

KPMG Women's PGA Championship

Wednesday, June 21, 2023

Springfield, New Jersey, USA

Baltusrol Golf Club

Seth Waugh

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Good afternoon, and welcome back to the 2023 KPMG Women's PGA Championship. We're pleased to be joined by the PGA of America's CEO, Seth Waugh, who has an exciting announcement and check presentation to make.

Seth?

SETH WAUGH: Well, great to be here, and Greg, you're working on your voice well. You're starting to sound more like Julius every day. Well done. I think we pick them by the melodious tones.

We have a cool thing to announce today. A few years ago, we decided to add a fourth pillar to our foundation, which is called PGA Reach, which hopefully a lot of you know, which is called Places to Play. We had this idea if we're going to create all these new golfers, which is obviously happening in the world, and particularly if they're going to be invitationally reached out to and coming from non-traditional places of golf, that we're going to need places to play.

The foundation of it is to create access to be not only welcoming but invitational, to do it in places, whether they're old munis that are struggling or driving ranges that might be sort of buffed up, whatever it is, we want to be there to do it, to help that. If we create all these golfers and there's no place to play, we've kind of defeated the purpose.

At each of our major events, we also realize that we kind of come in, have a great week, spend three years preparing for four days, if you will, and then we leave, and we feel like carpetbaggers that haven't left something behind to remember us by.

We're in these amazing places, in these amazing sections. By the way, I'm a Jersey guy, so it's great to be home, and really want to leave a legacy kind of everywhere we have a



footprint.

Today I'm very pleased to announce that we have a \$250,000 grant coming from our foundation which is going to, as part of our Places to Play pillar, which is at the Inspiration Golf Range and Activity Center which is in the Lyons Complex of the New Jersey VA Health Systems.

It will include putting a roof on it, as well as a bunch of irrigation and a number of things to invite all kinds of folks to play there. Obviously veterans, our Hope Program, as well as people with disabilities, as well as youth, so we really want it to be a special place to grow the game.

It's led by our PGA head professional Andy Brock, and again, we're going to run all of our programs through there. We have Special Olympics of New Jersey that will be a part of it, Unified Partners, and EIs for Autism will also use the tee box for things.

I wanted to recognize a few folks from our New Jersey section. Chris Bower, who is our executive director there; Bill Hook, who is the sitting president; we have Chris Hunt, who's the executive director of the New Jersey Golf Foundation; and Mike Atarra, who is the foundation president.

Thank you guys for being here. I also want to recognize our national leadership. We have our chairs of our Places to Play committee, Cathy Harvin I'm very proud to serve with, and Kennie Sims who is our program director for PGA Reach.

I want to thank everyone for coming here. This is an important initiative for us, and something again that we want to leave something everywhere we go, but particularly in my home state of New Jersey to recognize this great event this week and the future of the game.

Thank you all for coming, and I think we have something to present.

Q. I wonder how this fits with other initiatives and other programs like your board members or your sections or even members themselves are doing with

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

minorities, with recovering golf courses around the country, and if you plan to send this to other places around the country.

SETH WAUGH: Yeah, thank you for the question. It absolutely dovetails with everything we're doing. We have four pillars to our foundation. We have PGA Hope, which is helping veterans everywhere, which is considered therapy by the VA and we actually get funding as a result of that because we're saving lives, which is extraordinary.

We have PGA Works, which is our effort to include and diversify inequity within the game. We have scholarships there, we have internships, we run the PWCC, which is basically the HBCU National Championship, which we view as sort of a huge kind of billboard for what we're trying to do.

Then we also have our youth programs mostly through PGA Junior League, which is the fastest growing thing in golf. We have about 75,000 kids. We're trying to create scholarships for anybody that needs it, so we want any kid that wants to play junior league to be able to play through our scholarships.

We're about halfway through our first-ever capital campaign. We've always lived hand to mouth and we're on a \$100 million capital campaign. Over \$50 million has been raised now, all by individuals, which is something we're excited about. We've got an amazing group of trustees that help us steward that.

I will sound like an advertisement now. We're really excited about what's happening in the game. Not only are we at the all-time highs in playing, participation at over 41 million, but off course is booming, as well.

There's now actually more off-course players or participants than on-course, which you'd think is a little bit weird. But we view that as the gateway to the game in a lot of ways, and if we can convert more of them, so we're working hard on that.

The interesting part about the off course is it's more women or girls, females than men are playing off course, which is exciting.

Then if you look at the construct of like how the game is changing, I'll give you three stats that are really encouraging. One is that our juniors are at an all-time high and it's about 40 percent girls, which is up dramatically in the last three or four years, and about almost 30 percent are kids of color.

It's changing, and we've talked a lot about it being the right

thing to do, but also the right business thing to do, because last time I checked, half the world is female. Our next census, over half the country will be of color.

