



You Never Know Who You're Going to Meet...

By Debbie Waitkus, Golf for Cause®

Let's face it. We all have our own little list of reasons for taking up the game of golf and sticking with it, but we will never agree on a *best* reason. One of them, though, and this should be on everyone's list, is that golf can be a great way to meet new people.



I started thinking about this on a recent Friday morning while playing an enjoyable round with two female friends and a gentleman who was not averse to joining us. It occurred to me that a foursome such as ours, fairly commonplace today, was unheard of only a few years ago. In fact it was Billie Jean King's September, 1973 tennis victory in straight sets over Bobby Riggs before a Houston Astrodome crowd of 31,000 and a TV audience of 50 million that changed forever the way men and women look at the playing field. And the work place. And the boardroom. Even outer space.

Golf, more than any other sport, has benefited from Billie Jean's triumph and the ensuing recognition of the equality of the sexes. It is due in part to the way golf courses are designed now, with four, five, even six teeing areas on many of the longer holes. The original intention of this design feature may have been to make a given course as playable for the short-hitting Junior golfer as the long-driving scratch golfer, but a wonderful, perhaps unintended consequence is that it makes it easier and more enjoyable for men and women to play together.

That Friday morning, we gathered at the first tee, shook hands and began our round. As a foursome. Three women. One man. Different sexes, different skill sets, different senses of how to approach the game. During the next four hours we got to know each other pretty well. We learned early on that we all like to talk. That none of us harbors a bad temper. That we all enjoy hunting for golf balls. That one of us is a bank president. That one of us is the Director of Business Development for an investment firm. That one of us once interviewed the men who went to the moon. That we share a love of the outdoors, travel, good food, good wine, good movies, life in general.

Every trip to the golf course or the practice range is an opportunity to meet new people. Sometimes it seems fated. Steve Buchman tells of the day he went solo to a golf course and got paired with a man whose wife had just expanded her successful real estate company to include a commercial properties division. Steve was a commercial realtor looking for a job. Yes, you guessed it. The man got Steve's phone number and

gave it to his wife. Steve got hired. *Went to play golf and came home with a job.*

Maybe it is always fated. Barney Adams, founder of Adams Golf and developer of the revolutionary *Tight Lies*® fairway woods, told me of a day long ago when things were tight at his fledgling company. Despite a No Solicitors sign on the door, a stranger came in asking for money to help find a cure for mucopolysaccharidosis, the fatal disease his young son Ryan was battling. Barney had no money but gave the man some golf clubs to auction off. The clubs helped raise \$25,000. A friendship was born. When another \$200,000 was needed, Barney turned to the golf community. Money poured in and the research continued. That was 15 years ago. A way to treat the disease was found. Ryan's life was saved. *Went to a seminar and met Barney Adams.*

Golf brings people together. Maybe that is the best reason to take up this sport and stick with it. Denise Bibaeno would certainly say so. She was mentoring at a Golf for Cause Nine and Wine event in the Spring of 2005 and met John, who was working as one of the outside



service staff at Mountain Shadows Golf Club. No bogeys at that meeting! *Denise, meet John. Your future husband, your future wife.*

Maurine Karabatsos will tell you that meeting new people at a golf course is as easy as wearing an orange shirt, as she did recently at a private club, playing as a guest. She spotted a man in the staging area who was also wearing orange. She walked right up to him and said, "I see you got the memo too." They chatted briefly. Later, when she uncharacteristically drove her tee shot into a lake, a man playing in the group behind her yelled, "Hey, Maurine!" She turned and looked. "Who is it?" she called back. "The guy in the orange shirt!" he yelled. *Wear orange and see what happens.*

Get out the door and onto the course. Someone will be there to meet you. Keep in mind that I began this by saying golf *can be* a great way to meet new people. You have to be open to it. And remind me sometime to tell you about the man in the moon. *You just never know.*

Debbie Waitkus a business-golf consultant, speaker and trainer, is the owner and founder of Golf for Cause®, LLC. She speaks to groups and stages creative golf programs, especially for women, to help them leverage golf for business at any skill level. "Turn golf into gold."® Debbie can be reached at dwaitkus@golfforcause.com or 602/840-0607.