

## **2000 Buy.Com Golf Tournament Lafayette, Louisiana**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the economic significance to the immediate community and surrounding area of the 2000 Buy.com Golf Tournament that was held March 30-April 2, 2000, at LeTriomphe Country Club in Lafayette. A total of 178 golfers participated in the golf tournament. Two questionnaires were used to gather data. One was administered to tourists and the other to local residents attending the tournament. Results show a positive economic impact on the local community from visitor spending on hotel rooms, meals, transportation, and shopping with the tournament proceeds benefiting local charities. Comments about the tournament's operation and suggestions for improving the golf tournament are also included in this report.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Golf, as a sport tourism activity, has universal appeal. This pastime and competitive sport is usually played on an 18-hole course varying between 5000 yards and 7000 yards. Play begins off a tee with the object of getting the ball into a cup on the green using the least possible strokes. The fairway between the tee and the green contains hazards such as water, sand traps, bushes and zoo animals (Nance, 1985).

“Some historians trace golf back to the Stone Age, while others tell us that the sport had its origin with the idle antics of shepherd boys knocking small stones into crude holes in the ground with a ‘crook’, while their flocks grazed lazily in nearby fields” (Golf Magazine’s Encyclopedia of Golf, p. 1). The Romans also played “paganica”, a game using a bent stick and a feather ball in open country-sides. (Golf Magazine’s Encyclopedia of Golf). Similar games were also played in France, Belgium, Netherlands and England.

However, most writers believe that this game of accuracy officially originated in Scotland in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and was played on an open field with rough edges. In 1754, the Royal and Ancient Golf Club was established in St. Andrews, Scotland. In 1867, the first women’s golf club was formed, introducing golf as a female recreation sport to the world (Bolstad, 1964).

The first national golf championship, held in Scotland in 1860, was limited to professionals. In 1861, it was open to the world as the British Open. The first British Ladies Amateur Championship was held in 1893, at the Lytham and St. Anne’s Club (Encyclopedia of Golf, 1971).

Approximately 50 million people worldwide play the game. In 1993, there were 25,000 golf courses. The USA accounts for the largest number of players (27.8 million) followed by Japan (12.4 million) (Story, 1994). Expansion rates suggest 70-80 million golfers in the world by the year 2000. The 1997 Specialty Travel Index lists a directory of golf travel destinations throughout the world numbering 145 entries in 37 different countries. For traveling golfers and

spectators seeking golf enjoyment, most countries have tourist boards offering golf information. Also, many of these country tourism boards/bureaus are active on the Internet offering specific golf destination information on their web sites (Conly, 1997).

With new golfers such as Tiger Woods, the popularity of the game of golf is growing and people from all walks of life and backgrounds are participating. An estimated 26.5 million Americans played the game in 1997, an increase of more than 25% since 1987. As the number of rounds of golf played nationally increases, so does the dollar value of golf related spending – an estimated \$25 billion in 1997.

## **BACKGROUND**

Originally formed in 1990 as the Ben Hogan Tour, renamed the Nike Tour at the start of the 1993 season and at the start of the 2000 season, this tour was renamed the Buy.Com Tour to display the newly formed partnership with one of the leading companies in the Internet marketplace, Buy.Com. The Buy.Com Tour crosses the United States with events held from the state of Washington to Pennsylvania, Florida and South Dakota. “Just like the PGA Tour and Senior PGA Tour, the Buy.Com Tour has significant impact on local communities with events raising approximately \$16 million for charity since 1990” (Foote, 2000).

The Louisiana Open, part of the tour, is the oldest professional golf tournament in the state of Louisiana. Records indicate that the forerunner of what is now known as the Louisiana Open began in the 1920s, but it was in 1957 that the tournament matured into the organized event that it is today. Also, in 1957, the Professional Golfers Association began its affiliation with the Louisiana Open, a relationship that has continued and strengthened to this day.

In 1986, the Louisiana Open underwent a transformation. Herbert E. Schilling II incorporated the event into a 501C-3 non-profit organization, created a Board of Directors and an Advisory Board, and officially named it the Louisiana Open, Inc. Golf Tournament. In its first year of incorporation, the Louisiana Open, Inc. was able to contribute a total of \$15,000 to three area charities.

