



**GOLDEN HORSESHOE GOLF CLUB**  
WILLIAMSBURG, VA

## Golf Business Advisors 2016 and Beyond

As we begin our 24th year in business as **Golf Business Advisors**, it is still a rewarding challenge to assist our clients in meeting their objectives in the golf industry — which most of the time is to make their business more profitable.

With 17 years of sports management and marketing experience at Kingsmill Resort and a yearning for entrepreneurship, I opened the doors of **Golf Business Advisors** in late 1992. In those 23 years, we have assisted over 250 clients in meeting their objectives and realizing success in the golf industry. Beverly Van Straten joined GBA in 1999 following 14 years in the resort and private club arena. We have worked mainly in the Mid-Atlantic states but have assisted clients throughout the U.S. and internationally and are positioned for continued success.

Beverly and I continue to assist resorts, daily fee courses and private clubs with membership sales and marketing — as attracting new members significantly increases much needed revenue. By using sound business strategies, we have continued to help a number of clubs improve their performance from an operational and financial standpoint. We continue to be involved in executive searches for key positions in the golf industry, are involved in golf course brokerage and have also

performed interim management for a club when they were between managers.

We recently revamped our website ([www.golfbusinessadvisors.com](http://www.golfbusinessadvisors.com)) and by developing this newsletter and sending it to our past clients and friends in the industry, we are doing the right things from a marketing perspective...but this is a people business and the vast majority of our new clients come from referrals from past clients and golf industry friends.



*Jeff Fleishman, President*

Coming to work every day is still fun for me and hopefully, we can continue to enjoy assisting clients for years to come. 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 a successful 2016!

*Jeff Fleishman*

## The Golf Industry Is Recovering...Slowly

The golf industry has been slow to recover from the economic recession that began in 2008 and many courses continue to close each year while only a few new ones get built. Course renovations are increasing as the older courses are focused on improvements to attract and retain customers, such as converting green complexes to more drought and heat tolerant grasses and the new "Billy" bunkers which improve playability and are much less expensive to maintain. In general, the number of golfers, rounds of golf and revenues have stabilized over the past few years and according to new research, the Millennial generation does have a keen interest in playing golf — all good news for the golf industry.

Private clubs have learned that the addition of a Fitness Center will help in retaining their members plus help attract new, potentially younger members. The club's programming, including babysitting services, parent's night out, kid's play areas, wine pairing dinners, guest speaker programs, craft beer and wine tastings, and club

excursions, are more popular than ever. Casual dining and outdoor dining offerings are expanding, and programs for instruction and playing 3, 6 or 9 holes are increasing as time commitments are preventing many from the traditional 18 holes and lunch at the club. What can we do to have our customers and members hang out at the club like they do Starbucks and Panera?

All clubs have learned that ongoing communication via emails, Facebook, Twitter, etc. are an effective way to promote their facilities, programs, menus, specials to their members and/or regular customers. Well-designed websites are indeed important for clubs today and allowing prospective members or customers to see your course, clubhouse, key staff and especially the people having fun will give them a true sense of what the club has to offer. It is also important that your members and customers can make tee times and dinner reservations on the website and perhaps purchase merchandise basics.

## The Growth of the Game Initiatives are Making a Difference

**Rory McIlroy, Jordan Spieth, Ricky Fowler and Lydia Ko** — the future of professional golf, the faces of golf on TV each week and the new golf superstars that the kids are looking up to — are all young, personable, clean cut, well spoken and have amazing golf games! So, will Tiger Woods make a comeback? That may be good for the game, but it certainly looks like the star power of these new young guns are ready to take over.

I do think that golf in the 2016 Olympics will be a huge boost for golf worldwide...it has been over 100 years since golf was played in the Olympic Games and these young superstars shown above are sure to be a part of the drama — and the worldwide excitement about the game!