If we're not growing in those incredible growth areas, we're not growing. The game needs to look more like the rest of the world, and hopefully the world can get a little civility and behave a little bit more like our game, if we can get it right.

I'll give you one last really cool stat, which is almost 50 percent, 48 percent of all participants in golf are now under the age of 35. If you think about the future of the game and where it's going, that's an extraordinary number. You think about -- I don't know what the number was, I'm trying to figure that out, but I'm guessing five years ago it was probably 75 percent over 50.

We're really changing, which is different than a lot of sports. Everybody talks about the aging of baseball, for instance. I don't mean to pick on them, but in a game that was getting older is now getting younger, which really bodes well for the thing.

To have places for these people to actually experience the game is absolutely vital, and our PGA professionals are out there, our 28,000 are out there every day at the front line of the game, making it more enjoyable and more understandable and more welcoming, and we're really proud of that.

Q. Between the factors of places you are, places in need, and then places converging with some of your other pillars, how are you weighing those factors when picking which locations to contribute to for Places to Play?

SETH WAUGH: Yeah, so we have a committee that will so some of that. We just did the same thing in Rochester. Not the same exact thing. What we're trying to do is go to the community, go to the locals on the ground, not impose something from national, but say, hey, what's the best way to help grow the game in your section.

In this case, we've picked this decision. We had a different one in Rochester. We had a different one in Tulsa a year ago at the Southern Hills PGA Championship.

That's one thing we're doing around the majors. Then the other things we're doing is we're relying on our committee to find worthy projects in different parts of the country.

We're also looking at a potential loan program, which I think is more exciting than any of it in some ways, because if we just write checks we'll run out of money at some point. If we can become a bank, if you will, that lends into certain

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

projects, then we can perpetuate that forever. We're just using our balance sheet to do that.

We're looking at all of the above. We're all really proud of it and excited about what we just accomplished in West Palm Beach at the golf park where we had an agreement with the mayor. It was really a handshake between he and I to say we think we can do a public private partnership, and there was an RFP out there and they were going to -- all the developers were going to build condos and probably a mediocre golf course and probably have the same issue that a lot of munis have, which is that they're under-invested in, and therefore mismanaged to a certain degree and they fail over time because they become white elephants for the town in the sense that West Palm was losing about a million dollars a year on something that we think should be a revenue generator, if you will.

They sort of look at it, rightfully so, as well, we have a million dollars, are we going to buy books or are we going to progress. I would make the same decision they make. If that's what you're comparing it to.

But we think that the model of public-private partnerships where they're managed, the money is raised locally, charitably, to restore them, and then they're managed in a remote way for the city but for the benefit of the residents is a great model.

We went into it at West Palm and we raised \$55 million to restore a municipal golf course.

The reason people donated -- and it's all people; it wasn't any corporations -- is really the story of changing lives. Golf is this vehicle. It's not -- there's a lot of other ways to do it. It can be a great teacher. It can be an art class. It can be whatever.

But here is a public facility of 180 acres that we think can transform lives through this game. We're also going to teach STEM classes at night and art classes during the day and have a caddie program and kids are playing for free on the par-3.

I just think golf is this incredible engine for good that changes all of our lives. We're all here for it. It's a miracle that we would hold major championships and people come, to a certain degree, in this game.

You think about the charitable -- the game raises over \$3 billion a year in charity. Like every other game on earth borrows it. You've got the values that it teaches, the lessons that are learned, the time with your loved ones or meeting new people. I can't remember the last close relationship that doesn't have some either beginning or end

in golf.

That's the beauty of my job, is the ability to take this amazing brand and kind of leverage it for good, to hopefully change lives.

Golf is the vehicle for that. It's not the only way to do it, but it's a great way to do it, and we're going to do that every chance we can.

That's what Places to Play is all about.

Q. Obviously you're a key leader in the game. I have to ask you about the merger, what your thoughts are, and how you feel it could impact the PGA.

SETH WAUGH: Yeah, look, this is not our news story, right, it's others'. This is the PGA TOUR and not PGA of America. Sadly, we've been -- our brand has been dragged into it because people don't totally understand the difference between the two of us.

I don't think it is a merger. I think that's a misunderstanding of what this handshake is. We're still waiting for lots of details on what it ultimately looks like.

I do think that peace is better than war for the whole game because I think you were getting unnatural acts, and I've been pretty vocal about saying that I didn't think it was a sustainable business model, and that's speaking as a pure sort of business person.

In some ways, I'm hopeful, but obviously it's created an enormous amount of conversation and angst and confusion, and we're a bit a part of that confusion, as well, and trying to sort through it all.

I don't think there's any direct effect on us specific to this. Certainly the war had some implications of competing against a business model that wasn't a business model, and we have to do that, too, and we'll see how it all plays out.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