Starting in 1992 as a Ben Hogan event, the Louisiana Open has enjoyed improvements to its presentation each and every year. The purse (or prize money) has increased from \$300,000 last year to \$450,000 this year. Also new this year was the presence of the Golf Channel which televised the event providing the opportunity to highlight the Louisiana Open and the Acadiana area.

In addition to nationwide exposure, Acadiana has also benefited from the Open’s generous philanthropy. Since its incorporation, the Open has awarded more than \$1,000,000 to local charities and \$14,000 in scholarship money to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

The 2000 Buy.Com Louisiana Open was held March 30 – April 2, 2000 at LeTriomphe Country Club. The event attracted 178 golfers participating in the tournament and according to the PGA in the Buy.Com Tour Tournament Report, attendance was 59,750 over the four-day tournament. Golf is a sport that has had tremendous growth recently with participants as well as

viewers. The sport appeals to both males and females alike. The primary purpose of this project is to demonstrate the benefits both economically and community service wise that the Louisiana Open Golf Tournament has on the Acadiana area.

## **STUDY OBJECTIVES**

The Louisiana Open Buy.Com Golf Tournament study had two primary objectives:

1. To identify the economic significance of the Buy.Com in Acadiana. University of Louisiana at Lafayette accomplished this objective by identifying the direct expenditures associated with the event, and profiling the visitors and attendees to the event.
2. To identify opportunities for enhancing the event in coming years. This was achieved by surveying attendees and asking them how they heard about the Louisiana Open. This information is of interest to event organizers, LeTriomphe (the site of the golf tournament), PGA (Professional Golf Association), Lafayette Convention and Visitors Commission, and the state of Louisiana Office of Tourism.

Due to the fact that the golf tournament was broadcasted live during the tournament, the exposure for the area to potential golfers and tourists is tremendous.

## **THE 2000 BUY.COM LOUISIANA OPEN**

A total of 144 golfers and an estimated 59,750 attendees participated in the 2000 Buy.Com Louisiana Open. The golf tournament began with a Pro-Am open on Wednesday, March 29 and proceeded on Thursday, March 30 through Sunday, April 2. After the first two days of golf, the field of 144 golfers were narrowed down to 60.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Two separate two-page questionnaires were developed and designed by Dr. Jerome Agrusa in consultation with LSU Sea Grant, Dr. Harsha Chacko from the University of New Orleans, the Office of Tourism and Buy.Com Louisiana Open Board of Directors.

The first questionnaire was designed to survey tourists and the second questionnaire was designed to survey local residents who attended the golf tournament. Interviewers randomly interviewed adult spectators at LeTriomphe during the golf tournament and asked if the spectators were from “out of town” or “local residents”. Interviewers had explicit instructions to enlist adults who were at the golf tournament as spectators. The majority of the spectators were accommodating with 88 tourists and 534 local residents completing the survey instruments.

## **SUMMARY OF ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE TO THE ACADIANA AREA**

Data from all resources provide the following results related to expenditures made overall by tourists and by local residents at the 2000 Buy.Com Louisiana Open Golf Tournament.

## **Overall Expenditures**

- According to the PGA, attendance for the five days of the tournament was estimated at 59,750.
- An estimated 2,207 spectators purchased tickets (total value of \$33,575 for the four-day event).
- According to the Buy.Com Louisiana Open sales staff, 26 Golf Event Packages were sold which included skybox passes, clubhouse passes and admission to the golf tournament sales equal \$25,000.
- Food and beverage concessions recorded \$30,000 in sales at the golf tournament.
- Over \$54,000 was spent on catering at the skyboxes during the tournament.
- According to the golf tournament caterer, over \$200,000 was raised during the golf tournament for various charities throughout Acadiana.

## **Tourists' Expenditures**

- Tourists from 16 different states completed the survey, with Louisiana having the highest percentage of respondents followed by Florida, Texas and Pennsylvania.
- Tourists spent approximately \$43,243.20 for 655 hotel room nights during the tournament.
- Tourists stated that they spent approximately \$25,712.88 on food and beverage over the golf tournament.

## **Local Spectators' Expenditures**

- Miscellaneous spending by local spectators during the golf tournament according to the 534 local participants was \$6,970.
- Local spectators' spending on food per day of the golf tournament by 534 participants was \$9,205.

