

Making connections on the golf course

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Some say more deals are done on the golf course than in the boardroom. The sport is known for bolstering business relationships and partnerships. Nowhere is that more evident than South Florida, which has an abundance of award-winning courses. We asked local business leaders a few questions about their favorite courses, how they use golf to help build business relationships and even their best scores.

Paul Adkins, *Chairman, Florida Peninsula Insurance Co.*

What is your favorite South Florida golf course? It's tough to beat Seminole and Pine Tree.

Is golf a leisure or business activity for you? It's both. It's tough to separate the two. Some of my best friendships started as a round of business golf.

In what ways is the sport used to help build or improve business relationships? Golf is the perfect environment for establishing and building business relationships. After spending four hours with someone on the golf course, you develop a sense of trust and understanding that you can never get from a business meeting.

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Jim Dunn , *General manager and VP, JM Lexus*

What is your favorite South Florida golf course?

My favorite courses are the Boca Raton Resort and Broken Sound, where the Allianz Senior Championship is played, in Boca Raton. I have had the privilege to play many wonderful courses throughout the country, like Pebble Beach and Spyglass, Sage Valley in Georgia, Sebonick on Long

Island, but there is no place like home.

Is golf a leisure or business activity for you? In what ways is the sport used to help build or improve business relationships? My golf playing is both business and pleasure. I find golfing is a great way to develop friendships and partnerships. We have great community golfing events throughout the year, many events tied to wonderful charities, which exposes you to seeing other people involved in the community. I know it is instrumental in bringing business to JM Lexus, and is a real assist in allowing us to remain the world's-largest Lexus dealership.

What was your best score on a South Florida course? What course was it My best score actually just happend at the 2015 Allianz Championship this past February. My score was 52, but I must admit it was a scramble and our team won the Pro-Am and our professional was **Lee Janzen**. We must have been a good luck charm for him, as the next week he won the senior event in Naples.

Keith Koenig , *President, City Furniture*

What is your favorite South Florida golf course? I play at Grande Oaks and love it, but have to say Seminole is the best.

Is golf a leisure or business activity for you? It's leisure unless I am playing with my buddies **Tom Miller**, **Harry Moon** and **Steve Halmos**. Then it is work trying to win \$5.

In what ways is the sport used to help build or improve business relationships? It's the best way to get to know anyone. You can see their true colors.

What was your best score on a South Florida course? What course was it? Maybe 72 at Fort Lauderdale Country Club.

Al Levy , President, Levy Advertising

What is your favorite South Florida golf course? Trump Doral Blue Monster.

Is golf a leisure or business activity for you? Both. I always network on the course.

In what ways is the sport used to help build or improve business relationships? Golf presents many opportunities to meet different people every time you tee it up. Spending four hours with a total stranger allows you to get to know them and promote your business while playing. I always keep a stash of custom-decorated Levy Advertising giveaway items in my golf bag for this exact reason.

What was your best score on a South Florida course? What course was it? 74 at Trump Doral Red Tiger.

César Melgoza , CEO and founder, Geoscape

What is your favorite South Florida golf course? Miami Beach Golf Club. Of the ones I've used, it seems to be the best-maintained. It has a nice pro shop, a nice little restaurant [and it is] very conveniently located.

Is golf a leisure or business activity for you? It's more of a leisure activity – probably 80/20 leisure.

In what ways is the sport used to help build or improve business relationships? You're out there for maybe four hours. So it gives you a lot of time to mingle and get to know people on an informal basis. Let's say that you're a really good golfer. You get a certain level of respect, even if it's not business-related, just because you play well. If the golfer happens to be a supplier, it puts you in a good position: You help them win.

What was your best score on a South Florida course? What course was it? I'm not a good golfer. I shot an 89 at the Biltmore [Golf Course in Coral Gables] a few years ago.

Dev Motwani , *President, Merrimac Ventures*

What is your favorite South Florida golf course? My home course is Coral Ridge Country Club, which is amazing. Though it's hard to compete with the Blue Monster at Doral, especially given all the recent upgrades and improvements that have taken place.

Is golf a leisure or business activity for you? It's both, depending on who I'm playing with.

In what ways is the sport used to help build or improve business relationships? It's a good way to spend time with potential partners, investors or colleagues outside of the office. At my level, the game tends to be equally frustrating for most people, so it gives us something in common.

What was your best score on a South Florida course? What course was it? Low 90s at Coral Ridge, but I may have taken a mulligan or two in order to get to that!

Philip Spiegelman , *Principal, International Sales Group*

What is your favorite South Florida golf course? Grande Oaks.

Is golf a leisure or business activity for you? Golf is really both, but first and foremost it's a leisure activity. It's something both my business partner and I have enjoyed for many years.

In what ways is the sport used to help build or improve business relationships? I can always get to know a person better during a round of golf. It builds both business relationships and friendships. When selling an area, such as Downtown Doral for example, taking a client to the golf courses nearby serves as an opportunity to showcase the area's leisure activities in a much more personal manner.

What was your best score on a South Florida course? What course was it? It was an 81 at Grande Oaks.

Craig Studnicky , *Principal, International Sales Group*

What is your favorite South Florida golf course? Indian Creek

Is golf a leisure or business activity for you? Both – although I must admit I have a lot of fun when I am playing for business purposes.

In what ways is the sport used to help build or improve business relationships?

All people (men and women) relax on a golf course. A normal round takes more than four hours to play. You get to know people in a unique way in those four hours – and they get to know you. Also, golf reveals a lot about a person's sense of etiquette and honesty that undoubtedly shows up in a business environment.

What was your best score on a South Florida course? What course was it? 69, Grande Oaks.

Daren Trousdell , *CEO, OneUp Sports*

What is your favorite South Florida golf course? The Dye Preserve.

Is golf a leisure or business activity for you? Golf is both leisure and business for me.

In what ways is the sport used to help build or improve business relationships?

[It's] the ultimate four hours of time to spend with partners or business prospects to discuss all topics - business and personal. More than anything, golf can really create a common ground with the other person. In that way, it is certainly unique. Some of the best deals I ever made over the years have been initiated on a golf course.

What was your best score on a South Florida course? What course was it? 78 at The Bear's Club.

Ariela Wagner , *Founder, SunRay Construction Solutions*

What is your favorite South Florida golf course? Raised [here] as a golfer, this is a super-challenging question. Two that are worth mentioning are Crandon Golf at Key Biscayne and Boca Rio Golf Club.

Is golf a leisure or business activity for you? Ninety percent of the time I play, I play for business.

In what ways is the sport used to help build or improve business relationships? For business, golf has turned out to be absolutely sensational. I am invited to spectacular charity tournaments. Instead of just being on the telephone for two minutes, I can develop a personal relationship. I learn about the person's business and what their needs are. Being a woman in business and playing golf is such an advantage because the majority of golfers are men.

What was your best score on a South Florida course? What course was it 68 at Boca Raton Municipal Golf Course.



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Philip Spiegelman

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Craig Studnicky