

SPECIAL REPORT: TRUMP'S FAVORITE TECH COMPANY VS. THE PENTAGON

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FOUNDER IS  
EMPOWERING  
ENTREPRENEURS

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ABOUT BUILDING THE CUBS  
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& MORE

CONTENT FROM THE PGA TOUR

# FAMILY MATTERS

The **PGA TOUR** adds attractions to make its events more family-friendly.

**FIREWORKS DISPLAYS, VIDEOGAMES,** bounce houses, arts and crafts, concerts, movies, and barbecues are not activities typically associated with golf tournaments. Yet that's the kind of fun stuff the PGA TOUR is offering attendees at its events in a strategic effort to make them more family-friendly. Just as other sports leagues attract fans with bobble-head nights, T-shirt cannons, and tailgate parties, the PGA TOUR wants to bring wholesome entertainment beyond golf to its venues—and in the process expand its audience.

"At every event, one of our major initiatives is to drive interest and participation from a noncore golf fan," says John Norris, the PGA TOUR's senior vice president, tournament business affairs. "We know the golf fanatics will show up early to watch players practice putting, or get a good spot at a certain hole for the entire day. But if we want to continue to grow



our brand and our sport, we've got to attract nontraditional fans."

The challenge is to convince families, even if there's only one duffer in the household, that attending a TOUR event means more than golf. Forget going to the mall or a theme park—there's plenty to do in between the fairways and greens. Lead them to the water hazard, the thinking goes, and they will eventually drink in the game. "Once they're on-site and see all the other activities available, there is a better chance to engage them in the sport and turn them into a fan," Norris says.

It helps that many tournaments are played at popular vacation destinations, such as Hilton Head Island, S.C., longtime host of the TOUR's RBC Heritage. Held in mid-April during the week immediately following the Masters, the season's first major championship, it incorporates a variety of family-centric programs. The push begins with opening ceremonies at Harbour Town Golf Links. While not quite Olympian in scope, it kicks off with a bang: The previous year's winner hits a tee shot with an exploding golf ball that coincides with a cannon blast, followed by keynote speakers, remarks from the defending champion, and music.

As at dozens of other TOUR stops, the RBC Heritage stages a Kid Zone, which includes a putt-putt course, bounce house, face painting, arts and crafts, snow cones, and lemonade. Several Kid Zones have recently featured a new initiative called Imagination Playground, a creativity-inspiring area where children build and play with large foam blocks. These blocks are later donated to a local charity, in keeping with

**GOLF'S ARTISTRY**  
Kid Zones provide off-course activities for children attending TOUR events.





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the TOUR's community-minded goals. Specific to this tourney, Coca-Cola Youth Day lets kids putt alongside the pros who might be, or might become, their heroes. The first 200 participants receive a tournament souvenir, and each who holes a putt wins a prize courtesy of Coca-Cola. The day concludes with a late-afternoon family movie on the grand Heritage Lawn.

At this year's PLAYERS Championship in May, the traditional Kid Zone is being branded and converted by Nickelodeon to create *NickSports at the PGA TOUR*. Inside the designated area not far from TPC Sawgrass' iconic 17th island green will be a SpongeBob-theme golf cart, Ninja Turtles putting greens, and a bounce house. In addition, during PLAYERS week, NickSports will air content featuring a fun competition with PGA TOUR players, LPGA players and the cast of "School of Rock." Yes, there will be slime.

Other tournaments have similar offerings. The Honda Classic hosts Tire Kingdom Family Day, with arts and crafts, games, and fireworks. The Memorial Tournament presented by Nationwide puts on Junior Golf Day, with a Clubhouse Kids course treasure map, a designated autograph area, and field trips. Many TOUR events arrange a youth clinic featuring pros hitting trick shots and answering questions.

#### SCREEN TIME

The TOUR also has addressed an issue that bedevils parents: kids and digital devices. Although its initial

thinking was that watching live golf might distract them from gaming, that notion has evolved. So now, just as the TOUR allows adults to use cellphones on the course, there is a videogame truck in the Kid Zone.

"If you don't provide any of that stuff, you run the risk of losing kids' interest," Norris says. "Whether it's Xbox or other games, we provide activities that are golf-related. While our Kid Zones and Family-Friendly Zones don't necessarily focus heavily on technology, it's unrealistic to ask youth or adults to be away from it for what might be the entire day."

#### SHARING NICELY

How these family-friendly concepts come together exemplifies how the PGA TOUR simultaneously accommodates its corporate sponsors. "An official marketing partner like Coca-Cola might say that youth is an important target group and ask how they can activate their brand around them," Norris states. "We can create a specific program for the company, offer an event's existing program, or the partner might have its own ideas." Considering that the TOUR co-sanctions more than 40 tournaments annually, sharing best practices among partners, Norris explains, is one of its internal business focuses. Family engagement has become a key topic in this regard.

"We are all about borrowing from one another, because the tournaments generally don't feel they're

**SMART PLAY**  
Children created their own fun at the Imagination Playground during THE PLAYERS Championship.

in competition with each other," he says. "Week to week, we're in different markets, so it's not like restaurants next door to one another. When we see something that works, a lot of those ideas wind up spreading throughout the country."

The TOUR has several mechanisms to encourage a success in one place taking root elsewhere. Twice annually, in the spring and at year's end, tournament organizers gather for a two- or three-day retreat to communicate what worked well and what didn't, as well as to discuss short- and long-term initiatives. Additionally, TOUR officials travel to each event, where several post the week's best practices upon its conclusion. Another staffer compiles the information and sends out a weekly email blast to all the tournaments. This supplements the TOUR's best-practices password-protected website that every tournament can access, which is broken down by various categories: family activities, food and beverage, and so on.

#### MINING THE DATA

For any business, putting ideas into action is where the

#### DETERMINING WHAT CONSTITUTES SUCCESSFUL FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT IS ANOTHER COLLABORATIVE PROCESS.

rubber hits the road. The PGA TOUR, the tournaments, and the marketing partners work in close coordination on this front year-round. Come tournament time, however, the unsung heroes are tournament volunteers. With oversight by the event's managers, they put in 10, 12, or even 14 hours a day staffing the various family activities; in recompense, they get various benefits such as volunteer recognition parties, a discount on tournament merchandise, and sometimes even the chance to play the host course in the future. (All volunteers working on areas with children must go through background checks conducted by the TOUR and the individual tournament.)

Determining what constitutes successful family entertainment is another collaborative process. The TOUR sends post-event surveys to attendees to learn about their experiences. Tournament staff and volunteers file reports on what went well, what didn't, and what can be better next year. Even the golfers themselves get in on the act: Two or three traveling members of the TOUR's Player Relations team solicit feedback each week from the pros about their experiences, including those of their families. Likewise,

a TOUR employee gets input from the PGA TOUR Wives Association, ensuring that spouses' feedback on family engagement is also heard. All the data is merged into a report provided to the tournament within 30 days of its conclusion, followed by a conference call with TOUR officials to discuss specific topics.

"Like every other company and sports league, we are constantly striving to learn more about our fans," Norris says. And exploring ways to keep attracting new ones. So if that means satisfying kids with videogames and their parents with social activities, the PGA TOUR will find ways for families to stay together and play together at its events. ●

**SING ALONG**  
On-site concerts have helped attract families to tournaments.

