



Summer Summit's a Smashing Success

PGA Buying & Education Summit in Las Vegas offered golf apparel and accessory sourcing, education and peer networking

By Lisa Goulian Twiste



Amidst a continuing wave of growth, members of the golf industry came together in July in Las Vegas for the 2022 PGA Buying & Education Summit – an event where golf companies both new and established could get in front of PGA Professionals and influential buyers in a series of pre-set One2One appointments many have likened to “speed dating.”

The two-day event, held at the JW Marriott Las Vegas Resort & Spa, also featured open ballroom exhibits, a PGA Education Conference, Southwest PGA Section Town Hall, new Golf Industry Careers Program, AGM Sustainability Trends Panel, welcome networking reception and after-hours putting contest at Angel Park Golf Course won by Mike Jurca, PGA Director of Golf at Homestead Resort & Club in Midway, Utah.

“We are pleased with the positive feedback from buyers and exhibitors alike at this year’s mid-season PGA Buying & Education Summit,” said PGA Golf Exhibitions Industry Vice President Marc Simon. “The focused buyer appointments and open merchandise line showings delivered important new business relationships, while education, career and peer networking programs

added even more value for attending PGA Professionals and golf buyers.”

One2One Sessions a Success

The timing of the event also meant attendees were among the first industry professionals to get a look at the spring 2023 golf apparel lines, which were full of color, a broad spectrum of prints and an increasing number of items bridging the gap between golf, fitness and an active lifestyle. Two-thirds of the 50-plus exhibitors opted to participate in “One2One” meetings – each a half hour in length – where attendees

got to meet new vendors while also re-establishing connections with others. These sessions took up about half the day, with the remaining portion devoted to open line showings and impromptu meetings with other show attendees.

“As a newcomer to the industry, I like the fact there are set appointments where you meet new people who might otherwise just walk by your booth,” said Evelien Lauwers, Managing Director, North America, for Duca Del Cosma, a color-driven footwear brand and one of the



The One2One sessions (above) and nighttime putting contest (right) were two highlights of this year's Buying & Education Summit.

COURTESY OF REED EXHIBITIONS



Attendees were provided a wealth of experiences, including the PGA Education Conference – which featured industry experts like the PGA’s Dawes Marlatt, PGA – as well as product sourcing and interacting with exhibitors.

carefully curated exhibitors in categories ranging from apparel, headwear and footwear to skincare products and other accessories.

“The one-to-one portion was a great way to see new vendors and meet new people,” said Jennifer Roddy, AGM Merchandise Manager at the Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort and Spa in Cedar Creek, Texas. “And the timing works great for this show, as we have been so busy and are looking for new products to fill out our shop.”

Laura Robinson, AGM Director of Retail at Pinehurst (North Carolina) Resort & Country Club, agreed the experience was highly valuable, adding: “Thirty minutes was just the right amount of time to spend with new companies to learn from each other and see if your businesses pair up.”

Panels Provide Insight

Many exhibitors talked about the boom the industry has been experiencing in the wake of COVID-19 and the new generation of golfers coming into the game who are more concerned about fitness, work-life integration and preserving the environment. In fact, the AGM hosted a panel discussion on the importance of sustainability in the marketplace and how to advance it more in the seasons to come.

Panel members Monica Gordon of Hedgren, Scott Morrison of Radmor Golf and Dave Leveille of Tasc Performance all said the industry is taking steps to become more sustainable in both its products and manufacturing processes, but noted there was still a lot of room for improvement. They

also agreed golf consumers are becoming more invested in sustainability, but not at the cost of great styling and fabrications.

“It ultimately comes down to a value proposition. If it’s the right product for the right price for the right consumer – and it’s sustainable – there’s a definite advantage,” Morrison said, with Leveille adding: “It’s about a great product with a great hand feel, and people are not going to sacrifice those things for sustainability.”

The 2022 Buying & Education Summit also featured PGA of America national-level education sessions, offering a total of 8 MSR credits for sessions and event participation. Topics included From Burnout to Balance in 12 Weeks; Essential Elements to Enhance Your Value and Overall Business Impact; Recruiting and Retention in Today’s Challenging Labor Market; and Player Engagement Strategies to Retain and Activate Golfers.

“The Summit’s PGA Education Conference was extremely focused around our career paths to encourage networking and relationship-building,” said PGA of America Senior Director of Education & Talent Development Dawes Marlatt, PGA. “The goal is to enhance our members’ value and offer relevant resources that can assist them in improving performance and overall job impact, and this year’s event allowed us to do just that.”

Additionally, a new Golf Industry Careers Program was launched in partnership with PGA Golf Exhibitions, PGA of America Career Services and the National Golf Sales Representatives Association (NGSA), giving aspiring professionals a chance to learn about golf career paths and internship opportunities, and PGA Professionals and sales representatives to explore new job opportunities.

Wide Range of Exhibitors

The event also featured several recent entries to the golf marketplace who overwhelmingly credit the golf boom for allowing them to achieve early success with their unique products.