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY

### Ticket Sales

#### Package Ticket Sales

1) Six (6) Platinum Packages at \$ 2,500 each	=	\$ 15,000
2) Two (2) Gold Packages at \$ 1,000 each	=	\$ 2,000
3) Sixteen (16) Silver Packages at \$ 500 each	=	<u>\$ 8,000</u>
		\$ 25,000

Packages include the following: <b>Platinum</b>	=	8 skybox passes per day plus 60 clubhouse passes
<b>Gold</b>	=	8 skybox passes per day plus 10 clubhouse passes
<b>Silver</b>	=	80 clubhouse passes

#### Advance Ticket Sales

760 season passes @ \$25 each	=	\$ 19,000
680 daily passes @ \$10 each	=	<u>\$ 6,800</u>
		\$ 25,800

#### Ticket Sales at the Gate

7 season passes @ \$25 each	=	\$ 175
760 daily passes @ \$10 each	=	<u>\$ 7,600</u>
		\$ 7,775

## Tourists

### Sources of Information

When asked how the tourists heard about the Buy.Com Louisiana Open Golf Tournament, the majority (28.4%) of the respondents stated other (such as the Internet), 25% stated family or friends, 19.3% stated word of mouth, 18.2% stated the PGA Tour, and 9.1% stated the newspaper.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Word of Mouth</b>	17	19.3
<b>Family or Friends</b>	22	25.0
<b>Newspaper</b>	8	9.1
<b>PGA Tour</b>	16	18.2
<b>Other</b>	25	28.4
<b>Total</b>	88	100.0

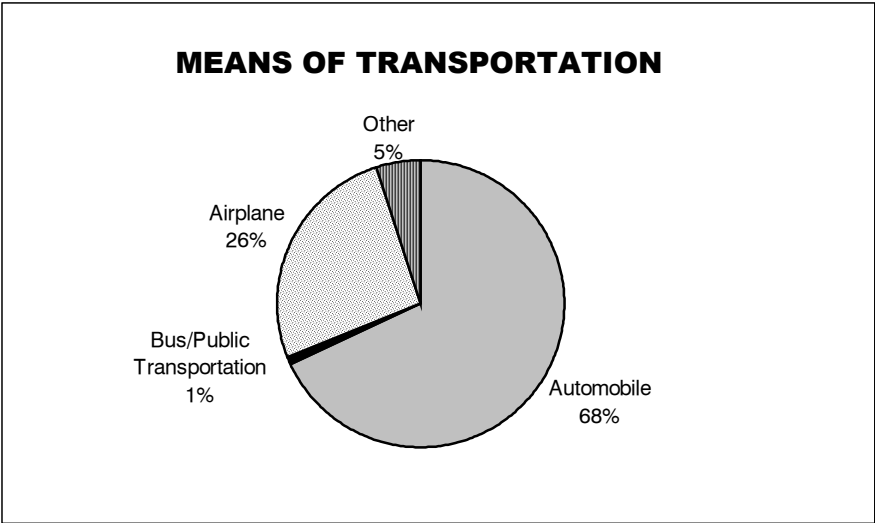
### Travel Itinerary of Tourists

Almost 50 percent (49.2%) of the tourists surveyed stated they stayed six or more nights, 17% stated one or two nights, 15.4% stated five nights, and 13.8% stated three nights.

When asked how many people traveled with them to the golf tournament, 25.3% stated with one other person, 21.5% stated with two other people and 24% stated four or more people traveling together.

