



# GOLF BUSINESS ADVISORS

*A Division of Chambers*

2023 NEWSLETTER



*Golden Horseshoe Golf Club | Williamsburg, VA*

## ***Golf Business Advisors has a Clear Mission:***

***To assist our clients with determining and meeting their objectives in the golf and club industry.***



*Centre Hills Country Club, PA*



*Shenvalee Golf Resort, VA*



*McCall Golf Club, PA*



### CONTACT US

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## Golf Business Advisors 2023 and Beyond

Golf Business Advisors has been assisting our clients in the golf and club industry since 1993 with meeting and exceeding their operational, marketing, and financial objectives. We started a new chapter in 2021 when we were acquired by Chambers, which is headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland (with additional offices in Dallas, Minneapolis, Naples and Washington, DC). Chambers is a 125-year old planning, architecture and design firm that specializes in lifestyle design for private clubs, communities, and hospitality spaces across the country and abroad.

We now operate Golf Business Advisors as a division of Chambers and continue to offer the same services as we have for over 30 years. However, we also are able to assist Chambers with some of their projects and they are assisting us with some of ours-- our ability to assist our clients is stronger together and the Chambers team are true hospitality professionals and are a pleasure to work with.

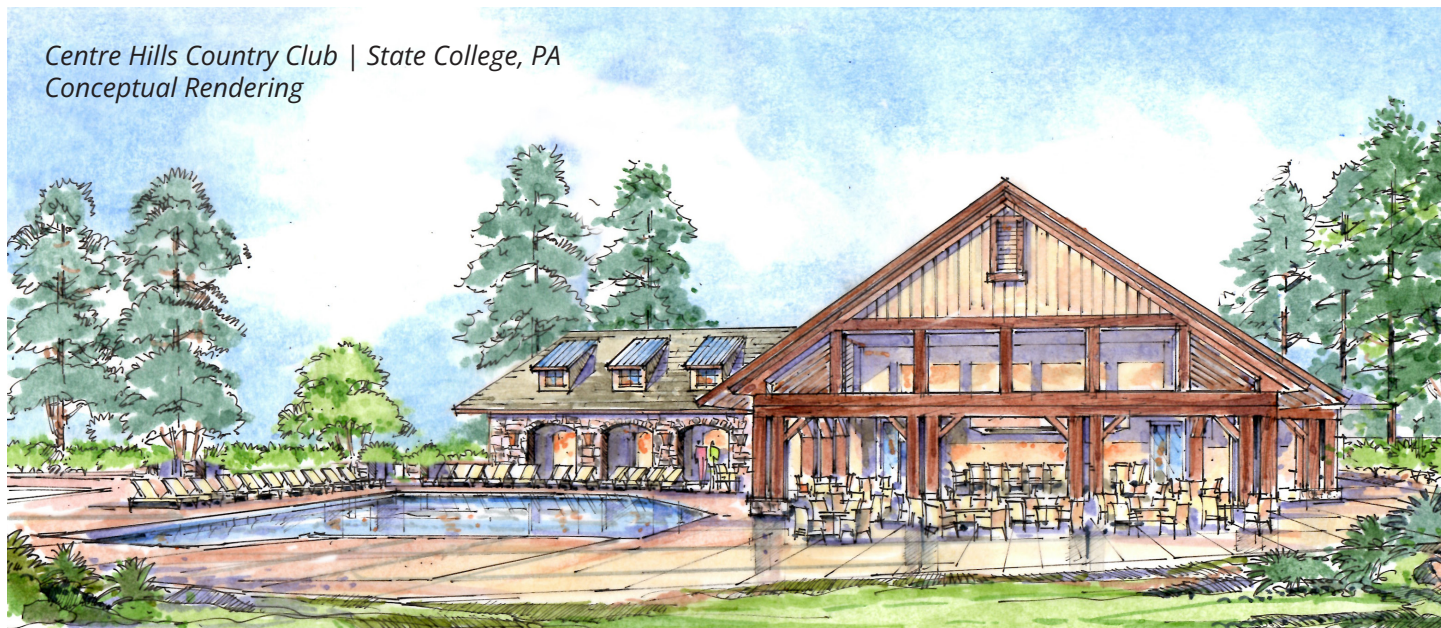
As the founder of Golf Business Advisors, I am very excited about the future of GBA and the synergistic relationship that we have created over the last two and a half years. Chambers is the industry leader in master planning and design for private clubs and communities. Their team of professionals is the best at developing club concepts, master plans, renovations, and design. We are certain that our partnership will continue to provide clubs with a turnkey approach to our clients planning, operational and marketing needs to ensure improved services and financial success. The combination of our strengths makes Chambers and GBA a perfect choice for premier golf and country clubs.

