

Golf's Impact



Stephen F. Mona

EDITORS' NOTE Steve Mona assumed his current post in March 2008. Mona served as Tournament Director of the Northern California Golf Association from September 1980 to January 1982 and went on to become Assistant Manager of Press Relations for the United States Golf Association and then Executive Director of the Georgia State Golf Association. In November 1993, he became the Chief Executive Officer of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, a position held until March 2008 when he assumed his role as Chief Executive Officer of the World Golf Foundation. That same year, Mona was inducted into the Tri-Valley (San Francisco Bay area) Sports Hall of Fame. The International Association of Golf Administrators (IAGA) named him their 2008 Distinguished Service Award recipient. He received a bachelor's degree in journalism from San Jose (California) State University in 1980.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF The mission of the World Golf Foundation (worldgolffoundation.org) is to develop and support initiatives that positively impact lives through the game of golf and its traditional values. In support of that mission, World Golf Foundation focuses on a variety of initiatives to grow and celebrate the game around the world. Through The First Tee, the World Golf Foundation focuses on positively impacting the lives of young people. Under the banner of the World Golf Hall of Fame, it recognizes and celebrates golf's greatest players and contributors, and serves as an inspiration to golfers and fans worldwide. The World Golf Foundation's GOLF 20/20 initiative pursues programs to ensure golf's continued growth and vitality. All World Golf Foundation initiatives work together to support the growth of the game among youth, women, and minorities, while also fostering diversity within the golf industry.

What is the vision of the World Golf Foundation and has it remained consistent since its inception?

The World Golf Foundation was the brainchild of Deane Beman, who was Commissioner of the PGA TOUR from 1974 to 1994.



An Interview with Stephen F. Mona, Chief Executive Officer, World Golf Foundation

His vision was to create a golf organization that serves to bring the industry together to focus on initiatives that no one entity could take on by itself. This vision stands true today.

Since the creation of the World Golf Foundation, which occurred formally in 1994, there have been three specific initiatives developed: The First Tee program, which was launched in 1997; the World Golf Hall of Fame, which opened at the World Golf Village in May 1998; and GOLF 20/20, which is essentially a trade organization representing the U.S. golf industry, which launched in November of 2000.

In addition, the foundation's board was reorganized and the scope of the foundation was recalibrated in 2007 by Tim Finchem, who was then and remains today the Commissioner of the PGA TOUR, and who was Deane Beman's successor.

Tim accomplished two main objectives: the evolution of the breadth and focus of the foundation and the development of its board, which today consists of the chief executives of the PGA TOUR, the U.S. Golf Association, the LPGA Tour, the PGA of America, the Masters Tournament, the R & A, and the European Tour. This group oversees the strategy and long-term planning for the foundation. It's more global in scope and inclusive of all the major entities in golf.

In keeping with that, Tim also expanded the role of the foundation in the world of golf through the creation of that board, and bringing me on as the first CEO of the World Golf Foundation. He also involved the foundation in major issues that impact the game and that require coordination of major entities on a global basis.

For the first time, the golf industry created a unified approach to anti-doping in 2007. It was under the aegis of the World Golf Foundation that the various organizations came together to create this unified policy.

Even though this is being administered by a different body, the effort to include golf in the 2016 Olympics was led by the seven entities that represent the World Golf Foundation board.

What milestones has The First Tee program reached and are there metrics in place to track its impact?

The First Tee program was announced in November 1997 and launched in 1998. Since that time, it has reached several million young people through its chapter structure. There are about 200 across the U.S. and five locations globally.

It has also initiated a National School Program, whereby golf is offered as part of the physical

education curriculum at 6,000 elementary schools across the U.S., which translates to several million students being reached.

Another delivery vehicle for The First Tee involves military bases, both in the U.S. and abroad, where programs are offered to children of service members. There is an additional program called DRIVE, which offers The First Tee at non-golf facilities, such as the Boys and Girls Club.

The First Tee has established a goal to reach 10 million young people between 2012 and 2017, and we're well on our way to achieving that goal.

As part of GOLF 20/20, there is an initiative to focus around the contributions that golf makes to the U.S. economy. Why is that important?

Golf still suffers from a perception that doesn't align with the facts. We are viewed by some as elitist, as a small cottage industry and a niche sport, and that is not the case.

We worked to figure out how we could quantify what we know to be true about the golf industry so that it could be communicated to the media and the general public with the objective of influencing public opinion as to its attitude towards golf.

This message also needs to reach Washington, D.C., including members of Congress and members of the Executive Branch, and leaders of the various agencies with whom we interact.

We needed to commission research that would lead to authoritative data on the golf industry. One element was to measure the economic impact of golf, which we have now done in 2000, 2005, and 2011. In 2011, we found that golf is close to a \$68-billion per year industry that employs close to two million Americans. From an economic impact standpoint, this is larger than the performing arts and spectator sports industries combined.

Golf generates more than \$3.9 billion a year in charitable giving, which is more money raised for charity than the NFL, the NBA, Major League Baseball, and the NHL combined. Almost all of the money generated by golf for charity goes to causes outside of golf. The sport is being used as a vehicle to fund various charitable efforts at a community level.

How has the World Golf Foundation approached the issue of diversity?

We want golf to look like America from the standpoint of recreational players, of competitive players, of those who work in the industry, and of those who supply goods and services to the industry. Golf is not going to achieve its true promise if it doesn't look like America looks. ●