In just a few years, Vimhue has placed its patented ponytail hats with above ear comfort, back taper and a secure fit into 2,000 golf shops, and the com-

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Apparel exhibitors emphasized prints, bold colors and many lifestyle pieces

Some common themes among the apparel companies displaying at the Las Vegas event were bolder colors, a broad range of prints and a definitive move toward more lifestyle pieces that are athletic, comfy casual and can be used on the course and in other daily activities. Prints were obviously the star of the show, from industry veterans to newer market entrants.

Greg Norman Collection showed everything from bolder cherry pie and guitar patterns to subtle shark-inspired all-over prints in its Lab series, while SanSoleil drew a steady stream of traffic with a variety of striped, foil and conversational prints. And Scales, which introduced its brand to the golf industry at last year's event, reports explosive growth with its line of ocean and fish-inspired print men's polos, as well as the introduction of both a women's offering and print-driven golf bags that are already 80 percent pre-sold.

A trend toward lifestyle has opened the door to vendors like Swet Tailor, whose line is all about natural fibers that stretch in five-pocket pants and shorts, as well as hoodies and other crossover items. "The more urban the environment we sell in, the better," Chief Golf Officer Jim Ireland said. "Maybe not in old school clubs, but in the big markets like Los Angeles, Chicago,

Houston, Atlanta and San Diego, someone can throw on a blazer over some of our pieces and it works."

Mizzen+Main is also telling a lifestyle story with items like Helmsman five-pocket pants, shorts with an eight-inch inseam, joggers, hoodies and knit luxury



T-shirts, while Columbia Sportswear is bringing its outdoor lifestyle to golf with quilted outerwear products, soft shell jackets and other multi-use layers. And FJ Apparel showed multiple lifestyle pieces, including mid-layers, button-down shirts and fashion shorts for men and a new jogger and short in the women's Golfeisure Collection.

"We were full of appointments the whole time," FootJoy Director of Sales Corey Fisk said. "Our design team has

done an excellent job and everyone is pretty excited about it. The season ahead is going to be really good."

Representing a coastal lifestyle were 7Diamonds, whose uniquely patterned button-up shirts, printed active shorts, joggers and hoodies evoke a summer surf vibe, as well as Bald Head Blues, which combines "beach and golf" and offers untucked polos with gingham trim, swimwear with compression shorts underneath, custom prints and soft organic cotton tees. And with more of a Southern coastal influence, Harlestons showed Charleston, South Carolina-inspired print polos, mid-weight quarter zips and performance hoodies, all offering a contemporary twist on classic staples. "We were able to connect with key clubs," Founder Weston Mallon said. "Getting orders is great but getting in front of people and investing in relationships is everything for us."

In the headwear category, Pukka's lineup demonstrated a continuing trend toward raised letter logos, bigger icons, lightweight tech fabrics, custom prints and lots of color. "People want to see personality in their hats," said Ryan Nolz, National Sales Director for Pukka's Golf Division. "The gaudy looks that were going on in the 1970s have been brought back, but in a more tasteful way."

Exhibitors used the event's open ballroom floorplan to unveil their latest lines of apparel, accessories and products to industry professionals.



pany introduced new Sun Goddess Bucket Hats for spring as it continues to expand its customer base. Another standout accessories brand new to the industry was DrinkTanks, a Bend, Oregon-based insulated drinkware company that specializes in ways to serve craft beer, pre-mixed drinks and other beverages not only on the course but in other venues associated with the golfing lifestyle.

Recently formed Proud 90 turned some heads with fun, bold prints that can be matched for men and women, while Palm Golf Company showed why it's gaining traction with patterned golf gloves and a partnership that sees all the proceeds of sales of a glove/towel combo go to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

"It's our first time at the PGA Buying & Education Summit, and I like seeing the full scope of what's going on," Palm Golf Co-Founder Dustin

Ghoul said. "You live in the framework of what you do, and it's great to see what's happening around you and learn from your peers."

Fury Athletix, founded in August 2021 to address what it sees as a gap in the marketplace for higher-end athletic hats, showed some of the brand's unique features, including a defining "x" across the crown on every model, as well as golf tee-shaped perforations to let the head breathe. "The golf side of the business is very important to us and we received valuable feedback from a lot of people in the marketplace," Founder and CEO Jeff Medici said. "The timing couldn't be better because of the new emphasis on fitness in golf and courses hiring certified trainers. It's becoming part of a lifestyle, and we think this brand fits in nicely with the trend."

And in a nostalgic and inspiring turn, Ashworth has come back into the market with a new parent company called the Newtimes Group and an impressive product lineup for spring 2023. Eddie Fadel, who was with the company during its heyday, has returned as President and was showing a line with cotton/poly-blended polos, bottoms with warp fabrics and garment details like under-button colors and tastefully placed branding.

"We want to do it the right way, and it's going to take time, but I'm humbled by the great reaction we've been getting," Fadel said. "We're very committed to the PGA and definitely look forward to seeing everyone in Orlando next year." ■