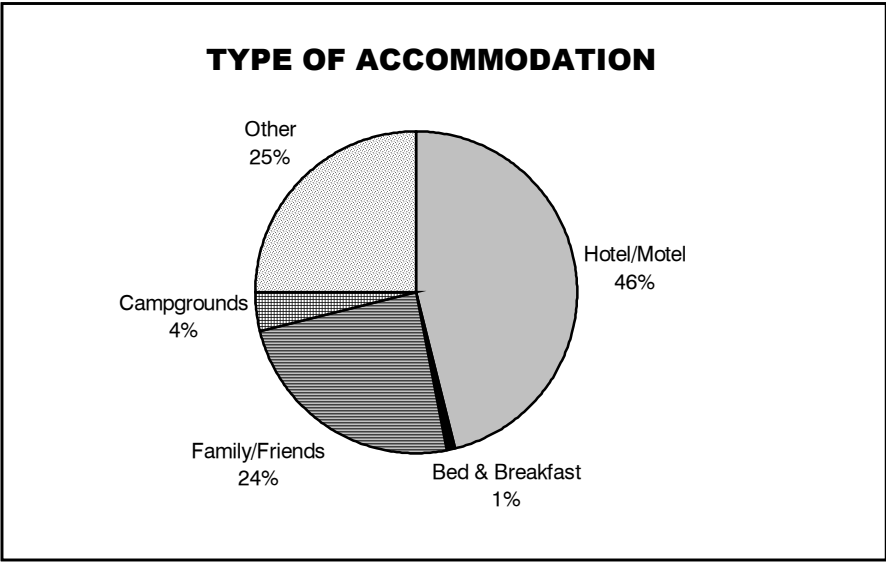
Means of Transportation

When asked about the means of travel of the respondents, 26.5% of the respondents stated having arrived at the golf tournament by airplane. With the majority (67.5%) stating their means of transportation was by automobile.



Type of Accommodation

When asked the type of accommodation the tourists used during their visit to Lafayette, of those who responded, most respondents, over 45%, stated they were staying in a hotel or motel.



### Tourists Hotel Spending

Over nine percent of the respondents stated that they spent over \$90 per night on lodging with over 30 percent stating that they spend over \$61 per night on lodging.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Under \$30</b>	18	20.5
<b>\$30 - \$45</b>	4	4.5
<b>\$46 - \$60</b>	8	9.1
<b>\$61 - \$75</b>	11	12.5
<b>\$76 - \$90</b>	9	10.2
<b>Over \$90</b>	8	9.1
<b>No Answer</b>	30	34.1
<b>Total</b>	88	100.0

Expenditures by tourists in lodging was an average of \$66 per night and a mean of 4.55 nights. Twenty-five percent of the responding attendees stayed in hotels. The number of tourists that stayed in hotels was estimated at 144 for an average of 4.55 days at \$66 per night, which generated \$43,243.20 in gross revenue to area hotels during the course of the golf tournament. This figure is based on:

- Information furnished by the 88 tourists surveyed during the event.
- Information gathered by the research from area hotels.
- The previous assumption of the number of tickets that were sold and distributed and the number of spectators that attended the event.



### Tourists Food Spending

When asked how much money tourists spent per person per day on food, 28.4% answered between \$20 and \$29.99. Almost one-third (32.9%) of the respondents stated over \$30 per person per day on food.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Under \$20</b>	24	27.3
<b>\$20 - \$29.99</b>	25	28.4
<b>\$30 - \$39.99</b>	14	15.9
<b>\$40 - \$49.99</b>	11	12.5
<b>\$50 or more</b>	4	4.5
<b>No Answer</b>	10	11.4
<b>Total</b>	88	100.0

The amount of money the tourists spent per person per day on food was an average of \$23.10 and the average number of people in each party was 2.78. They stayed an average of 4.55 days and the 88 tourists represent an estimated 25% of the total tourists.

[( $\$23.10$ ) (88) (2.78) (4.55) =  $\$25,712.88$ ].

### Tourists Miscellaneous Spending

When asked how much money the respondents spent on miscellaneous items in Lafayette per day while watching the golf tournament, 42% of the tourists responded they spend over \$10 per day with over 15% stating they spent over \$20 per day on miscellaneous items.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Under \$10</b>	40	45.5
<b>\$10 - \$19.99</b>	23	26.1
<b>\$20 - \$29.99</b>	8	9.1
<b>\$30 - \$39.99</b>	3	3.4
<b>\$40 - \$49.99</b>	3	3.4
<b>No Answer</b>	11	12.5
<b>Total</b>	88	100.0

The amount of money the tourists spent per day on miscellaneous items was an average of \$7.80 and the average number of people in each party was 2.78. The tourists stayed an average of 4.55 days and the 88 tourists represent an estimated 25% of the total tourists  
[(7.80) (88) (2.78) (4.55)] = \$8,682.27.

## Local Spectators

### Sources of Information

There were 534 local residents that responded to the Buy.Com golf survey. When asked how the local spectators heard about the Buy.Com Louisiana Open Golf Tournament, the majority (27.7%) of the respondents stated "Other" (such as the Internet), 26.4% stated word of mouth, 24.5% stated friends or family, and 16.1% stated the newspaper.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Travel Brochure</b>	3	.6
<b>Word of Mouth</b>	141	26.4
<b>Family or Friends</b>	131	24.5
<b>Newspaper</b>	86	16.1
<b>PGA Tour</b>	22	4.1
<b>Other</b>	148	27.7
<b>No Answer</b>	3	.6
<b>Total</b>	534	100.0

### Travel Itinerary

When asked the number of traveling companions, 77.9% stated one or more persons and over 28% of the local residents responded that they traveled with a party of four or more people.

