

## James “Bob” Husband

CEO of Heritage Golf Group says it's ‘incredibly important to give people what they want’

**J**ames “Bob” Husband is president and CEO of San Diego-based

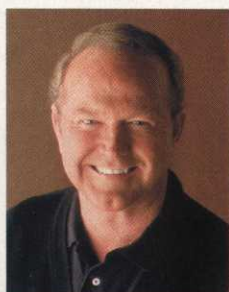
Heritage Golf Group, which operates 14 public and private courses nationwide, with plans to grow to 20 facilities by the end of 2005.

“Our goal is to become known as a boutique-type company that provides a higher level of service to guests and members to the point that we’re perceived as being the Mercedes of the golf industry, or the Four Seasons of golf in terms of service,” according to the company’s Web site.

Husband has operated courses for 25 years, previously founding Cobblestone Golf Group in 1992 and before that co-founding a company that ultimately became CCA/GolfCorp, the public golf operations subsidiary of Club Corporation of America. He is a PGA golf professional and was a PGA Tour member in 1978 and 1979.

*Golfdom* asked Husband to share his thoughts about the golf business and give readers some insight into one of the most successful course operators in the golf industry.

**Golfdom:** *What is the most important issue facing golf course owners today?*



**Husband:** Customer retention, whether public or private. There has been such a glut of courses built in so many markets. It has become incredibly important to

give people what they want and get them back to your property. On the private-course side, you are trying to understand the demographic and psychographic profile of your members and guests. In our case, we are trying to become the social center of their lives. When the membership bill comes in the mail at the end of the month, it should be more the family’s social bill than the husband’s club bill. On the daily-fee side, customers need to feel you are giving them a little more [than they could get elsewhere].

**Golfdom:** *What is the key to a good owner/superintendent relationship?*

**Husband:** The golf course is clearly the No. 1 item for which any property is judged. If a course is in great shape all the time, it begins to get a good reputation. You improve the owner/superintendent relationship by mak-

ing superintendents feel they are owners of that property. We have 401k plans, stock-ownership plans and other financial incentives to make superintendents feel like they’re sharing in the business, not only from a conditioning perspective but from a profitability perspective.

**Golfdom:** *Finish this sentence: “The best thing that could happen to the golf industry would be ...”*

**Husband:** ... for developers to become more responsible in building golf courses. The development of golf courses does enhance the development of homes. But the best thing for the golf industry would be if developers would be more responsible about building new courses in markets that are already saturated.

**Golfdom:** *What is the best investment you ever made in your business?*

**Husband:** First is getting the best people. Second is technology. In the Cobblestone days, we had 25 courses and as many as 30 people in the accounting office. Today, we have just three people responsible for accounting. That is all due to technology.

**Golfdom:** *Who are the three most influential people in the golf industry?*

**Husband:** PGA Tour Commissioner Tim Finchem, who is following in the footsteps of Deane Beman. Arnold Palmer, who is still among the leaders in getting endorsements. Tiger Woods, who has made golf more of an athletic sport.

**Golfdom:** *If you could have lunch with anyone, who would it be and what would be the first question you would ask?*

**Husband:** There aren’t many people I overly admire because we all have shortcomings that make us human. If it were anyone in history, Abraham Lincoln. In modern times, Bill Gates. The first question I’d ask Gates is why he didn’t call me when he started his company.

**Golfdom:** *What do you do in your free time?*

**Husband:** My 13-year-old son and my wife have dominated my time outside work.

**Golfdom:** *What was the last book you read?*

**Husband:** “The Summons” and “Skipping Christmas,” both by John Grisham.

**Golfdom:** *What is your favorite movie?*

**Husband:** “Patton.”

**Golfdom:** *With what club do you hit the best?*

**Husband:** Driver.