

Off The Fringe

Business briefs

Rounds rise in February, thanks to warm weather

It was an early spring for the golf industry as favorable weather, along with an extra day in February for leap year, bolstered rounds in February 10.4 percent compared to same-store rounds last February, according to the National Golf Foundation.

The increase was enough to offset January's doldrums and carry year-to-date rounds into positive territory — up 3.4 percent.

February numbers skyrocketed in areas where unusually warm weather drove golfers to dust off the clubs, including in the Upper Midwest (up 360 percent), the Northeast (up 134 percent), and the Mid-Atlantic, which was up 63 percent.

Also reassuring for the industry, areas where winter golf thrives did well, including in the Southeast (up 23 percent), the South Central (up 16 percent) and central and south Florida, which were up more than 7 percent for the month.

Marriott mandates Audubon

Marriott International is requiring its 34 golf courses at 25 locations throughout the United States, Canada and the Caribbean to become Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuaries by the end of the year.

The management company's Doral Golf Resort & Spa in Miami, host of the 2008 WGC-CA Championship in March, became the first-ever Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary in North America to host a World Golf Championships event. About 650 golf courses have gone through the Audubon certification program.

Briefs continue on page 18

From One Dream Job to Another

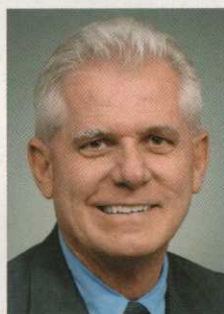
WOODWARD MOVES FROM TORREY PINES TO CEO OF GCSAA

By David Frabotta, Senior Editor

Only a pretty sweet job could have taken Mark Woodward away from San Diego. The past president of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America will host his first U.S. Open in June at Torrey Pines Golf Course, the first municipal facility to host a U.S. Open.

He pursued the position from a hospital bed three years ago during a bout with colitis. "I've been at the Majors, and I knew I'd never have the opportunity to host one unless I moved," Woodward said in March during a *Golfdom* visit to Torrey Pines.

Woodward spent 31 years working in various capacities for the city of Mesa, Ariz. He became the director of golf operations for the city of San Diego in 2005. "I knew it was going to be a very interesting job for me, and it would be a once in a lifetime experience for me being inside



Mark Woodward

the ropes at a Major."

But Woodward won't be inside the ropes for long. After the Open, he'll begin his tenure as CEO of the GCSAA. It's an organization he's known for 30 years, and he earned his certification more than 20 years ago. When he takes the helm July 1, he'll be the

first superintendent to lead the GCSAA.

"I've been working pretty hard my entire career to set myself up for an opportunity like this, so I'm proud to be the first superintendent to lead the organization," Woodward said via phone after the announcement. "I've been a member for 30 years, so I think I have a pretty good idea of what our members are about and what they want from the association — the value of education, programs and services that we offer."

Woodward, who has a master's degree in business administration from the University of Phoenix, says he's always been interested in leading the organization, but he didn't think he would ever have the opportunity

See our June issue for a complete U.S. Open preview.

Continued on page 21

Got a Beautifully Brutal Golf Hole?

If your golf course includes a hole where players boast after carding a bogey or finishing with the same ball they hit from the tee, John Deere Credit wants to showcase it

in a search for the Most Beautifully Brutal Golf Holes in North America.

"The Most Beautifully Brutal Golf Holes is an effort by John Deere Credit to salute the outstanding efforts of course owners, managers and superintendents for creating memorable experiences for players," says Steve Knutson, director of golf and turf leasing for John Deere Credit.

Golf course superintendents, architects, owners and builders can nominate the most Beautifully Brutal Par 4 holes on their courses until May 15 and Par 3 holes until July 15. A Web site, www.JohnDeereCredit.com/BrutalGolfHoles, complete with contest rules and details, has been created to accept nominations. Simply upload a photo of the nominated hole explaining what makes it beautifully brutal.

Nominations will be collected from five regions in the United States and one region in Canada (excluding Quebec). ■



"Woodward" — *Continued from page 16* because outgoing CEO Steve Mona was doing such a good job. He inquired about the position the same week Mona announced he'd be moving on to lead the World Golf Foundation.

"It's the next progression in my career," Woodward says. "I like challenges, and it's going to be a great experience."

The appointment might come as a surprise to many who have witnessed Woodward's satisfaction in working at Torrey Pines. After spending a day with Woodward in late March, he appeared to be a guy who found his niche. In just three years, Woodward became a pillar in the community. He sat on the board of The Friends of Torrey Pines, a business task force that raised \$3 million for renovations that helped bring the Open to the historic golf course. He revamped the fee structures for the Balboa Park and Mission Bay golf courses to make them more profitable — to the tune of \$3 million more in revenue — in spite of death threats from residents who feared their beloved community treasure would become unaffordable. But Woodward didn't blink.

All the while, he led negotiations

to bring high-profile golf tournaments to the city. He's currently talking to the Ladies Professional Golf Association and IMG to bring the Samsung World Championship to Torrey Pines in 2009 and 2010. If he succeeds, Torrey will host its usual PGA Tour event (Buick Invitational), a USGA event (U.S. Open), the Callaway Junior World Championship and the Samsung LPGA event in a 17-month span.

Now Woodward is gearing up for the two largest professional events of his life: hosting a U.S. Open and transitioning power to lead the professional association that has guided his career.

Good thing he knows how to multitask. The GCSAA knows it, too. It also knows how to support its own message. Mona dedicated his tenure to raising the professional status of superintendents. He also said that his successor should come from the golf industry. The board of directors couldn't have supported that message any stronger than appointing one of its own to lead the GCSAA.

Woodward will still get a U.S. Open under his belt, and something tells me it won't be the last time that you'll find him behind the ropes. ■



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