



- Home
- News ▶
- Technology ▶
- Markets ▶
- Personal Journal ▶
- Opinion ▶
- Leisure/Weekend ▶

The Print Edition

Today's Edition

Past Editions

Features

Columnists

In-Depth Reports

Discussions

Company Research

Markets Data Center

Site Map

Corrections

My Online Journal

Portfolio

Personalize My News

E-Mail Setup

My Account/Billing

Customer Service

The Online Journal

The Print Edition

Contact Us

Help

BARRON'S Online

THE JOURNAL REPORT: GOLF

The Name Game

How much do companies pay to sponsor a tournament? And what do they get? Consider the Ford Championship at Doral.

By BERNARD WYSOCKI JR.

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

April 19, 2004; Page R15

MIAMI -- Richard Bazy, a Ford dealer from Pittsburgh, is standing on the first tee at Doral Golf Resort and Spa, and he is nervous. It isn't the usual first-tee jitters, either.

Mr. Bazy has been playing golf for just six months. And while three of his playing partners are other Ford dealers, the fifth one, dressed in a green striped shirt and white golf shade, is David Toms. Mr. Toms, winner of the 2001 PGA Championship, is one of the most famous golfers in the world.

"I didn't think I'd get nervous," Mr. Bazy says "But I've gotten so caught up in this, I'm just shaking." His shaved head covered with a straw hat, Mr. Bazy strides to the tee. As his wife, Lisa, and two children watch, he makes an odd motion with his hips during his practice swing -- and smacks the ball down the middle of the fairway, about 225 yards.

His playing partner, Mr. Toms, says in a soft Louisiana drawl, "Another six months and you'll be playing really well, Richard." The auto dealer, unable to contain himself, walks over, raises his fist in the air and gently taps Mr. Toms's fist with his in a gesture of triumph.

This is an elite and mostly invisible part of a big PGA Tour tournament, in this case, the Ford Championship at Doral. It isn't Thursday, when the first-round competition begins at Doral's famous Blue Monster course. Nor is it Sunday afternoon, when the leaders fight down the home stretch for \$5 million in prize money, of which \$900,000 goes to the winner. This is something else.

This is Wednesday.

On Wednesday at most tournaments on the PGA Tour, the amateurs play with the pros. The pros do it as part of their contract with the tour. The amateurs do it because for them it's heaven on earth. On this particular morning, 52 top PGA Tour players are paired up with 208 amateurs who have paid dearly for the privilege. A two-slot package costs \$37,000 but includes tickets to the tournament and 400 rounds of golf at Doral.

[EMAIL](#) [PRINT](#) [★ MOST POPULAR](#)

advertisement

Introducing
Visa Extras for
Small Business

Earn
points
toward
rewards.



Enroll your
current card.

[LEARN MORE](#)


Report Rundown

- [Special Report Main Page](#)
- [Winning Back the Frustrated Golfer](#)
- [Keep Out](#)
- [Going Natural](#)
- [The Player](#)
- [High-Tech Tools](#)
- [An Open Secret](#)
- [Getting Into the Swing](#)

**Introducing
Visa Extras for
Small Business**

**Earn
points
toward
rewards.**



**Enroll your
current card.**

LEARN MORE



Advertiser Links

[Free Schwab Guide to Investment Advice](#)

[Lind-Waldock - Commodity Broker](#)

[Extend your small business bills](#)

[1-800-FLOWERS.COM blooms with Oracle E-Business Suite.](#)

[More Insights. Better Decisions. Visit The Business Insight Center.](#)

[Korea & NE Asia Business Conf.](#)

[Give the perfect gift: The Online Journal](#)

The largest number of slots -- 72, to be exact -- is allocated to [Ford Motor Co.](#), whose Ford division is the title sponsor for this event, for the second year in a row. For the most part, Ford hands out the slots as prizes, to 60 Ford dealers, for sales success; to a handful of commercial-truck dealers; to executives at its advertising agency, J. Walter Thompson; and to four executives of Ford, including Steve Lyons, the division president.

The pro-am slots are part of the package in what is a fairly big financial deal for Ford. The auto maker committed about \$25 million for the title-sponsor rights over four years, or slightly more than \$6 million a year.

Roughly half that amount, about \$3 million, goes toward the tournament's \$5 million prize purse. Ford spends the other \$3 million mostly for television commercials, which run on cable's USA Network during the first and second rounds and on NBC's weekend broadcasts of the tournament.

In return for all this money, Ford gets the commercials, the 72 pro-am slots and the right to plaster its name all over the Doral resort for several weeks. The Ford name is on the sides of autos patrolling the grounds, on stenciled logos on the doors of the hotel, and on Ford cars scattered around the course during the four days of the tournament.

