



# GOLF BUSINESS ADVISORS

*A Division of Chambers*

2025 NEWSLETTER



*Two Rivers Country 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.***



*Golden Horseshoe Golf Club, VA*



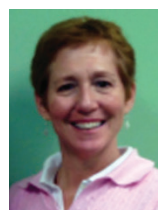
*Keswick Golf Club, VA*



### CONTACT US

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## Golf Business Advisors 2025 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 126-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.
- **SELLING GOLF COURSES** — Helping course owners understand the process and introducing them to potential buyers. In fact, in 2024 we facilitated the sale of two golf courses for a North Carolina development company for over \$15 million--10 times EBITDA.





### 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>            |
| • Bynav Technology          | <i>Hunan, China</i>           |
| • Pinnacle Golf Properties  | <i>Charlotte, NC</i>          |
| • Two Rivers Country Club   | <i>Williamsburg, VA</i>       |
| • Ledges Golf Course        | <i>South Hadley, MA</i>       |

### GET IN TOUCH!

Enjoy this Newsletter -- but don't forget to check out our website for additional information and case studies ([www.golfbusinessadvisors.com](http://www.golfbusinessadvisors.com)). 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.



## GOLF INDUSTRY UPDATES



The golf industry continued its post-COVID recovery in 2024 with participation and rounds up significantly. The 2021 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 45 million people that participated in golf in the U.S. in 2024.

### Key Tidbits on Golf in 2022 Include:

- 23.4 million people in the United States played golf on golf courses in 2024
- Another approximately 21 million people participated in golf at “entertainment facilities” like Top Golf
- Over 532,000 million rounds of golf were played in the US
- In Virginia in 2024, 1,866,496 rounds at Virginia courses were recorded for handicaps
- Approximately 8.3% of the population (over age 6) plays golf
- There are 38,864 golf courses worldwide and 16,752 courses in the United States
- Participation has climbed over the past few years and continued to become more diverse among age, gender and ethnicities
- In 2023 and 2024 course closings and new course openings were generally equal indicating that the supply and demand is closer to balanced
- Golf gives back \$4.6 billion to charitable causes annually—from local charity tournaments to the PGA and LPGA Tours—more than any other sport
- Putting Courses (natural grass) and Short Courses continue to become increasingly popular at resorts and private clubs



## 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.

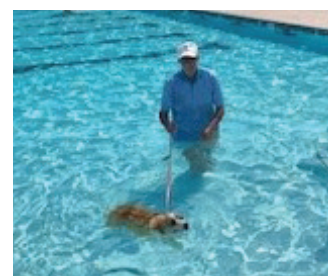
The Pandemic was scary for all, but golf ended up being a big winner with a huge interest in playing golf by many new and returning golfers—all with a desire to enjoy some outdoor exercise and socialization. Daily fee courses have been busier than ever. Private clubs have added new members and some even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



# MUNICIPAL GOLF

## *Part of the Fabric of American Golf*

Golf Business Advisors has long been a fan of municipal golf and has worked with many municipalities in a number of states to assist them in improving their operations, course conditions and financial situation. Municipal golfers are indeed a slice of Americana and enjoy the challenge of the courses, the fellowship and the exercise without all of the frills that the private and upscale daily fee courses offer. Perhaps it is a sense of accomplishment to help a municipality when their Council, Manager and Parks and Rec Directors often times do not understand the business of golf nor the value of their asset to their citizens.

We have had some interesting municipal clients in the past few years as outlined below:

**Heritage Oaks Golf Course in Harrisonburg, Virginia** is the City's municipal course and we were retained to conduct an operational assessment in 2021... after months of surveys, on-site research and an extensive Report including pages of recommendations, the leadership followed the recommendations and within two years, there was a \$300,000 turnaround in the course's finances—good news for the City and Heritage Oaks and one of our shining moments!

**The National Park Service** is comprised of 419 different units (including parks, battlegrounds, rivers etc) throughout the United States and also three golf courses located in the District of Columbia—**East Potomac (designed by Walter Travis), Langston and Rock Creek (designed by William Flynn)**. The courses date back to 1917 and were a key part in the desegregation of public golf in America beginning in 1941.

The three courses have historically attracted over 110,000 rounds of golf per year and combined revenue of over \$6 million per year, although there is a great need for capital improvements to the courses and clubhouses. The courses had been leased to one company for many years and in 2019 the National Park Service chose to issue an RFP to lease the three courses beginning in September 2020.

We were retained by the National Park Service to be a “subject matter expert” in assisting their Committee of Park Service employees in analyzing the proposals and answering questions. National Links Trust was the firm that was awarded the lease and is slowly working to renovate and improve the courses--- it is clear that the three courses will be completely renovated over the next few years and will soon offer dramatic improvements for the golfers of the Washington DC area.

**Providence, Rhode Island** owns the Triggs Memorial golf course, which was designed by Donald Ross and opened in 1932 and is now one of the City's 118 parks (including the famed Roger Williams Park that is over 435 acres) and overseen by the City of Providence Parks Department. The City self-managed the course for many years, but a local company has been leasing the course since 1990. The City of Providence put out an RFP for an evaluation of the Triggs course in early 2019 and we were awarded the contract with the purpose of providing them an overview of their asset and getting them prepared for an RFP for a possible new lessee in the next couple of years.



Our work included: Financial Analysis, Course Asset Analysis, Course Management and Maintenance Analysis, Marketing Analysis, Trends Analysis, Programming and Community Engagement, Overview of Management Options, Capital Improvement Recommendations and Estimated Costs and Draft of an RFP for leasing the course in the future. The course is very popular with local golfers due to the interesting Donald Ross design features and popular fee structure and historically attracts over 40,000 rounds per year.

One of the most interesting aspects of our study to me and the City officials was that the current lessee had made lease payments of over \$9 million and capital improvements of over \$2 million during the term of their lease. My satisfaction was in educating the Providence City officials all about their golf asset and helping them make plans for the next phase of renovations and management.

GBA worked with **Bide-A-Wee Golf Course** in Portsmouth, Virginia for over 10 years including planning and overseeing a complete renovation (Tom Clark and Curtis Strange architects), assisting in Clubhouse planning and design, developing operations plan and helping hire key employees. The course has been a tremendous success and serves golfers from Portsmouth and surrounding communities, as well as tourists to the area.

The area surrounding Bide-A-Wee was deplorable World War II housing and after the course was completed, that was completely changed and it became a successful real estate development and now a thriving community. In addition, Tidewater Community College built its campus at the entry to Bide-A-Wee and most recently, Rivers Casino (one of six approved casinos in Virginia) opened near the entrance—thus a tremendous turnaround in this land use with Bide-A-Wee as the centerpiece and now a thriving area of the City of Portsmouth.

We were just retained by **The Ledges Golf Course in South Hadley, Massachusetts** and will look forward to assisting them this Spring!



# 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 has been 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            |
| • Pinnacle Golf Properties - <i>Charlotte, NC</i>            | Corporate Controller       |