
GOOD BUSINESS

ACCENTURE MATCH PLAY CHAMPIONSHIP

Golf tourney's real winners: Tucson kids

If you need an excuse to see the world's best golfers play in Tucson, I have a great one - and it has very little to do with golf.

When the Accenture Match Play Championship kicks off Monday, spectators on the course and television viewers in more than 180 countries will see a one-of-a-kind world-class golf event.

What we in southern Arizona will see is even better. With every drive and every putt, we should see the faces of Tucson kids who benefit from this event.

At the end of the championship, proceeds go to the Tucson Conquistadores and, through them, straight to southern Arizona kids.

I know firsthand. Hundreds of our community's youths have received scholarships to YMCA's Triangle Y Camp and the YMCA's Youth Sports program.

The Conquistadores donated \$300,000 for new



Dane Woll

facilities at the Ott YMCA to keep kids active, safe and, in many cases, out of trouble after school.

The benefit to YMCA kids is only a small part of the story. The Tucson Conquistadores have donated more than \$20 million to support youth sports

programs all over Tucson for nearly 50 years.

They're also a primary funder of the Special Olympics of Pima County.

In 2008 alone, 200 other youth athletic programs benefited from the \$1.4 million the Conquistadores donated from tournament proceeds.

In these challenging economic times, when

philanthropy and funding sources are drying up, this is an easy and entertaining way to continue to support our kids.

With all the talk about the elite players coming to the exciting new course at The Ritz-Carlton Golf Club, Dove Mountain, we can readily overlook the important role this event plays in our community, indirectly developing strength and character in our kids through youth sports programs sponsored by the Tucson Conquistadores.

As a past chairman of the former Tucson LPGA Golf Open, I know what a tremendous contribution professional golf makes to our community, and what a challenge it is to keep those events coming back.

Moreover, I know how great the loss is, especially to the beneficiary nonprofit sector, when lack of sufficient support drives these events away.

The success of this year's Accenture Match Play Championship is critical to the event's future in Tucson, and to the ability of the Conquistadores to keep supporting youth sports.

Additional positive impacts on the community are huge. Based on research by the University of Florida related to a similar event in Jacksonville, Fla., the Conquistadores estimate that the Accenture Match Play Championship brings as

much as \$100 million into our community each year.

That's not even counting the potential impact on tourism from the many who watch broadcasts in those 180 countries around the globe.

So if we need a reason to buy tickets or a sponsorship package for the Accenture Match Play Championship, especially in this economy, I suggest we remember our kids, and force ourselves to spend an afternoon watching America's best golfers compete in a spectacular new setting for the tournament.

I've already bought my tickets and hope to see you there.

Tucson will win as the PGA Tour wins with a successful event - and your investment will be returned a thousand-fold in opportunities for Tucson's youth.

Dane Woll is president and CEO of the YMCA of Southern Arizona and of the YMCA Foundation. He has been a YMCA director for more than 30 years, having served the organization in California before bringing his family to Tucson in 1991. As president of the Tucson Parks Foundation in 1999, he was chairman of the LPGA tournament.