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ConnectWEST

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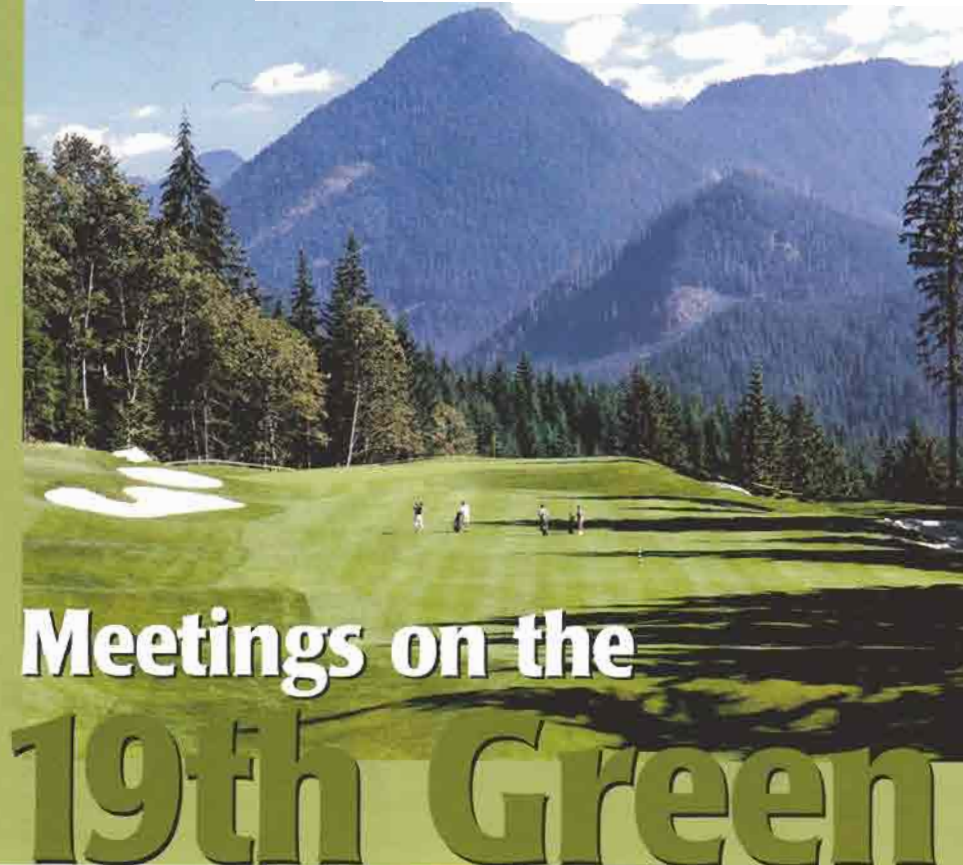
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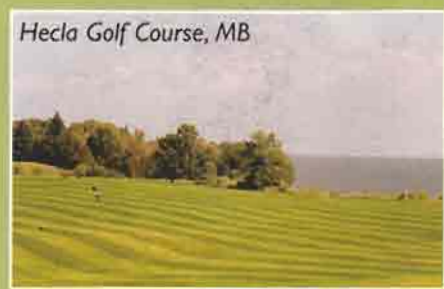
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Meetings on the 19th Green

By Shannon Lutter

You can feel the sun warming your face as a soft breeze drifts past you. You carefully place your tee in the ideal location, grab your lucky ball and spin it around in the palm of your hand. You set it on the tee, take hold of your trusty driver – the one with tattered grip – and get ready to swing. For you, this is paradise . . . and it is **definitely** not your average business conference!

"Golf and business are inextricably linked," explains Jason Lowe (jlowe@golf-bc.com), Director of Sales for the Golf-BC Group, Vancouver Island Region. He recognizes that, "the game is renowned for building successful business relationships beyond the confines of the office or the boardroom."

average 18 holes, from golf schools to quality time with a pro!

With so many different choices, integrating a conference and a golf tournament may seem like a daunting task for you to plan. However, most golf courses offer a helpful staff that has the expertise to help plan whatever type of function your clients are looking for. This may include arranging banquets or barbecues, planning for technical equipment and coordinating different tournament options.

Lowe, who also works hand in hand with **Olympic View Golf Course** in Victoria British Columbia, says there are a number of factors that meeting planners should keep in mind when they are pick-

from 16 to 200 for business meetings and trade shows. And, after the work is done, guests can take up a round of golf on the breathtaking course, complete with

"What better way to relax and unwind a business group than to play a round of golf?"

And for those of you who make the vision of a memorable business conference a reality – the possibilities are endless! Canada has close to 2000 golf courses country wide, with more than twenty new ones opening their doors each year. Many of these courses have services that go above and beyond your

ing a course. He says, "you should consider the proximity to your event, the meeting facilities that are available, the catering facilities, the ability of a club to assist you in managing the event, and of course, the cost."

The **Olympic View Golf Course** has facilities that can accommodate groups

waterfalls, lakes and a breathtaking view of the Olympic Mountains. "What better way to relax and unwind a business group than to play a round of golf," exclaims Lowe.

But it's not just about the golf, says Eric Suzuki (esuzuki@westwoodplateau-golf.com), Sales Manager at **Westwood**

Plateau Golf and Country Club near Vancouver, British Columbia. He says, "more companies want their participants to experience something unique and memorable. It just so happens that golf can provide that! It's exciting, yet the game's casual setting makes conversations

and interactions more welcome between colleagues."

