



# PASSION FOR THE GAME

We asked six avid golfers in the Tampa Bay business community to share thoughts about the game and their passion for it

Debbie Lundberg works out of a sand trap.



PHOTO BY STEVE JACOBSON

## DEBBIE LUNDBERG

Principal, Presenting Powerfully



**What does the golf industry need most?** The golf industry would do well to get, and stay, in touch with people who play the game, and people who are interested in the game, and yet are somehow uncomfortable or intimidated by the idea of it. This way, the voice of the "user" would be heard, and present throughout the game.


**Does business still get done on the course?** Absolutely. If someone is looking for an opportunity to be out in our beautiful surroundings with a client or collaborator for 3.5-5 hours of concentrated time together, doing something enjoyable, the topics of business, solutions and working

together are almost naturally going to come up. We like to do business with those we like to be around, and if you are around one another for that long, and you are still interested in pursuing something, starting or continuing business is a wonderful next step. How people play and act on the course directly relates to how they will conduct business, too, so insights are found on the links.

**Favorite course:** Being a part of the ClubCorp system through the Centre Club-Tampa, we have the opportunity to play a lot of courses in our system, and through reciprocal agreements. Hunters Green is a favorite local ClubCorp course, and for a public course, absolutely the drive to World Woods in Brooksville, is well worth it.

**Favorite hole:** While it is quite a ways to go, I play this hole as often as possible — it is a par three at Aspen Glen, in Aspen, Colorado. It may be because No. 14 is where I got my hole-in-one that won Michael and me an eight-day, seven-night trip to Mexico. As far as a favorite hole in Tampa Bay, hole No. 6 at Innisbrook on the beautiful Copperhead course is where my husband, Michael, and I have volunteered our time for the Valspar golf tournament for eight years. It looks like a straightforward par four, and yet it is very difficult to birdie. I love that challenge.

**Handicap:** Currently my index is a 13.1, as I have been having a few challenges off the tee, that are being remedied with the assistance of my swing coach, Rick Sopka. Check back with me in a few months for improvement, please.

 **MORE ONLINE:** See photos from the golfers in the digital edition at [bizjournals.com/tampabay](http://bizjournals.com/tampabay)

## SALLY DEE

Principal, Playbook Public Relations



**What does the golf industry need most?** For me, the question is, have the discriminatory policies of private clubs hurt the game of golf? I believe the answer is yes. I know several women who are six to 15 years younger than me, who will not play or join certain country clubs because of the misogynistic policies of the club. The reality I faced growing up was that I was not allowed to play golf at certain times at our club with the boys that I practiced with and beat every day. For my mother it was worse; she wasn't allowed to play golf at any country club when she was growing up. No one loved the game of golf more than

her. She was the one who instilled the love of the game in my brothers and me, as well as countless junior golfers along the way.

When Augusta National recently hosted a women's amateur event, I admittedly had mixed feelings. I was pleased it happened, however, it took place 45 years after Title IX passed. As a private club, Augusta National did not need to allow women to play ever — and they didn't for over a century. I personally believe the fact that the game of golf is currently hurting is a direct result of many of the private clubs ignoring and discriminating against women.

Just imagining how much stronger the game of golf would be today if an important club like Augusta National acknowledged, respected and supported the women's game 20 years ago, or in 1974 when Title IX became the law of the land? If they and other clubs had, I think we would be having a very different conversation about what golf needs.

**Does business still get done on the course?** Do I use golf to find new clients? The answer is no. However, golf is a game where I have the opportunity to spend an extended amount of time in a beautiful and fun environment with clients. I use the opportunity to play golf with my clients to deepen my understanding of their needs so I can serve them better. I find that playing golf with my client strengthens my relationship with them.

**Favorite course:** Old Head, Kinsale, Ireland

**Favorite hole:** The 18th hole at Old Head

**Handicap:** Scratch



**OSCAR HORTON**

*President & CEO, Sun State International Trucks LLC*



**What does the golf industry need most?**

Improved pace of play and more diversity

**Does business still get done on the course?** Yes

**Favorite course:** Whistling Straits in Wisconsin

**Favorite hole:** TPC Sawgrass Island Green hole 17

**Handicap:** 14

**BEMETRA L. SIMMONS**

*Managing director, Florida, Mutual of Omaha Bank*



**What does the golf industry need most?**

To increase awareness of the sport and attract more diverse players (i.e. women,

people of color)

**Does business still get done on the course?** I wouldn't say that business gets done on the course in the sense of, I haven't had someone request a loan on the course. However, golf allows for relationships to be built which has undeniably led to closed business and significant referrals.

**Favorite course:** My favorite local course to play is the Copperhead Course at Innisbrook (overall course-nationally is Bear's Best in Atlanta. It is a mimic course of Jack Nicklaus' favorite 18 holes)

**Favorite hole:** Any hole that I can make birdie on

**Handicap:** 20

**JAKE FISHER**

*CEO, Palms of Pasadena Hospital*



**What does the golf industry need most?**

More ways to engage kids in the game at a young age

**Does business still get done on the course?** I would say less actual business but more building relationships that can lead to business.

**Favorite course:** The Old Course - St. Andrews

**Favorite hole:** No. 18, Doral Golf Club Blue Monster

**Handicap:** 15

**MICKEY JACOB**

*Principal - Design Studio, BDG Architects*



**What does the golf industry need most?** Greater access to courses, equipment and instruction that is affordable for young players. We have to grow the game early on and build the love of playing that lasts a lifetime. If we do not invest in building the base from our youth, the game will suffer.

**Does business still get done on the course?** For me it's the relationships, friendships and trust that are built on the course playing with clients and friends - generating business is the byproduct of that.

**Favorite course:** Locally, it's Copperhead at Innisbrook (a great test for all levels of players and fun to see how you perform on the same course as the PGA Tour Pros). Nationally it's Pebble Beach (the only place I have completely lost myself in the moment for the entire round - a breathtaking experience).

**Favorite hole:** The 7th hole at Pebble Beach. It is the perfect blend of beauty, nature and challenge. There is nothing quite like standing up on the tee box at the top of the cliff and looking out over the Pacific and thinking, "Well this is pretty amazing."