Tackling a Tough Market

The chance for Ford to market its brand in the Miami market is one reason the auto maker became the sponsor of the tournament. "Ford does very well in Florida -- except Miami," Mr. Lyons says. It's a tough market with a highly diverse population, he explains, adding that upscale car buyers tend to flock to BMW, Mercedes and the luxury Japanese brands. To Mr. Lyons and his marketers, sponsoring the tournament at Doral is designed to boost Ford's market share in greater Miami, especially among the large Hispanic population.

The four days of the tournament offer Ford a once-a-year chance to showcase its wares to the 75,000 fans who show up for the Doral. The company trucks in 45 vehicles and scatters them strategically around the course. The company placed a \$140,000 Ford GT on a small island near the 18th hole, as a prize to the winner. That turned out to be Craig Parry, who won in a sudden-death playoff by holing a 176-yard shot from the fairway.

As the Ford extravaganza implies, sponsorship of big-time golf takes big-time money -- too much money for some companies. Nearly a dozen spots on the PGA Tour have had sponsorship turnover or sponsorship problems over the past few years. The Kemper Open had to scramble for new sponsors after the insurance company withdrew hastily in 2003. The Las Vegas Invitational is still searching for a sponsor. A tournament in New Orleans lost Compaq Corp. as the sponsor after the computer company became part of Hewlett-Packard Co.

The Doral, held at the same resort for the past 43 years, has suffered sponsor turnover, too. For decades, Eastern Airlines was the main sponsor. Then Ryder System took over, until it got out of consumer-oriented business. GTE Corp. spinoff Genuity Inc. was the title sponsor in 2001 and 2002, before filing for bankruptcy-court protection. The South Florida Golf Foundation -- a nonprofit that actually runs the Doral tournament and typically has turned over about \$700,000 a year to charities -- began searching for a replacement.

Meantime, Ford had indicated to the PGA Tour that it would be interested in a sponsorship if one opened up. The tour, based in Ponte Vedra, Fla., acted as a matchmaker of sorts. But Ford held off in making its interest

- [Where the Money Goes](#)
- [Neither Snow nor Rain nor War...](#)
- [The Name Game](#)
- [Editor's Note](#)
- [Teeing Off for a Golfing Life](#)
- [Improving Your Game Online](#)
- [Ladies' Tee Time](#)

COMPANIES

Dow Jones, Reuters	
Ford Motor Co. (F)	
PRICE	15.37
CHANGE	-0.13
U.S. dollars	4:01 p.m.

* At Market Close

Personalized Home Page Setup

Put headlines on your homepage about the companies, industries and topics that interest you most.

[Order Free Annual Reports](#)

[Order Free Fund Prospectuses](#)

[Run your business FASTER - The new Sun Fire\(tm\) V20Z server](#)

[Get Oracle Database for less than Microsoft SQL Server.](#)

[Get tips for working smarter with Microsoft Office System Webcasts](#)

[Financial Experts: Chance to win an HP IPAQ](#)

[Your perfect vacation@Incredible India](#)

[Financial HP Workstations at PC Prices](#)

known to the people running the Doral while they fretted over finding a new sponsor.

When Ford did show its hand, the auto maker engaged in months of negotiations. Mr. Lyons, president of the Ford division, and his marketers made many visits to Miami, met with officials from the South Florida foundation and tried to figure out how to use the tournament to build Ford's business in Miami. Finally, in late 2002, the company agreed to sponsor the tournament for four years.

Once Ford decided to take the plunge, it set out to connect with Miami's large Hispanic population. It hosts Latin theme parties for the public around the tournament, and has tried hard to get Hispanic golf stars to play in the event. This year, Mr. Lyons says, he tried to get Sergio Garcia, a young, exciting Spanish player. "But Sergio had a conflict and had to be in Madrid," Mr. Lyons says. Ford did get Seve Ballesteros this year. Mr. Ballesteros was a big star in the 1980s, winning a total of two Masters and three British Open tournaments in his long career.

Mr. Lyons also hoped the field would draw a substantial television audience. In 2003, Ford's first year, it pulled a 2.8 rating. (Each rating point equals slightly more than one million households.) Mr. Lyons had hoped to see a slight increase this year, but the rating was unchanged.

One of the problems nagging the Doral event over the years has been limited success in attracting the world's very top players. Tiger Woods played in 1998 and 2002, but not since. This year, Davis Love III was busy attending David Duval's wedding. Mr. Woods and Ernie Els were playing in Dubai. Vijay Singh, another top player, took a pass on Doral.

Tom Neville, executive director of the South Florida Golf Foundation, says he went to several tournaments early this year, trying to persuade top players to sign up for Doral. He approached Mr. Singh at least three times. "I'd camp out at the practice range every day, talking to players," says Mr. Neville. To entice the pros, Mr. Neville described the accommodations at Doral, the special package deals for families, and the chance to ride by helicopter to nearby Homestead auto racetrack, where the pro golfers could drive Ford race cars 140 miles an hour with Nascar drivers in the passenger seat. The Doral officials also touted the size of the purse; \$5 million is generous by PGA standards.

