, driving ranges, South Florida Golf Academy and golf shops. All facilities will remain open to the public.

## Port Royal counts on families during slow summer months

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The problems he found and the solutions he implemented led to a 50 percent increase in afternoon rounds played as well as added pro shop and snack bar sales over the past three years.

What jumped off the survey forms right away was the fact that most of Port Royal's summer clientele consisted of families, Tinkey said.

"We quickly learned," he said, "that the first reason they came to Port Royal was for Dad to spend some time with the children. The second thing was that Mom insisted everyone know about Reason 1. She didn't come all the way down here to provide child care while Dad played golf."

Port Royal offered child care. But many parents were concerned about leaving their children with strangers.

So, why not bring the kids on the course? "Cost was the main reason. The percep-

tion was that golf was just too expensive for parents to take kids out on a lark," Tinkey said.

"We recognized that if we were going to get more customers on the course during the summer, we needed to create a more friendly environment for fathers, mothers and children to play together. And after all, child golfers grow into adult golfers."

So, three years ago, Port Royal instituted "The Family Special" program, allowing kids aged 7 to 17 to play free when accompanied by a parent or grandparent.

"For a typical family with two kids, that cut greens fees in half, from \$200 down to \$100," Tinkey said.

"The Family Special" helped dispel the notion that golf was too expensive. But would the kids be truly welcome on the golf course? What about non-parents? How would they feel about paying \$50 to play behind a foursome that included a pair of

rug rats?

Tinkey dealt with this by limiting the program to selected afternoon hours. Prime tee times were reserved for childless golfers.

"Actually, we found in many cases that families played faster than all-adult foursomes," Tinkey said. "It's like women golfers. The perception is they play slower than men. But they don't want to be branded with that reputation and often play faster than men."

Families are the same, Tinkey explained. Parents rarely let their children waste too much time searching for lost balls. Often just parents hit off the tee. The kids hit three or four shots in the fairway and then pick up their balls while the parents putt out.

"Most of the kids are just happy to be with Dad and get to sit on his lap and drive the golf cart," Tinkey said.

Members account for 20 percent of Port Royal's play. Many are grandparents. Tinkey extended the same "kids play free" offer to them during a membership meeting.

"I've never seen so many tears of gratitude," Tinkey said. "Most of them said they never got to spend more than an hour of quality time with their grandchildren. They loved the idea of spending 4-1/2 hours, one-on-one with their grandkids in a golf cart. And grandparents are so patient, they make great instructors."

As for the kids, "They loved it," said Tinkey, noting that golf courses typically do little to make children feel welcome. "You know how kids are. You tell them they can't have something and they want it all the more. Golf is good for them, they enjoy being outside and we're building a client base for the future."

Any lost greens fees are partially offset by ancillary sales, Tinkey said. When children play, parents usually rent a second golf cart and two sets of clubs. Children eat at the snack bar and buy merchandise at the pro shop. Junior clinic participants have increased.

"We managed to keep the program a secret for two years. But this spring, two or three other courses copied it," Tinkey said.

"The program has provided a friendly environment for families, increased the number of juniors introduced to the game, increased revenue for the golf courses and created lasting vacation memories."

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