Westwood Plateau Golf and Country Club has three main meeting/banquet spaces that can accommodate from 4 to 400 people. Each room has a view of the championship 18-hole course and the

Panorama Room, located on the second floor has a spectacular view of Mount Baker, as well as an outdoor deck perfect for breakout sessions.

Suzuki explains that golf can always be incorporated into a meeting and is often the exciting component that everyone is eager to get to. "Plus," he says, "there are so many variations in the packages that meeting planners can arrange. They can plan for a game on our 18-hole course, take a lesson at our Golf Academy, play our 9-hole executive course or even take indoor lessons if the weather doesn't cooperate."

Miles Mortensen, the Head Golf Professional at **The Banff Springs Golf Course** (banffsprings@fairmont.com), agrees that integrating business and golf can make an ordinary conference extraordinary. He says, "breaking away from the hustle and bustle of the city and heading to a golf course because your boss actually wants you to is instantly something special!"

The golf course is located in **Banff National Park**, in the heart of the Canadian Rockies. Mortensen explains, "in the city, people are rushing to get to their conferences and rushing to get home. For lunch participants all go their own way. Presentations don't get anyone's full attention or participation because everyone is thinking of all the things they have to do when they get back to the office."

But bring them to a golf course, says Mortensen, and all that changes. "When meetings are held in conjunction with a game of golf, people really embrace the day. Their enthusiasm spills into the conference rooms and people are more likely to participate and really contribute their ideas." The **Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel** offers over 76,000 square feet of versatile meeting and exhibit space. Meeting space is available that can hold as little as ten people and as many as 750, plus banquet space for up to 700.

There is no doubt that planning a business event takes a lot of hard work, organization and preparation by meeting planners. Working golf into the mix



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sounds like it would require even more – from booking the course, scheduling the teams, hiring a pro, renting equipment, and so on – but that's not the case insists Lindsay Berglof (admin@willowsgolf.com), Sales and Marketing Coordinator at **The Willows Golf Club** in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. "In fact," she says, "most places like ours offer highly efficient staff who are happy to assist with working golf into the conference agenda."

The Willows Golf Club has rooms that will cater to groups as small as 10 and as large as 200, with most of the rooms offering a view of the championship course. In addition to great surroundings they provide equipment rentals from flip charts to televisions to slide projectors. And, once the business is taken care of inside the boardroom, two 18-hole golf courses are waiting outside. "Plus, when the game is over the fun doesn't have to end," says Berglof. "We have a big red barn that is perfect for barbeques and get-togethers after everyone has worked up an appetite on the greens." The **The Willows Golf Club** offers a full service dining room and lounge with a wraparound deck. "A perfect place to watch our spectacular Saskatchewan sunsets," exclaims Berglof!

Berglof explains that many golf courses offer the little extras as well. Whether that is a pro golf instructor or personalized golf bag tags, she says, "attention to detail is our number one priority!"

And, incorporating business with pleasure (ie. golf), is something that more and more businesses want their meeting planners to look into. Berglof says, "the demand is definitely increasing each year as the word gets out that this type of thing exists. We are getting more requests and are looking to market golfing even more in the future."

Jordon Lanthier (gharbour@mts.net), Sales and Marketing Manager from the **Gull Harbour Resort and Conference Centre** on Hecla Island in Manitoba agrees that the demand is definitely increasing. "I've heard from clients," he says, "that for them the chance to attend a business conference and play golf is

something they really benefit from. They can focus on work related issues because they are away from the distractions of the city and they can enjoy recreational time with their colleagues when the work is done."

The **Gull Harbour Resort and Conference Centre** houses five meeting rooms on the main floor and three banquet rooms on the second level. The rooms, most of which have a spectacular view of Lake Winnipeg, can accommodate

up to 300 people. Outside, conference goers can enjoy an 18-hole golf course, a driving range, two practice greens, full time bag storage and powered carts.

"Golf is worked in very easily with conferences," says Lanthier. "Often there is a meeting in the morning and golf in the afternoon with a supper to finish. If the conference is a longer event – they may have meetings for a few days and wrap up the event with a big company golf tournament."



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Lanthier hopes that more people come to realize that golfing isn't just a Sunday sport anymore. "Integrating golf is a chance to really make people remember the conference they attended. It's not just 'I rushed downtown, sat through a boring meeting, and snuck out early' – it's 'I drove out to the course with some colleagues,

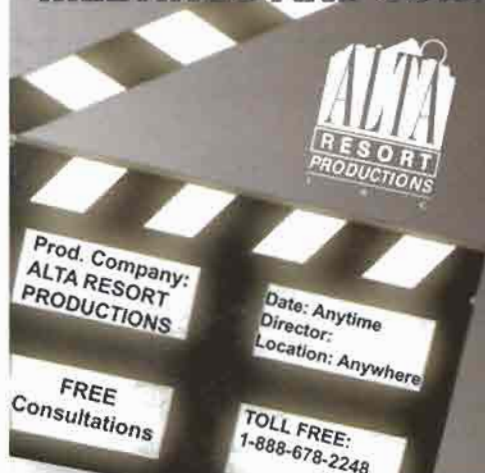
contributed my ideas in the meeting and played a round of golf with the executive of my company.'"

So, are the sand traps, slices and showers worth the extra trouble of leaving the convenience of a conference in the city? Ask any golfer – rookie or experienced – and the answer is loud and clear ...YES! ♦

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