My observations over the past ten 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! **First Tee; PGA Junior Golf Leagues; Drive, Chip and Putt; LPGA/USGA Girls Golf; VSGA Junior Golf Circuit, Robins Junior Programs, Kandi Comer Golf Academy Programs.** 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** initiatives of **Get Golf Ready, Play Golf America, and Tee It Forward** are also introducing adults to golf and making it more fun for those that are playing.

The introduction of **Top Golf** facilities at over 20 locations in 14 states (including 3 in Virginia) are also invigorating and putting a new spin on the game. These facilities are sort of a combination of a driving range and entertainment, offering instant feedback on shots to target greens and bar/grille amenities in a festive environment. However, I am not as bullish on FootGolf and SpeedGolf, also new versions of our traditional game, but time will tell.

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

## Membership Sales and Marketing Seminars and Recent Success Stories



Over the past few years, Beverly and I have shared our knowledge of Membership Sales and Marketing by being the guest speakers at the following golf industry seminars: **Club Managers Association of America Virginia Chapter; Carolinas Golf Association; National Golf Course Owners**

*Beverly Van Straten, Vice President*

**Association and Shenandoah Valley Area Clubs.** It is apparent that increasing the sales of new members is a hot topic, and we have been pleased to share our experiences and expertise with the participants.

In addition, we were pleased to work with **Keswick Golf Club** (Keswick, Virginia) and **Old Trail Golf Club** (Crozet, Virginia) in 2014 and 2015 and assisted them in adding over 175 new members combined during that time frame.

## What is an HOA To Do?

Just when we thought that we had heard it all, we got a call from a homeowners association that represented the owners of the homes in their golf community (although the course is owned by a separate company). It seemed that the course owners were stripping the sod off of the fairways and selling the sod to a sod company as a way to make additional revenue. Not

only did they send me photographs but they also had a drone shoot videos of the "work in progress".

We are continuing to assist them in reviewing all of their documents regarding the golf course along with renovation costs and options. It may or may not become a legal issue, so cannot share the outcome at this point...more to follow.

## Jeff Receives Awards from the USGA and Maccabi USA for Volunteer Efforts

I recently received the **Ike Grainger Award** from the United States Golf Association for 25 years of volunteer service to the United States Golf Association. In addition, I was honored as one of the **Legends of Maccabiah** for the Washington, DC area for my involvement and support of Maccabi USA and their golf programs.

*At right, Jeff Fleishman receiving the Ike Grainger Award from Kathy Gordon of the USGA*



## The FOM Golf Society Travels in Style

In the late 1990's Mark Goldstein, a friend (and certified golf nut) from the Washington DC area, asked me if I would be interested in organizing a golf trip a couple of times per year to the best golf resorts. So, the **FOM Golf Society** was formed — and **FOM** stands for "Friends Of Mark" as many of the attendees were his golf and business buddies.

Since that first trip to Pinehurst, the **FOM Golf Society** has enjoyed visiting most of the top golf resorts in the United States. The attendees are a collection of men and women from all parts of the country who enjoy the travel, golf and camaraderie.

There is a daily golf competition, but with formats that are not stressful...and did I mention lots of great food and a drink or two?

We generally have anywhere from 16 to 24 golfers, although we had 44 golfers in Las Vegas a few years back. I handle all of the trip details and coordinate the golf and scoring, and so far every trip has been a good one.

In 2016, we will be going back to **Kiawah** April 3rd – 6th and then probably to **The Greenbrier** October 9th – 12th. Anyone is welcome to join us for the fun. Just call the office and we will email you the information...I promise that you will have a great time!

## The Right People Make All the Difference

A few years ago, we were retained by a private equity country club to conduct an executive search for a new Director of Golf. The Club wanted a Director of Golf that would help take the club to the proverbial "next level." Much had been spent on course renovations and the Board had a great vision for this aging Club to revitalize it and make it a viable and energetic club — a mirror of its past.

Golf Business Advisors met with the Board to better understand their vision and had discussions on the best type of individual for the Club — an eager Assistant Pro or Head Pro from a top-tier club that would invigorate the club, improve Member service, anticipate members' needs, attract younger members and especially develop a junior program that would be the envy of other clubs.

