

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Club Car goes on offensive

In an effort to promote the sport, Club Car is sponsoring free golf lessons for employees who want to learn the game. The lessons are part of the Link Up 2 Golf player development program offered at The First Tee of Augusta, Ga. Link Up 2 Golf was developed by Golf 20/20, a collaborative effort of the entire golf industry intended to accelerate growth and participation.

Club Car is paying for a pilot group of employees to participate in the Link Up 2 Golf program and hopes to expand the offer to at least 100 employees in 2005.

"Those of us who depend on the health of the game to support our business should be willing to invest in programs that grow the game," Club Car President and CEO Phil Tralies said. "We should not expect others to do what we're not doing ourselves."

Courses really are for the birds

A new study shows that natural vegetation on courses along the Grand Strand in South Carolina has increased the number and variety of birds while also drawing other animals.

The U.S. Golf Association and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funded the \$60,000 study, which is the first to make the correlation between bird populations and golf courses.

"People have the perception that the course is all grass," said Peter Stangel, director of the Southern Region of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. "Not this one," he added, referring to The Reserve Golf Club at Litchfield, where the study's results were unveiled.

Stangel said some of the environmental improvements, such as letting grass grow and breaking up continuous patches of turf

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NGCOA Joins the Club

TRADE ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS EFFORTS TO LIMIT TECHNOLOGY

The National Golf Course Owners Association (NGCOA) has joined the great technology debate. The

NGCOA recently announced it's joining the United States Golf Association, the American Society of Golf Course Architects, the R&A and the PGA Tour in expressing its concern that technology is hurting the game.

NGCOA said it supports efforts of the rule-making bodies to limit the impact technology has on golf ball distance.

"We view this issue as a top priority for the industry; and encourage both the rule-making bodies and the manufacturers to develop a timely and credible set of parameters that restrict further technology-driven increases in hitting distances," the organization, headed by Executive Director Mike Hughes, said in a statement. "The NGCOA agrees that the purpose of the equipment rules is to protect golf's best traditions, to prevent over-reliance on technological advances rather than skill, and to ensure that skill is the dominant element of success throughout the game."

The NGCOA said any further significant increase in hitting distances is undesirable. It cited its concerns as the following:



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- Increased golf ball distance results in errant shots missing their intended target by greater distances than before. New golf courses are required to be built with more land in order to accommodate the need for larger safety buffers to either side of the preferred line of play. The effect has been that golf courses take up more land, with subsequent increases in land acquisition, construction and maintenance costs.

- Older courses, many of which have been brilliantly designed, are being rendered powerless to challenge the modern power hitter.

- Off-line shots, due to the greater dispersion that is generated by increased distance, also contribute to slow play. Additionally, greater hitting distances subject longer hitters to increased waiting periods between many shots, further impacting the pace of play.