### **GBA's unique suite of services as shown below complement those of Chambers:**

- **GOLF COURSE RENOVATION AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT** — Planning for course improvements and serving as Owner's Rep for golf course renovations in coordination with the Greens Committee, Superintendent, Architect and Contractor.
- **OPERATIONAL REVIEWS** — Situational and historical analyses and golf course reviews to provide improvement options and recommendations.
- **MEMBERSHIP SALES AND MARKETING** — Developing and helping to implement a sales and marketing plan to attract prospective new Members.
- **EXECUTIVE SEARCH** — Specializing in General Managers, Golf Course Superintendents, PGA Directors of Golf and Membership Directors.
- **STRATEGIC PLANNING** — Working with clubs and resorts to help analyze where they are today and develop plans for a successful future.



*Centre Hills Country Club | State College, PA  
Conceptual Rendering*



**Our recent clients include the following:**

- |                             |                               |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Centre Hills Country Club | <i>State College, PA</i>      |
| • Glens Falls Country Club  | <i>Queensbury, NY</i>         |
| • Eagles Mere Country Club  | <i>Eagles Mere, PA</i>        |
| • Old Palm Golf Club        | <i>Palm Beach Gardens, FL</i> |
| • Willow Oaks Country Club  | <i>Richmond, VA</i>           |
| • Shenvalee Golf Resort     | <i>New Market, VA</i>         |
| • Boyd Homes                | <i>Virginia Beach, VA</i>     |
| • Liberty University        | <i>Lynchburg, VA</i>          |
| • The City of Harrisonburg  | <i>Harrisonburg, VA</i>       |
| • The City of Providence    | <i>Providence, RI</i>         |
| • The City of Amherst       | <i>Amherst, NY</i>            |

**GET IN TOUCH!**

Enjoy this Newsletter which highlights some of our client work -- but don't forget to check out our website ([www.golfbusinessadvisors.com](http://www.golfbusinessadvisors.com)), which has additional information including a few interesting case studies. This is a people-oriented business and the vast majority of our new clients come from referrals and golf industry friends.

If we can assist you or if you have a referral to pass along, please give me a call to discuss. Thank you and best wishes for success in 2023.



## GOLF INDUSTRY UPDATES



The golf industry continued its post-COVID recovery in 2023 with participation and rounds up significantly. The recent announcement of the merger between the PGA Tour, DP World Tour and the Saudi Arabia Public Investment Fund was a stunner and we will all wait to see how it plays out. However, this is the business of the world's elite professional golfers and in general will not affect the enjoyment of the game by the 41 million people that participated in golf in the U.S. in 2022.

### Key Tidbits on Golf in 2022 Include:

- 26 million people in the US played golf on golf courses in 2022
- Another 15 million+ people participated in golf at “entertainment facilities” like Top Golf
- Over 500,000 million rounds of golf were played in the US
- In Virginia, 1.5 million rounds were recorded for handicaps
- Approximately 8.3% of the population (over age 6) plays golf
- In 2022, rounds of golf were up 13% over the prior five year average
- There are 33,400 golf courses worldwide and 16,000 courses in the United States
- Participation has climbed over the past few years and continued to become more diverse among age, gender and ethnicities
- Course closing outnumbered new course openings and it appears that will continue for a few more years until the supply and demand is set
- Putting Courses (natural grass) are becoming increasingly popular at resorts and private clubs



## JEFF SPEAKS AT SUPERINTENDENT'S MEETING

This past March, I was invited to speak to the Shenandoah Valley Golf Course Superintendents Association event held at Shenvalee Golf Resort in New Market, Virginia. In addition to discussing some of the golf updates outlined on page 4, I had the opportunity to discuss how golf courses are valued and the importance of new membership to a club's financial health.

I was also able to share my opinions on Superintendent Best Practices based on my 60+ years as a low handicap competitive golfer and extensive professional experiences working with many client courses over the years.

### **Some Superintendent Best Practices include:**

- Bunkers raked with Australian method with consistent sand depth throughout
- Blogs and emails about on-going maintenance on the golf course
- Painted cups
- Regular tree pruning up to approximately 6 feet (and carts can fit under)
- Use of green sand to fill divots-- especially on practice tees
- Fairway mowing with movement rather than straight lines
- Bunkers edged regularly
- Superintendent playing golf with the regulars
- Regular emails (with videos) explaining maintenance practices
- Greens as fast as possible and use of rollers
- Painted fairways on bermuda grass in the winter months
- Use of pine straw mulch (rather than hardwood) in areas that are in play



# ATTRACTING AND RETAINING MEMBERS

## *Through Membership Sales & Marketing and Innovative Programming*

We have continued to share our knowledge of Membership Sales and Marketing with many clients, as adding new Members is a key objective for financial success for most clubs.