After GBA completed a comprehensive search, we helped the Club's Selection Committee identify and interview the top candidates and ultimately select the best PGA Golf professional.

It has been four years now and GBA is proud to say that the Club's new Director of Golf has been a perfect fit and is indeed guiding their way to the "next level." Junior programs, caddie program, "champagne instruction" for beginner ladies, a beautiful selection of merchandise in the Pro Shop and most importantly, a new culture of member service in golf. This PGA Golf Professional is a star and the Club is fortunate to have him!

## Member Surveys Provide Great Feedback

We have assisted three clubs in developing, administering and interpreting member surveys recently. In each case, we learned that the members had a great deal to say about the club and its facilities, services and course conditions. By carefully assigning numbers to each response and then calculating numerical answers to each question, it is apparent what the strong areas are what areas need attention. In all three cases, it was amazing how much time many of the members spent outlining their positives and negatives in narrative form.

The largest a club of a negative survey, it tends to be the first time that response and had discussions on the best type of individual for the Club — an eager Assistant Pro or Head Pro from a top-tier club that would invigorate the club, improve Member service, anticipate members' needs, attract younger members and especially develop a junior program that would be the envy of other clubs.

fixed — the "low hanging fruit." The other items may impact staffing, customer services, and capital projects. The key to making the survey successful is to communicate and respond to the members promptly. Let them know that you appreciate their input, the results of the survey and your timeline for action. Members don't expect everything will be fixed immediately, but they expect you to take action where you can.

So the take away for us and for each club is that the members do really care and are happy to share their thoughts — just ask to say. These members are their best customers and we feel that what they have to say is very important. They will appreciate that their input had a positive effect of the club.

## The Maccabiah Games — A Fantastic Experience!



I was fortunate enough to qualify for my third **World Maccabiah Games** and enjoyed playing in the Masters Division in Israel in the summer of 2013 (I had also played in 2005 and 2009). The USA had over 900 athletes competing as part of the 7,000 athletes from over 80 different countries...it is the third largest sporting event in the world and quite a spectacle. Being part of a huge international sporting event in the historical and vibrant country of Israel, seeing old friends and making new friends from many different countries, competing on the Caesarea Golf Club course that I had a hand in renovating a few years ago (they were a client of ours regarding the course renovation, memberships and operations), and being part of Team USA Golf and my Masters teammates in a challenging competition...it was all great fun!

And we won the Gold Medal as a Masters team and I finished tied for 5th place individually. It was a close team competition and we beat out Israel, South Africa, Australia, Canada, Great Britain and Sweden.

When I played in the Maccabiah Games in 2005, I met a 12-year old young lady (Laetitia Beck) that they told me was the best female golfer in Israel. She was an excellent player and came to the Ledbetter Academy in the U.S. for high school and then was an All-American at Duke. And she did win both the 2009 and the 2013 Maccabiah Games.

She is now entering her second season on the LPGA Tour, and I am pleased to say that we are still friends and she stayed at our home for a week during the Kingsmill LPGA Championship last Spring. She is the only golfer from Israel to play on either the PGA or LPGA Tour, so she has an entire country following her. She is also high enough up on the World Rankings that it appears that she will be playing in the Olympics representing Israel this summer in Rio — and she has plenty of game, so remember that name in 2016, Laetitia Beck.

## Recent Clients

- Golden Horseshoe Golf Club** • Williamsburg, Virginia
- Old Trail Golf Club** • Crozet, Virginia
- Keswick Golf Club** • Keswick, Virginia
- Two Rivers Country Club** • Williamsburg, Virginia
- Green Valley Country Club** • Greenville, South Carolina
- London Downs Golf Club** • Lynchburg, Virginia
- FOM Golf Society** • Bethesda, Maryland
- Beacon Hill Golf Club** • Leesburg, Virginia

**Golf Business Advisors Has a Clear Mission:**

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