

# McConnell Golf Reverses Fortunes of Sedgefield Country Club

August, 2011

In February, after McConnell Golf purchased Sedgefield Country Club in Raleigh, N.C., Wyndham Championship tournament director Mark Brazil hailed the moment. Brazil was well aware of the extensive renovation and restoration work McConnell Golf had already performed at its stable of private clubs around the Carolinas, and knew Sedgefield was now in line for the same type attention.

"We know John McConnell and his track record is impressive, so we understand the significance of this transaction, how it will affect the Wyndham Championship's host course, and what it means for the future of the club and the tournament," Brazil said. "If history is any indication, John will make significant enhancements at Sedgefield, which will upgrade what is already a beautiful club."

When the 2011 Wyndham Championship tees off this week, Sedgefield will unveil a subtle yet substantial facelift courtesy of McConnell Golf, part of the millions in capital investment improvements above the purchase price the company has performed at other clubs its acquired since 2003.

In August, McConnell Golf added its eighth golf club and placed its stamp on the Nationwide Tour with its acquisition of TPC Wakefield Plantation in Raleigh. Priding itself on providing 3,000-plus members a quality golf experience at each of its courses, which include Raleigh Country Club in Raleigh, N.C.; Cardinal Golf & Country Club in Greensboro, N.C.; Treyburn Country Club in Durham, N.C.; Old North State Club in New London N.C.; Musgrove Mill Golf Club in Clinton, S.C.; and The Reserve Golf Club in Pawleys Island, S.C., McConnell Golf's mantra is "Pure Golf for the True Golfer."

In its first six month of ownership at Sedgefield, McConnell Golf invested more than \$1 million towards such improvements as:

- A new "Wall of Champions" overlooking the ninth green and inscribed with the names of all past Wyndham Championship winners. The list includes such golf greats as Ben Hogan, Gary Player, Chi Chi Rodriguez and Seve Ballesteros. Also involved are stone busts of multiple winners including, eight-time champion Sam Snead, along with two-time champs Byron Nelson, Billy Casper and Davis Love III.
- A freshly painted water tower overlooking the course. The historical landmark at Sedgefield is visible from numerous vantage points around the grounds.
- Re-routed cart paths and a stone bridge renovation on Nos. 10 and 18, improving both

aesthetics and playability.

- Extensive bunker work on No. 3.
- Major tree work and landscaping around the clubhouse and along the first fairway, with additional landscaping coming this fall in front of the clubhouse.
- Four new brick columns adorning the clubhouse entrance.
- An updated Sedgefield clubhouse interior designed by Leo Dowell Interiors in Charlotte, N.C., which brings fresh color schemes to the main level of the clubhouse, and a white stairwell adorning black-and-white photos of past tourney champions, along with historical photos of the course and clubhouse.
- A fitness center that will break ground after the club's pool closes for the summer, and will feature the latest in state-of-the-art equipment, massage therapy and more.

In 2003, John McConnell received rave reviews around the golf world for his purchase of Raleigh Country Club, the last course ever designed by legendary architect Donald Ross. Word at the time was that the investors who picked up Raleigh CC's bank note when the club filed for bankruptcy were planning to bulldoze the course and build condominiums in its place.

A passionate golfer who saw the opportunity to preserve an important piece of golf history, McConnell refused to watch Ross' final legacy turned into a housing subdivision. In a 2005 Golfweek magazine feature story about McConnell entitled "Saving Donald Ross," one Raleigh CC member dubbed him the club's "white knight."

Unlike other multiple-club owners around the country, McConnell Golf prides itself on preserving the private club environment in a geographically strategic manner, which is why McConnell Golf doesn't own any courses outside the Carolinas. McConnell keeps its clubs private at a membership arrangement almost unheard of today; initiation in one McConnell Golf club gains access to all eight properties.

McConnell Golf's philosophy is that when chasing the discretionary dollar, a company must offer a better product. "We treat our membership like customers," McConnell said. "To attract new members, you do right by the ones you already have. They are members, but truly they are customers. If they don't like the product we are delivering, we will lose them as customers."

McConnell Golf also gives back to the game. The McConnell Golf High School Golf Scholarship, a program intended for young golfers based on their level of talent, need, and commitment to the sport, is designed to offer playing opportunities to young golfers that may not have the financial wherewithal to play challenging courses.

"This is one of the most exciting and rewarding programs in which we've been involved," said McConnell. "Our company is committed to amateur and junior golf. Some of the best junior golfers do not have access to practice facilities and good courses. Our goal is to provide this

access and supervision in hopes of helping these talented young players move to the next level of play, and possibly allow them to elevate to the point where golf can become a means of helping them receive financial assistance for higher education and even play beyond the collegiate level."

Many tournaments are contested at McConnell Golf properties. Old North State Club served as the host site for the ACC Women's Golf Championship in the early 1990s and the league was so impressed it awarded Old North State the men's golf championship in 1995; it has remained there for all but three of the years since, providing a venue for the likes of former collegiate stars like former U.S. Open champion Lucas Glover, former British Open champions David Duval and Stewart Cink, Matt Kuchar, Webb Simpson, Jonathan Byrd, Bill Haas and Mark Wilson.

There's also the Cardinal Amateur in Greensboro, which boasts a storied history of matching some of the world's top players in a competitive but fun environment while, since 1983, offering an educational scholarship. The 2011 champion, Olafur Loftsson, is playing the Wyndham on a McConnell Golf sponsor's exemption as the winner of last weekend's Cardinal Amateur. He will be the first golfer from Iceland to compete in a PGA Tour event.

McConnell said he approaches private club ownership with the same philosophy he used in the medical software field: Attention to detail, outworking the competition and offering the highest value proposition possible for its customers or, in this case, its members.

"I've always said if you can provide the high quality of product and service, in the end, you're going to beat most of your competitors," McConnell said. "The model of assessments and cost cutting is a short-term fix. Our team is being built to think long term."

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