The Pandemic was scary for all, but golf ended up being a big winner with a huge interest in playing golf by many new and returning golfers—all with a desire to enjoy some outdoor exercise and socialization. Daily fee courses have been busier than ever. Private clubs have added new members and some even began waitlists to join.

We work to better understand the needs of both club members and potential club members, help clubs understand their current demographics and identify target markets. Then, by developing and implementing comprehensive Membership Sales and Marketing Plans (in cooperation with the General Managers, Membership Committees, and Membership Directors), we have helped our clients add over 1,500 Members valued at over \$6 million in first year Initiation Fees and Dues in the past few years.

Most clubs have learned that a calendar of fun programming is now essential to help attract and retain new members. It now takes more than a great golf course and other club facilities, but it is the on-going club experience that has become more and more important. This should be planned for both adults and children and should cover all of the sports and food and beverage.

**In addition to the standard Holiday type programming, a few of the “best in show” programming ideas that we have seen include:**

- Beginner ladies golf instruction with champagne
- Three Tee type program to introduce the game to beginners
- Outdoor yoga and exercise classes
- “Date Night” dinners for the parents with childcare at the Club
- Special nights of Hamburger, Pasta, Pizza, Sushi, Fish and Chips, etc.
- “Wine and Nine” golf evenings
- “Drool in the Pool” dog swimming event
- Family Camp out on the lawn
- “Dive-in” movies at the pool on a weekly basis in the summer months
- Bocce and Pickleball leagues
- Mother-Daughter Tea
- Speaker series
- Polar Swim Club in winter (if pool is heated)
- Wine Shop with discounted wines
- Trips to ballgames, golf tournaments, horse racing, historic sites, gardens, etc.



# THE GROWTH OF THE GAME INITIATIVES

## Key Ingredients in Golf's Future Success

Tiger Woods made one of the greatest comebacks of all time to win the 1999 Masters and an entire generation of younger golfers and non-golfers got a taste of “Tiger-mania”. The Augusta National Golf Club introduced the Augusta National Women’s Amateur the week prior to the 2019 Masters and hosted the best amateur female golfers in the world— which was a huge success and an amazing statement for women’s golf. In 2023, Rose Zhang won the NCAA Women’s National Championship and then two weeks later played in and won the first LPGA tournament she played in as a Pro— and at age 20— just amazing!



The game continues to expand around the world and there are now golf facilities in 85% of the countries in the world. Golf was played in the Olympics in 2016 for the first time in over 100 years. Fans now have 24 hour access to the Golf Channel, PGA Tour radio, and instruction on the web which are also fueling the worldwide interest in the game. The PGA and LPGA Tours now conduct their regular schedules with tournaments in Australia, Korea, China, Japan, France, Scotland, England, Canada and Mexico.

My observations over the past 10+ years are that the kids today are so wrapped up in youth soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, baseball, basketball, volleyball, etc. that they are not playing the country club sports of golf and tennis like in prior years. Is it all in the quest for that college scholarship and is it the kids or the parents doing the pushing? With all of the little league, school and travel teams in all of these sports, golf is having a tough time finding its way. However, the recent introductions of the following youth golf programs are all working to get young kids interested in golf— and I can see firsthand that it is working!

There's *First Tee*; *PGA Junior Golf Leagues*; *Drive, Chip and Putt*; *LPGA/USGA Girls Golf*; *Operation 36*; *Kids on Course*; *VSGA Junior Golf Circuit* and many other programs in every state. The kids are indeed flocking to these innovative programs that teach both golf skills and life lessons— and all have some focus on competition which is apparently what the kids are really looking for. Some of these programs are also finding their way into the school systems which is where I think they can make the most difference— by introducing all of the kids to the great game of golf. In addition, The PGA of America's and USGA's initiatives of *Get Golf Ready*, *Play Golf America*, *Tee It Forward* and *Play 9* are also introducing adults to golf and making it more fun for those that are playing.

The introduction of *Top Golf* facilities at over 70 locations in 31 states and five foreign countries are also invigorating and putting a new spin on the game. The *Top Golf* and copy-cat facilities (like *Drive Shack*) are sort of a combination of a driving range and entertainment offering instant feedback on shots to target greens and with a bar/grille in a festive environment. My visits (including a holiday party with the Chambers team) were great fun with a combination of men, women and kids— some of whom were golfers and many of whom were beginners, but all having a blast.

To the golf industry, we commend you on the **Growth of Game** initiatives— well played and keep it going!

