

Reap-What-You-Sow Philosophy

BY LARRY AYLWARD, EDITOR

Ed Eget doesn't recall the man's name, but he certainly remembers the great idea the man gave him to secure more tournaments at his golf course.

Eget and his second wife, Corinne, who own Olde York CC in Columbus, N.J., met the mystery man in a bar in Monterey, Calif., during the National Golf Course Owners Association's annual meeting in 1999. All Eget remembers about the man is that he owns a golf course in Ohio. But they talked some serious shop.

"I was telling him that I wasn't getting enough tournaments and that it was hurting my business," Eget recalls. "Then he told me his idea. It was an interesting concept, and I told him I wanted to copy it."

The mystery man's idea follows a reap-what-you-sow philosophy. Prior to embracing his idea, the few tournaments that Eget hosted were held by area charities, which sponsored them for fundraising.

The mystery man advised Eget to offer free one-year memberships to each charity holding its tournament at his course. The memberships would be auctioned at the dinners following the tournaments and the proceeds donated to the charities.

Before implementing the idea, Olde York, which is near Philadelphia, held one or two tournaments a month on Monday nights. After implementing the idea in the spring of 1999, the course held tournaments almost every Monday night from April through October. Tournaments were also a sellout last year, and Eget doesn't expect anything less this year.

For example, if the Visiting Nurses Association sponsored a tournament, Eget would donate a free membership to the organization to be auctioned during the dinner for the players after they finished their rounds. The highest bidder for the mem-



Ed and Corinne Eget have found that charity and golf make perfect sense.

bership would write his or her tax-deductible check to the Visiting Nurses Association and receive the year's free membership to Olde York, including initiation fee and dues, valued at \$9,400.

"This enables the charity holding the tournament to raise more money," adds Eget, who says memberships have been auctioned for as high as \$7,500 and as low as \$2,500. "We've raised more than \$100,000 for charities in the last year."

The mystery man's idea has gone over like a Broadway smash at Olde York. But it's not only Eget's course that's benefitting.

Of course, the charities treasure the idea and the extra cash. They like it so much that they're booking their tournaments at Olde York a year in advance and making their \$500 down payments, Eget says.

"We're retaining everybody," Eget says, noting that other charities heard about Olde York's approach and moved their tournaments to the club. The charity tournaments are also increasing club memberships. Many golfers who purchase the auctioned memberships are joining the club and paying normal dues after the auc-

tioned memberships expire, Eget says, noting that the course's 350 memberships are almost sold out.

One of the charities that holds its tournament at Olde York, the Vietnam Veterans Association, is close to Eget's heart. Eget was a helicopter pilot in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969.

Eget has no use of his right leg, which was severely injured after his helicopter was shot down. After the accident, he was sent home to the United States and spent 11 months in a Philadelphia hospital. Eget underwent 13 leg operations. Doctors wanted to amputate his leg above the knee, but they couldn't get Eget's first wife to sign the release papers to perform the surgery.

Eget is thankful to have his leg, even though he can't use it. He's also happy to have the Vietnam Veterans at his course. They moved their outing to Olde York two years ago after learning that Eget would donate a membership to be auctioned by the organization.

"I'd been trying to get the Vietnam Veterans to have its tournament at our course for several years," he says. "Now they're staying with us."

Interestingly, the 60-year-old Eget didn't take up golf until he was in his 40s. He and Corinne purchased a horse farm in 1993 and hired Gary Player to design a golf course on the property.

Eget, who walks with a limp, is upbeat about his life and is not letting his bum leg interfere with his game or his business. He's a decent golfer with a 17 handicap.

During a recent round at a course in Orlando, Eget slowly scaled a steep knoll on the side of the fairway to reach his golf ball. He looked at his playing partners, whom he knew were watching his every step. "Even a one-legged man can climb this hill," he said with a chuckle. ■