



# Communication Key to Future of GMO

By Rob Schultz

Some amazing developments have taken place in this state during the past few months.

Reggie White signs with the Green Bay Packers. Rashard Griffith commits to play basketball for the University of Wisconsin. Some of the best athletes in the country commit to play football for Wisconsin.

The right people suddenly are in the right place to make the right moves for some of Wisconsin's top sports teams. And that is the key to any successful organization.

That also is the key to the future of the Greater Milwaukee Open. Officials for the PGA Tour event have made some bold moves in the past few months and, after what initially appeared to be a step backward, it may turn out to be a huge step forward.

In fact, the GMO's plans will have as great an impact on golf in this state as White's signing had on Packer fans in this state.

There were plenty of reasons for the GMO to move from its present site at Tuckaway Country Club in Franklin to Brown Deer Park in Milwaukee starting next year.

A major reason was Tuckaway itself. It's a course with major drainage problems created by the huge housing projects that have sprouted up in the area in recent years.

But Tuckaway also is a private course and that rubs against the grain of what philanthropists Lloyd and Jane Pettit envision for the site of the tournament they have helped finance. They want a public tournament on a public golf course.

That's where Brown Deer Park comes into play. The tournament will be held on the Milwaukee County-owned course starting next year and probably will continue to host the tournament for the next three to four years.

Much needs to be done to successfully pull off a PGA Tour event at Brown Deer.

Pessimists, like myself, have likened Brown Deer to San Diego's Torrey Pines because of the battering it takes from public golfers and the proximity of its greens and tees near the clubhouse that will make it difficult for gallery movement. It's also difficult for a public course to become tournament-ready when the grounds crew is unionized and employed by a municipality or county.

Optimists, like Andy North, who will help renovate Brown Deer, liken the situation to the Western Open and its successful move to public-course Cog Hill and say the public will flock to the place because they'll be able to watch the world's best golfers play a course they, too, can play.

The best thing the GMO has going for it is the Milwaukee County Parks system, which is one of the best and most futuristic in the country. The county parks system, in conjunction with the state PGA, which operates most of its courses, is bending over backwards to help the GMO officials make the tournament work.

The county plans to re-renovate Brown Deer Park; improve the clubhouse and the driving range and stand aside while North and partner Roger Packard redesign some greens and tees. The county is even going to put up a fence around the course the week of the GMO and take it down the following week.

But, more important, Milwaukee County and GMO officials understand that Brown Deer Park is probably just a stop-gap, or band-aid, to the long-range problem of finding a permanent home. Tournament and county officials are continuing to look at building a new course, or courses, at other sites. And the most logical would be for a North-Packard design at Bender Park,

which is located on the Lake Michigan shoreline in Oak Creek. County and GMO officials have been looking at that site for over four years.

That would be the big golf deal this state is waiting for. It could be the golf complex that everyone around the state will look forward to playing each year. It could have a national impact that would enhance the state, and Milwaukee's, reputation as a great place for golf.

What has been interesting to watch regarding the GMO's discussion for a new home in the past few months has been how tournament, state PGA and county officials have teamed up to make such a situation work.

There were some communication problems initially as each group came up with ideas but some failed to include the others when those ideas were put on paper. For instance, some county officials felt left out, but were brought in to the fold before any real damage was done.

It was all part of the learning process. Many of the initial problems have been worked out regarding Brown Deer Park and everyone is communicating. That should make the discussion about a permanent home, perhaps at Bender Park, go much smoother.

The common denominator to the sudden successes in Wisconsin sports has been communication. Ron Wolf's and Mike Holmgren's communication with Reggie White helped him to sign with the Packers. Stu Jackson's communication with Rashard Griffith and his mother helped him to commit to the Badgers.

And now, improved communication between the state PGA, Milwaukee County parks system, the Pettits and the GMO should help create a better GMO for years to come. 🙏