## EXECUTIVE SEARCH

### *Hiring the Right People Makes All the Difference*

Having the right people leading your club's team makes all the difference in providing outstanding service to your members and guests and in making your club financially successful. These experienced leaders ensure excellent member and guest experiences and quality facilities and programs resulting in successful financial operations. Conversely, the wrong people can negatively impact the brand, the business, and your overall success.

GBA prides itself in helping our clients find the "right" people through our vast network of industry contacts and our understanding of the golf/club business and the responsibilities of these key positions at successful clubs. We ensure we attract the top candidates and assist owners, Board Members and/or Selection Committees in making the right decision for their unique situation.

We develop positions descriptions, assist the club in understanding salary comparables, and utilize our database to attract the right candidates. We then conduct resume reviews, first round interviews, and background checks. The best candidates are interviewed by key staff and Board Members using an objective rating scale to ensure the selection of the best candidate. GBA has assisted private, resort, daily fee and municipal clubs in successfully recruiting outstanding candidates and eventually hiring the best candidates for the following positions: **General Manager/COO, Director of Golf, Golf Course Superintendent, and Membership Director.**

We have completed successful Executive Searches over the past few years for:

• Centre Hills Country Club – <i>State College, PA</i>	General Manager/COO
• Glens Falls Country Club – <i>Queensbury, NY</i>	General Manager/COO
• Eagles Mere Country Club – <i>Eagles Mere, PA</i>	General Manager/COO
• Willow Oaks Country Club – <i>Richmond, VA</i>	Director of Golf
• Otesaga Resort – <i>Cooperstown, NY</i>	Golf Course Superintendent
• Otesaga Resort – <i>Cooperstown, NY</i>	Director of Golf
• James River Country Club – <i>Newport News, VA</i>	General Manager/COO
• James River Country Club – <i>Newport News, VA</i>	Director of Golf
• Bent Creek Country Club – <i>Lancaster, PA</i>	General Manager/COO
• Nemaquin Resort – <i>Farmington, PA</i>	Director of Golf
• Nemaquin Resort – <i>Farmington, PA</i>	Golf Course Superintendent
• The Country Club of Virginia – <i>Richmond, VA</i>	Golf Course Superintendent
• Golden Horseshoe – <i>Williamsburg, VA</i>	Golf Course Superintendent
• Old Trail Golf Club – <i>Crozet, VA</i>	PGA General Manager
• Hershey Resort – <i>Hershey, PA</i>	Director of Golf
• Farmington Country Club – <i>Charlottesville, VA</i>	Membership Director
• Indian Creek Yacht and Country Club – <i>Irvington, VA</i>	General Manager



## MORE ABOUT CHAMBERS

*Planning • Architecture • Interior Design • Procurement*



### C H A M B E R S

It has been a great learning experience to work with Chambers on a few renovation projects, including Glens Falls Country Club, Eagles Mere Country Club, and Centre Hills Country Club.

Chambers works closely with Boards, General Managers and entire membership to understand what the unique needs really are for each club client. Much of this is accomplished through focus groups and detailed surveys to help prioritize potential improvements. Chambers also works to include the key trends in the Club industry that will assist the club in the future, including things like outdoor dining, casual dining, kitchen improvements, pro shop, fitness/wellness centers, golf simulator lounge areas, etc.

Using their expert industry knowledge and the data collected directly from members, Chambers then develops conceptual plans with associated cost estimates (and possibly phasing plans), and works with club leadership to develop an appropriate funding model to pay for the improvements. In most cases, these plans are then presented to membership for approval. Following a (hopefully) positive vote—which Chambers holds a 95% success rate at achieving—Chambers' architects and designers then work with the club to implement the improvements.

Learn more on their website: [www.chambersusa.com](http://www.chambersusa.com).



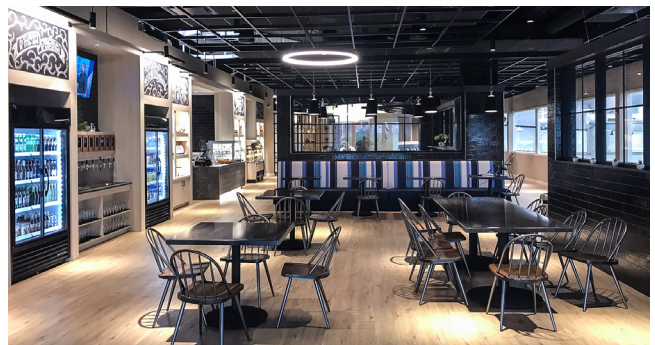
*Bald Head Island Club (NC)*



*Wyndemere Country Club (FL)*



*The Country Club of North Carolina (NC)*



*Oxford Athletic Club (PA)*