### Local Spectators Food Spending

When asked the amount of money that local spectators spent per person per day on food, over 32% stated over \$25 per person per day. This figure appears low because the sky boxes around the 18<sup>th</sup> hole had three full buffets and three open bars which were free to all those that had sky box tickets during the golf tournament. The skyboxes were opened Thursday through Sunday during the tournament and the cost of catering the food for four days was \$54,000.

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>\$10</b>	<b>x</b>	347	\$3,470
<b>\$25</b>	<b>x</b>	87	\$2,175
<b>\$35</b>	<b>x</b>	26	\$910
<b>\$45</b>	<b>x</b>	21	\$945
<b>\$55</b>	<b>x</b>	31	\$1,705
<b>No Answer</b>		22	\$0
<b>Total</b>		534	\$9,205

### Local Miscellaneous Spending

When asked the amount of money spent on miscellaneous items in Lafayette per day while watching the golf tournament, over 46% of the responding local spectators stated they spent over \$15 per day while watching the golf tournament.

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>\$5</b>	<b>x</b>	279	\$1,395
<b>\$15</b>	<b>x</b>	119	\$1,785
<b>\$25</b>	<b>x</b>	50	\$1,250
<b>\$35</b>	<b>x</b>	28	\$980
<b>\$40</b>	<b>x</b>	39	\$1,560
<b>No Answer</b>		19	\$0
<b>Total</b>		534	\$6,970

## CONCLUSION

According to the PGA, total attendance for the 2000 Buy.Com Louisiana Open Golf Tournament was 59,750. During the golf tournament, a total of 622 people were surveyed. Those surveyed were divided into two groups: tourists and local residents.

Tourists from 16 different states participated in the survey with Louisiana having the highest percentage of respondents followed by Florida, Texas, and Pennsylvania. Almost half of the tourists (46.6%) stated that this was their first visit to Lafayette for a golf tournament.

When asked how the respondents heard of the golf tournament, a quarter (25%) of the respondents stated friends and family; almost 20% (19.3%) stated word of mouth; 18.2% stated the PGA Tour; almost 10% (9.1%) stated newspaper and 28.4% stated other.

Twenty-seven percent of the tourists surveyed stated that their means of transportation to the golf tournament was by airplane. A majority of the tourists (67%) stated their means of transportation was by automobile.

Of the tourists who responded to the questionnaire, over 45% (45.6%) stated that they stayed in a hotel during their visit to Lafayette. A total of \$43,243.20, for 655 hotel room nights, was spent by tourists during the tournament. Tourists spent another \$25,712.88 on food and beverage during the tournament.

With over a quarter of the tourists surveyed stating that their means of transportation to the golf tournament was the airlines, the Buy.Com Louisiana Open Golf Tournament attracted a high end tourist who was willing to fly in, stay in hotels for almost 5 nights, and spend almost \$25 (\$23.10) per day on food and beverage.

Over 30% (30.8%) of the tourists stated that they were guests of a tournament sponsor that included skybox tickets. As guests in the skybox, they could enjoy an open bar and a free full buffet. This might be the reason the amount tourists spent per day on food and beverage was lower than the researchers expected.

Overall, the golf tournament was a great success in major part due to the excellent weather and having the golfers scores be so close together. The benefits of the Golf Channel broadcasting live during the tournament will be felt by the Acadiana area for months and years to come.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are some of the recommendations for tour operators from the tourists and local residents.

1. Have a map of the golf course that would show where the holes are on the pairing sheets. Spectators were frustrated trying to find the holes where the golfers that they wanted to see were located.
2. Promote that the golf tournament is a fundraiser for charities. The majority of those surveyed could not name three of the charities that the tournament benefited. Some of those surveyed stated that they “did not even know that the golf tournament helped to raise funds for charities”.
3. Promote the sponsors of the golf tournament better. The majority of the respondents surveyed could not name three sponsors of the tournament. However, they could list more sponsors than charities.