This year, the Doral did attract lots of big names, including Phil Mickelson, who has signed a separate three-year deal with Ford to be its spokesman (and would go on to win this year's Masters). Mr. Mickelson seemed to be everywhere during the Ford tournament: driving race cars, holding golf clinics and teeing up with amateurs at 6:40 a.m. on Wednesday morning.

The Big Day

For the corporate types, the highlight of any tournament is the pro-am on Wednesday.

"It's monumental," says Gary Stevenson, formerly executive vice president, business affairs, at the PGA Tour, who runs a sports consultancy called OnSport in Raleigh, N.C. "Imagine Michael Jordan suiting up on Thursday night to play basketball with nine overweight executives."

Typically, there's a party on Tuesday night where the pro-am pairings are set. Here, it was a giant party in the biggest ballroom at the Doral. It had a Mardi Gras theme, with dancers on stilts, a big band, open bar and hundreds of people milling around. There were few PGA Tour players in evidence, although their names were all listed on a giant illuminated computer screen in the ballroom.

As the evening progressed, a local TV anchor reached into a box and drew the team numbers by lottery. Mr. Lyons, the Ford division president, and his team of three Ford dealers won the first pick of the drawing. Mr. Lyons picked Mr. Mickelson; that became the first "fivesome" for the next morning. So it went, for an hour or so, as each "team" selected its pro, until all 52 teams were picked.

At 6:40 the next morning, with the sun barely up, Mr. Mickelson stood on the first tee with Mr. Lyons and

three Ford dealers from around the U.S. Mr. Mickelson pounded his drive on the first hole, a 529-yard par five, and took only four strokes to reach the cup with a tap-in birdie. His playing partners stood in awe. They struggled with Doral's toughest course. Mr. Lyons hit mostly solid shoots, but one Ford dealer in the group struggled mightily. Mr. Mickelson dispensed gentle advice when asked.

If there's anything the touring pros don't like about it, most of the big names are too diplomatic to say so. Asked after the round if there are any "negatives" about playing in pro-ams, Mr. Mickelson quickly said, "There aren't any negatives."

Every nine minutes throughout the morning, another pro teed off with another foursome of amateurs. Mr. Ballesteros gave one lucky amateur some advice on the second tee, bracing his shoulders and urging him to quit swaying his body when swinging.

At 8:40, it is Mr. Toms's turn. He hits a towering drive, and then his playing partners amble 20 yards closer to the hole, where they hit from a forward tee box (only the pros must hit from all the way back).

One of the amateurs is Marc Cross, 47, the general manager of Jordan Ford in San Antonio. Standing to the side, in matching yellow golf shirts, are his parents. As they watch the group stride down the first fairway -- five players, five caddies and various tournament officials -- George Cross sees his son chatting up Mr. Toms. "He's in heaven," the elder Mr. Cross says of his son.

In the Bunker

Mr. Bazy, the car dealer from Pittsburgh, soon shows that six months of play isn't enough to produce a consistent game. After four shots, he is in a sand trap, 50 yards from the green. The ball is wedged up against the front lip of the bunker -- a tough shot. Mr. Bazy looks around, sees Mr. Toms nearby and calls for advice.

"What do you think I should hit, David?" Mr. Bazy asks.

"I'd hit a 9-iron." Mr. Toms replies.

"Should I hit the sand first or just hit the ball?"

"I'd hit the ball," says Mr. Toms, a model of patience.

Four hours and 16 holes later, Mr. Toms reflects a bit on the nature of the pro-ams. For him, the round is serving as a low-key practice round, a tuneup for the tournament's opening round the next day. "I only had a chance to play nine holes yesterday," he says, as he walks the 16th fairway. (Mr. Toms would be among the leaders for most of the four rounds before faltering a bit; he tied for fifth.)

As for playing with the Ford dealers, Mr. Toms seems to enjoy himself. He gives a "lesson" to Mr. Bazy on the 15th hole. It leaves Mr. Bazy ecstatic. For Mr. Toms, it is a friendly gesture that might, conceivably, pay dividends someday.

"I don't plan on traveling to Pittsburgh or San Antonio to buy my next car," Mr. Toms says. "But you never know. Someday they might want something. Or I might want something. I've done deals with people I've met in pro-ams."

--Mr. Wysocki is a Wall Street Journal news editor based in Washington.

Write to Bernard Wysocki Jr. at bernie.wysocki@wsj.com

[Return To Top](#)

[Log Out](#) [Contact Us](#) [Help](#) [E-Mail Setup](#) [My Account/Billing](#) [Customer Service: Online](#) | [Print](#)
[Corrections](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Subscriber Agreement](#) [Mobile Devices](#) [News Licensing](#) [About Dow Jones](#)

Copyright © 2004 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved



