

Golf 20/20 highlights research, results and plans for action

Industry studies identify growth potential

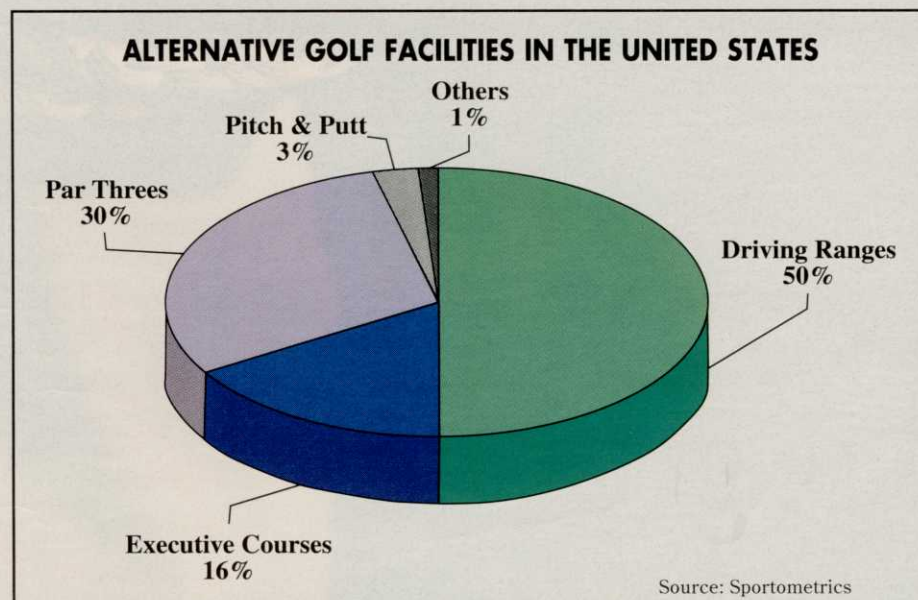
By ANDREW OVERBECK

ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. — In the wake of another year of flat participation growth, Golf 20/20 convened here again Nov. 11-13 to discuss and implement plans to grow the game of golf.

The short term and long term goals are aggressive: increase the number of new golfers to 3.5 million from 3 million a year, while slowing the exodus of golfers to 2.5 million from 3 million a year. By 2020, the organization hopes to have 55 million par-

However, in order to bring more new players into the game quickly, researchers also identified 12 million adults in the United States that fit the best customer profile that do not currently play golf, but have expressed an interest in playing or playing more frequently.

"We wanted to identify the best and most profitable customers and then identify the best and most profitable prospects," said Dr. Joe Beditz, president of the National Golf Foundation which conducted the research in



The percentage breakdown by type of the 5,542 alternative facilities in the United States.

ticipants playing 1 billion rounds a year.

Since the first meeting, Golf 20/20 has amassed a staggering amount of data to help it both crystallize its goals and identify a plan of attack.

MARKET SEGMENTATION

In addition to quantifying the number of golfers in the United States, Golf 20/20 segmented its consumer research to identify a "best" customer profile.

Of the 36 million golfers in the country, research identified 10.1 million that fit the "best" customer profile. These customers make up 40 percent of all golfers, account for 81 percent of spending and 85 percent of rounds played.

cooperation with NFO WorldGroup.

Researchers also found that among the golfing prospects, ball striking was three to five times more important than scoring, course conditions, competition, and exercise. The information will help structure teaching initiatives such as Link Up 2 Golf (see accompanying article) and other skill improvement programs. Fifty-three percent of potential best customers said that they would be very or somewhat likely to participate in Link Up 2 Golf.

"Of the committed best customers, 40 percent said that they had committed to the game in less than a year," said the NGF's vice

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Industry gets behind player development

By ANDREW OVERBECK

ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. — Acting on initiatives and ideas presented at the inaugural Golf 20/20 conference, the industry has formed two new player development programs.

Link Up 2 Golf was created in order to target new, infrequent and former golfers. Under the local leadership of former PGA of America president Will Mann, Link Up 2 Golf was tested this past summer at eight golf facilities in the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area of North Carolina.

While there is still work to be done to refine the model, the success of the pilot program has convinced the PGA of America and the National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) to team up and expand the program.

"The time is right to get together with the industry and roll out Link Up 2 Golf on a wider basis this year," said Mike Hughes, NGCOA president. "The two essential elements of this program are the facility owner and the golf pro, so it is a very natural marriage."

LINK UP 2 GOLF'S SUCCESS

Over a three-month period, the program had 334 participants at facilities that included golf ranges, public courses and a private country club. For \$199 participants received six hours of instruction from a PGA professional, five rounds of golf, equipment rental and complimentary range balls.

