

## DECADE OF SUCCESS

***In the 10 years since purchasing Raleigh Country Club and saving the final Donald Ross design from extinction, McConnell Golf has emerged as a major industry player and one of the brightest stories in the world of golf.***

**RALEIGH, N.C. (December 2013)** — In early December 2003, McConnell Golf became owner of Raleigh Country Club (RCC) and its centerpiece golf course, the final design in the storied career of architect Donald Ross.

In the decade since acquiring Raleigh Country Club, McConnell Golf has grown its ownership stable to include eight of the premier private golf clubs in the Carolinas while at the same time earning a sterling reputation for providing its 3,000-plus members a quality golf experience at each of its award-winning courses. In addition, McConnell Golf has become an industry leader in tournament golf and junior golf development, as well as charitable community giving.

Little wonder company founder and CEO John McConnell last year was named one of the North Carolina Golf Panel's "Most Influential Figures in Golf," a prestigious list compiled every five years that includes North Carolinians who influence the game throughout the state, nationally and in some cases worldwide, whether in the spotlight or behind the scenes.

"I have been truly blessed in that I get to see so many members having a great time when they come to our clubs," said McConnell. "Our capital saved some great golf courses from extinction and that is a legacy for which we can be proud."

McConnell Golf quickly gained a reputation as a player to be reckoned with in the golf industry. In an era of economic challenges for private golf clubs including a market saturated with upscale public courses and residential golf communities, McConnell Golf defied expectations by transforming RCC from bankruptcy and a declining membership to one of the finest private golf clubs in the region.

Four years after purchasing RCC, McConnell Golf announced that it had retired all debt with its last remaining creditor from the club's 2003 bankruptcy. RCC's emergence from debt is unheard of, as 75 percent of golf and country clubs carry some level of debt according to McMahon Group's 2006 Financial Issues Survey.

"This business started with no business plan, simply on a whim to preserve Raleigh Country Club from development and with a bankrupt club in which all creditors were paid 100 percent of their bills, which is unheard of in most bankruptcy cases," said McConnell. "We have acquired great clubs during the worst economy in 70 years and continued to expand."

McConnell also bucked conventional wisdom by raising the new member initiation fee at a time when many private clubs were reducing initiation costs to attract new members. Members who had joined the club on a trial basis during its bankruptcy and those whose outstanding fees and/or installments were suspended during that time were required to pay a rejoining fee to continue. Another standard implemented was a 15-handicap rule that clearly established what RCC represented.

“Our goal was to clearly outline the vision of championship golf unfolding at RCC,” said Christian Anastasiadis, McConnell Golf Chief Operating Officer. “With hiring Josh Points and establishing a teaching program, we encouraged higher handicap players to work on their game to become better.”

Like Michael Shoun, McConnell Golf VP and Director of Agronomy, Anastasiadis was with the company from the start. Together, they have built what it is now considered a golfing “Cinderella Story.” Anastasiadis was originally hired by RCC’s “old board” as a turnaround guy to assist the club through its bankruptcy. After doing so, McConnell asked him to remain a key part of the team. As Anastasiadis says: “It has become a fabulous ride. John is a great guy with a talented and keen eye for detail. We built a team — the spine of the operation — that can’t wait to get up the next day and get to work.”

Says Brian “Boomer” Kittler, McConnell Golf’s VP and Director of Golf: “John’s focus from day one has always been providing a high level of service in each area of the club business to the membership and providing a quality product. Our goal is to create a great club environment for both the membership and employee so they are excited to come to the club every day.”

McConnell points to the small touches and details to which his staff pays careful attention, such as painting its cups daily. “[Painting the cups] is our trademark which is something very few clubs do except for tournaments,” McConnell said. “I think the one major thing that sets us apart from others in our markets is the condition of the golf course. We pride ourselves on top-shelf courses that are challenging and rewarding.”

“Every time someone turns into one of our clubs we want them to feel special,” said McConnell, who used his computer software marketing expertise to help spread the word and coin the McConnell Golf mantra: “Pure Golf for the True Golfer.” For those who believe golf in the Carolinas is as good as you’ll find anywhere, McConnell Golf’s National Memberships have been designed to offer full golfing privileges at all McConnell Golf properties and no minimums, assessments or additional fees. National members enjoy the benefits of playing a selection of top-ranked courses all maintained to the same high standards associated with all McConnell Golf clubs.

In addition, McConnell Golf’s “Footprints on the Green” volunteer program is designed for members and staff to contribute by volunteering part of their time and efforts to help enrich the lives and the environment around them. Seeking to leave a vast “footprint” of giving, McConnell Golf’s nascent program has already elicited a strong and supportive effort by its collective community. In less than one year, Footprints on the Green has

become a formidable driving force in the local communities where McConnell Golf clubs reside.

Last but not least, McConnell Golf is dedicated to the amateur and junior golfer. To demonstrate this commitment, the company launched the MCG Junior Golf Scholarship Program. Many talented young golfers often have no quality courses or practice facilities that they can utilize and membership to most private courses may be out of the financial reach of the parents of some very talented young golfers. Therefore, McConnell Golf offers an opportunity to the “future of golf” by providing a place for those selected to grow and mature into the next level of their game.

Of course, golf course and club transformations have not been McConnell Golf’s only industry contributions. In March 2010, McConnell Golf acquired ClubSoft North America, one of the nation’s leading private club management software companies allowing McConnell Golf to offer advanced technology to private clubs across the country. “We have experienced how technology can assist clubs in containing costs and providing a high level of service to the membership,” said McConnell. “We feel many clubs today are looking for state-of-the-art technology as well as a company that understands the challenges of operating a membership club in tough economic times.”

“McConnell Golf started 10 years ago and nobody knew who we were or what we were doing,” said Kittler. “Now our brand is one of the best in the Carolinas and John is one of the 10 most influential people in our industry. I’d say that’s pretty impressive.”

### **ABOUT MCCONNELL GOLF AT 10 YEARS**

McConnell Golf’s mission during its first decade of existence has been to offer all areas of the Carolinas some of the finest private golf and country clubs. McConnell Golf offers pure golf for the true golfer as a privately held company offering one membership and access to eight private club experiences at world-class facilities and golf courses designed by legends Donald Ross, Pete Dye, Tom Fazio, Arnold Palmer, Greg Norman and Hale Irwin. Founded in 2003, McConnell Golf provides members a quality golf experience among 153 holes of championship golf at eight properties: Raleigh Country Club in Raleigh, N.C.; Treyburn Country Club in Durham, N.C.; Old North State Club at Badin Lake, N.C.; Musgrove Mill Golf Club in Clinton, S.C.; The Reserve Golf Club in Pawleys Island, S.C.; Sedgefield Country Club in Greensboro, N.C; and TPC Wakefield Plantation in Raleigh, N.C. All clubs are maintained and serviced to the highest standards with an emphasis on true golf, complete service and absolute quality. McConnell Golf offers numerous unique membership opportunities that are tailored to young families, avid golfers, corporate executives and culinary enthusiasts. Membership offerings include individual club memberships, as well as innovative corporate, national and legacy memberships that deliver unmatched access to the top courses in the Carolinas.

### **Media contacts:**

Martin Armes (919) 608-7260, [martinarmes@nc.rr.com](mailto:martinarmes@nc.rr.com)

Brad King (336) 306-9219, [king@bradkingcommunications.com](mailto:king@bradkingcommunications.com)