

LIBERTY CORNER, N.J. (Dec. 22, 2023) – Delivering on an organizational commitment to drive impact “for the good of the game,” the USGA’s investments and programs contributed greatly to golf’s overall health and growth in 2023.

“129 years ago today, a handful of forward-thinking American golf clubs came together to formulate the USGA – with a simple mission to provide a common set of rules for all, to conduct national championships, and to provide a long-term, unbiased perspective for an even better future for our game,” said USGA CEO Mike Whan. “In 2023, we took significant steps toward that goal to more deeply invest our voice, expertise and financial resources to foster a stronger, more welcoming and more sustainable game.”

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A mission-driven, nonprofit organization, the USGA invests 100 percent of its revenue back into golf, highlighted by its efforts to unify the game, showcase the best talent, govern with an unbiased perspective, and advance key issues to ensure that golf remains strong at every level and continues to grow.

These wide-ranging efforts impact the more than 41 million people who play golf in the U.S. and the millions more who live the game through employment, volunteerism and fandom.

Key highlights from 2023 include:

Golf Course Sustainability and Innovation

- **Launch of the GS3 smart golf ball**, which gives superintendents more robust data to improve playing conditions, by measuring putting green speed, trueness, smoothness and firmness through one easy-to-use device. GS3 is a first-of-its-kind tool for the golf industry and a game changer for green management.
- Investment of \$1.2 million to **advance water conservation on golf courses**, including approximately \$500,000 toward demonstration projects in tandem with golf facilities in the Southwest. The projects are part of the USGA’s water resilience program – launched in 2023 with a \$30 million, 15-year commitment to reduce golf’s use of water by up to 45 percent.
- With the help of a \$350,000 USGA Davis Grant, the University of California-Riverside released two new bermudagrasses that will better retain their green color during the winter months and reduce the need for costly and water-intensive overseeding.

Showcasing Golf’s Best Players

- The **launch of the U.S. National Development Program** marked a historic moment for American golf – creating the nation’s first unified pathway to identify, train, develop, fund and support the country’s most promising junior players. The program built its staff and infrastructure, created a comprehensive grant program to help eliminate financial barriers, and held player and parent educational sessions in 2023.
- **Record registrations and viewership** – 47,928 individuals applied to play in one of 15 USGA national championships in 2023 – a record number of entries for the USGA and a testament to the growth in the competitive game. USGA championships also recorded their highest digital reach and engagement, as well as an eight-year high in broadcast viewership in 2023.
- **Hosting the U.S. Women’s Open at Pebble Beach for the first time** fueled interest and awareness of women’s golf in monumental ways. The championship earned record highs in entries, digital consumption and social media mentions, as well as the largest TV audience since 2014 and the largest on-site fan attendance since 2015.

- **The campaign to endow the Walker Cup and Curtis Cup Matches** attained its goal in 2023, thanks to the generosity of 20 USGA Foundation donors. The initial \$10 million secured through pledges was matched by the USGA, ensuring that the international amateur team competitions will continue their historic legacies for decades to come.

Governance

- Following an extensive six-year process of research, collaboration and public dialogue, the USGA and The R&A delivered a decision to **stem increased hitting distances** in golf and promote a more sustainable game. The change in golf-ball testing conditions will be implemented starting in 2028 and will have minimal impact on recreational golfers.
- In January, the USGA and The R&A released a significant update that **modernized how golf's rules are delivered, ensuring they are inclusive** of all who play through the addition of Rule 25 that covers modifications for players with disabilities.

Grow the Game

- As part of its 2023 U.S. Open host community engagement program, the **USGA invested \$1 million in a project to revitalize** programs and course conditions at Maggie Hathaway Golf Course in partnership with the Southern California Golf Association and The Los Angeles Country Club, host site of the 123rd U.S. Open. The nine-hole public course offers affordable, accessible playing opportunities in one of America's most densely populated areas.
- **Continued year-over-year growth** in the number of golfers with a Handicap Index®, as nearly 400,000 golfers enhanced their enjoyment of the game by utilizing the World Handicap System™ for the first time in 2023. The 3.3 million U.S. golfers in the handicapping system represent the most avid players in the game, with 70+ million scores posted this year.
- Powered by USGA IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility) Grants, select First Tee chapters **established partnerships with HBCUs** (historically black colleges and universities), helping to ensure that youths see themselves reflected in the individuals welcoming them into the game.

Career Development

- **More than 40% of students** who participated in the 2022 and 2023 USGA [Pathways Internship Program](#) – a one-week immersive learning experience held during U.S. Open week for students from underrepresented communities – were employed in golf or with a program supporter in 2023.
- Utilizing **the most funding to date** for the USGA P.J. Boatwright Jr. Internship Program, the 57 Allied Golf Associations hired more than 150 individuals across the country for paid internships in golf administration, including a military veteran and a former schoolteacher who were looking to make a career change into golf administration.
- The **first Greenkeeper Apprenticeship Program class graduated** in December from the free, one-year in-class and on-course training program in N.C. with curriculum written by, and classes taught by, USGA Green Section experts. Each of the 18 golf course workers in the cohort – including a U.S. Army veteran – received pay increases, and 14 participants have been promoted or seen increased responsibilities in their current role.

The USGA will celebrate these 2023 milestones and share its 2024 strategic initiatives at its Annual Meeting on March 2 in Nashville, Tenn.

For more information, please visit usga.org.

About the USGA

The USGA is a mission-based golf organization whose purpose is to unify the golf community through handicapping and grassroots programs; to showcase the game's best talent through the U.S. Open, U.S.

Women's Open and 13 other national championships and our museum; to provide unbiased global governance with The R&A through the playing, equipment and Amateur Status rules; and to advance issues important to golf's future, with a focus on driving sustainability, accessibility and inclusion. As a nonprofit association, our work and our team are driven to act for the good of the game. For more, visit usga.org.

<https://mediacenter.usga.org/press-releases?item=123057>