"The program worked well at some places and not well at others," said Mann. "Ranges did well, they still provided the free rounds of golf and sold an average of one to two sets of clubs for every class. Semi-private and public courses were less successful due to the lack of time and competing instructional programs. The private country club was a huge success, they had 65 participants and had to turn away 30 to 40 more."

After participating in the program, 78 percent said they were more comfortable and 41 percent said they planned to play 11 to 20 rounds in the

next year.

JUNIOR GOLF

Another sign of success at this year's summit was the United States Golf Association's creation of a Web site that will serve as a clearinghouse for junior programs in the United States.

LINK UP 2 GOLF Participant History

Never Played	20%
Only Hit Balls on Range	17%
Only Played a Few Times	24%
Play Four or Less Times/Year	15%
Play Frequently	7%

Source: Golf 20/20

The site, www.juniorlinks.com, is currently focusing on registering junior programs through an online registration process. It will feature content on a wide range of subjects including rules, swing tips and college scholarship information.

The site will play a role in the regional summits that the USGA Foundation has held around the country. The summits bring junior golf communities together to discuss best practices, build awareness, and stimulate growth and participation in junior programs.

"This will be a comprehensive database of junior programs in the United States," said Jessica Turnwald, USGA fellow. "The site will encourage parents and kids to get into golf and will facilitate local and regional summit meetings."

Carolinas show a success

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. — Regional trade shows may be a hot ticket this year given the downturn in air travel and a slumping economy, according to officials of the Carolinas Golf Course Superintendents Association. The Carolinas GCSA's 35th annual Conference and Trade Show here generated record revenues for the 1,600-member association.

"No one really knew how we would fare given the cloud over the economy," said association president Steve Wright. "The fact that we had a record year in terms of both income and attendance is great news for us and could be a good indicator for other regional trade shows."

Wright suggested that the uncertainty over air travel meant people were looking for product

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The First Tee expands overseas, tops 2001 goals

By ANDREW OVERBECK

GUANLAN TOWN, Shenzhen, China — The First Tee has expanded beyond the United States with the establishment of The First Tee of South China at Mission Hills Golf Club.

Joe Barrow, national director of The First Tee, joined Mission Hills Group chairman Dr. David Chu and Powergolfasia CEO Peter Hsu to make the announcement during a clinic with Tiger Woods that was held to benefit The First Tee experience in Asia.

"This is the initial First Tee located outside of North America," said Barrow. "Many thanks to Dr. David Chu and Mission Hills Golf Club for donating the land and constructing the six hole golf course."

The course, which is set to open in

March, marks the first step towards achieving one of its Phase II goals and expanding The First Tee, added Barrow.

"To extend The First Tee to China is



Joe Barrow, Tiger Woods, Dr. David Chu and Peter Hsu at Mission Hills Golf Club

key to our goals for Phase II and the expansion of the program," he said.

"We are delighted to take this first step into South China and look forward to the prospects of extending into other cities in China over the coming years."

SUCCESS ON THE HOME FRONT

Back on the home front, the organization has surpassed its first year expectations for Phase II by more than doubling the number of participants expected to experience The First Tee, opening 44 dedicated facilities and developing 74 affiliate relationships. The First Tee introduced 64,000 juniors to the game last year and now has 85 facilities in total.

In the next five years, the organization aims to introduce the game to 500,000 youngsters, have 250 dedicated facilities and establish 500 affiliate relationships with existing golf courses.

Research

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president of research Jim O'Hara. "We need to quickly convert these potential customers into best customers."

ALTERNATIVE FACILITIES

Research also identified that 62 percent of golfers leave the game because of time constraints. Since alternative facilities (par-3 courses, driving ranges, executive courses, and pitch and putt courses) take less time to play, another significant research effort examined the role of alternative facilities in bringing in new golfers and re-

taining existing ones.

Research conducted by Sportometrics found that there are 5,542 alternative facilities in the United States and identified the best practices that make the facilities successful. The firm also found that alternative facilities complement traditional facilities: golfers pay and play more at alternative facilities when they are in communities with a larger num-

ber of traditional facilities; and golfers pay and play more at traditional facilities when they are in communities with a large number of alternative facilities.

The 6.6 million golfers that play exclusively at driving ranges and alternative facilities represent an immediate pool of potential golfers for traditional facilities. According to O'Hara, most of those users play exclusively at alternative

facilities because they are less expensive and less time consuming.

Golf 20/20 is developing industry initiatives to support alternative facilities and operators to integrate their efforts with traditional courses. ■



The executive board fields questions at the conference.

Carolinas

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and professional information closer to home.

Close to 190 companies from nearly 30 states exhibited at the trade show, down marginally from 2000. Attendance figures were up, however, boosting overall revenues by more than two percent. According to



The Carolinas show posted records

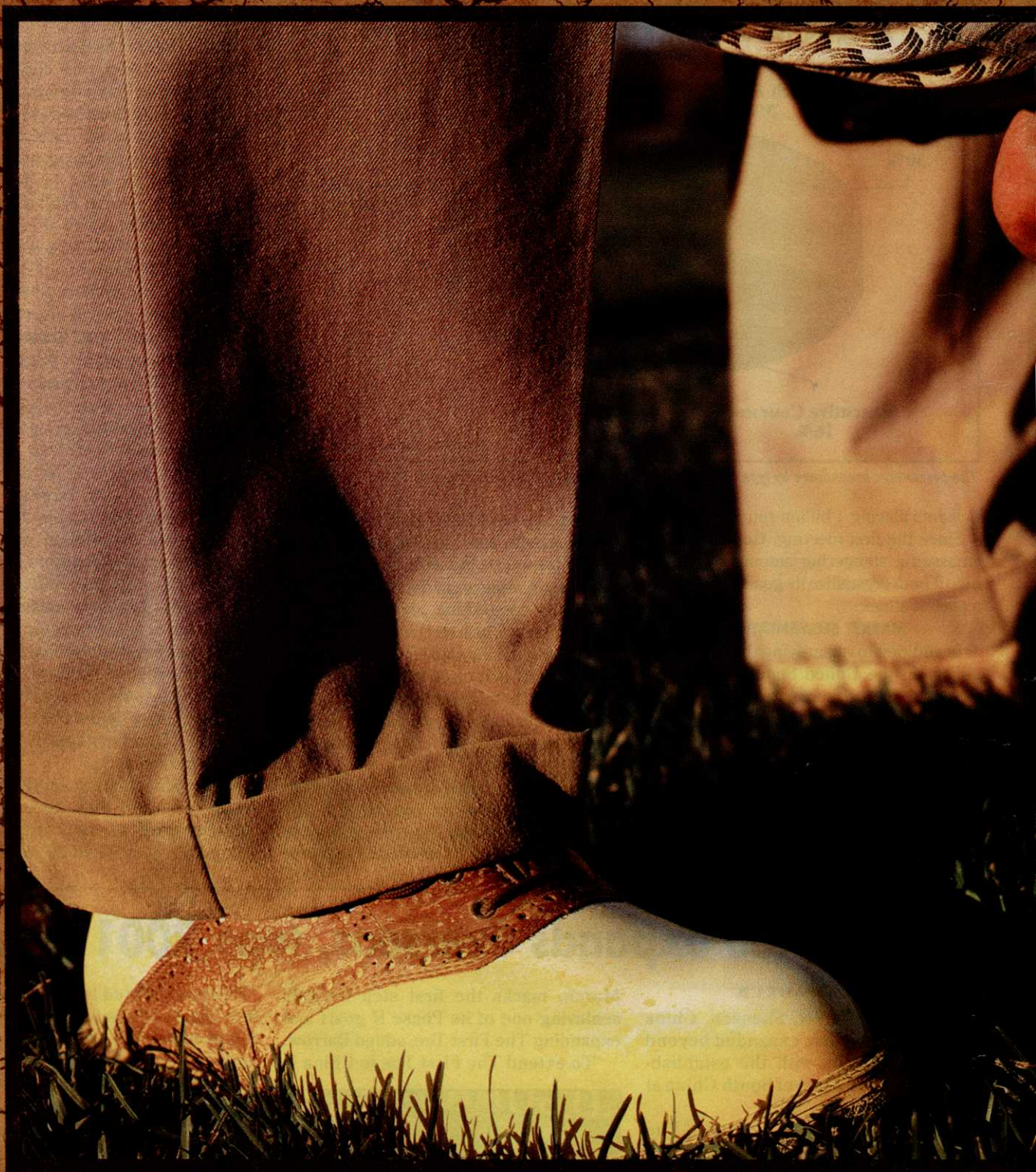
communications director Trent Bouts, more than 2,000 attendees attended the show and educational sessions at the 100,000-square-foot Myrtle Beach Convention Center.

"We received good feedback from exhibitors," said Bouts. "The show gives them a chance to do what they needed to do and they reported that the traffic and interest was strong."

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Also at the show, the Carolinas GCSA recognized Palmer Maples Jr., CGCS, with its 2001 Distinguished Service Award. The award is the latest in a long line for Maples, who is credited as one of the first to introduce bentgrass greens in the South at Charlotte Country Club (N.C.), more than 40 years ago. In recent years he has also been recognized by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, the United States Golf Association's Green Section and the Georgia Golf Hall of Fame. He is a former president of the GCSAA and the Carolinas GCSA and was a director of the Georgia Golf Course Superintendent Association. ■

— Andrew Overbeck



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HERBICIDES THAT STAIN. AND**