

Bill Fountain

The co-owner of Majestic at Lake Walden is never short on promotional ideas to drive business

Bill Fountain is co-owner of the Majestic at Lake

Walden, a Jerry

Matthews design in Hart-

land, Mich. In a

state overflowing with public

courses and

recreational

options, Foun-

tain believes it

takes more

than scenic lakeside vistas

and a first-class layout to en-

terce players to his 27-hole

facility an hour northwest of

Detroit. His promotional ideas have benefited and delighted his partners, players and community.

Among the more intriguing events hosted along the shores of Lake Walden:

■ A golf ball drop for a local girl battling cancer — The club sold 1,000 golf

balls at \$25 each. All 1,000 tickets sold in about two weeks. Each ball was marked with a number

between one and 1,000 with a corresponding ticket displaying the purchaser's name. While more than 200 people looked on, a helicopter flew over the practice range and dropped the balls from a height of 300 feet to a target green. The five closest balls to the pin won \$1,000 apiece. The young girl drove out to the green and helped decide the winners before climbing aboard the helicopter for a ride over her house.

"It was a truly special day," Fountain says. "The generosity displayed at that

event still amazes me."

■ Turkey Day — The Sunday before Thanksgiving the past several years, anyone bringing a frozen turkey weighing 20 pounds or more to the course receives 18 holes of golf and a cart. The turkeys are donated to a local food bank. Fountain has contacted a number of local courses about expanding the event to their facilities as well.

■ Banana Day — The entire staff dresses in yellow and gives out bananas to guests.

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GOING BANANAS: One of Fountain's wacky promotions is Banana Day.

PROFILE/BILL FOUNTAIN

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Golfdom asked Fountain to share his thoughts about the golf business and give readers more insight into the owner that some call "The Banana Man."

Golfdom: *What's the most important issue facing golf course owners?*

Fountain: We still look at golf in the traditional way. Golf, as an entertainment option, takes a tremendous amount of time. However, our society, for a number of reasons, has eroded personal time for recreational activities. The game has not changed significantly since it started. When I look at other



sports and see how they have evolved, I feel golf is at a crossroads where change will be good for the growth of the game. We need to become more creative and mold our businesses to address the amount of time we spend playing the game. Perhaps that means an 18-hole course broken up into three six-hole courses that could accommodate six-hole play and leagues but still allow 18-hole events.

Who would have thought 20 years ago that beach volleyball would be an Olympic sport, or that riding a skateboard 40 feet in the air could make you millions?

Golfdom: *What's the key to a good*

owner/superintendent relationship?

Fountain: Trust, honesty, respect.

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

Fountain: ... the freedom for businesses to have the ability to entertain their clients and expense them on their business accounts.

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

Fountain: The building of relationships with my partners, team members and others in the golf industry.

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

Fountain: Mother Nature because of the weather, Alan Greenspan because of interest rates and George Bush because of our freedoms.

Golfdom: *Who is your favorite golfer?*

Fountain: Tiger Woods.

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

Fountain: God. And my first words would be to say, "Thank you."

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

Fountain: Spend time with my family.

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

Fountain: "Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... and Others Don't," by Jim Collins.

Golfdom: *What's your favorite movie?*

Fountain: "Caddyshack."

Golfdom: *With which club in your bag do you hit the best?*

Fountain: My 5-iron. ■

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