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Tournament helps groups close deals, raise big cash

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PGA Tour pros won't be the only ones playing for high stakes during this year's Memorial Tournament at Muirfield Village Golf Club in Dublin.

Individuals like Allstate Insurance's Tom Clarkson and Fore Hope's Mindy Derr will also have plenty on the line during tournament week, May 30 through June 5.

Clarkson will watch over Allstate's efforts to tell its agents about the company's new auto insurance program. Derr will be at the center of fundraising efforts for the Columbus nonprofit organization she directs.

Though their missions differ, the two will be among the legions of Central Ohio executives who use the tournament as a springboard for building relationships and closing deals.

"We were looking for something that is uniquely Ohio and a significant event," said Clarkson, Allstate's field vice president for its operations in Ohio, Michigan and Indiana.

"If you're a golf fan and get past the four majors and possibly the (Players Championship) at Sawgrass, the Memorial is as classy a tournament as it gets."

Allstate will bus insurance agents from around Ohio to Dublin on three days of tournament week, Clarkson said the bus trip to the Memorial is part of a national rollout of its Your Choice Auto product, which allows vehicle owners to tailor coverage.

"We were looking for a way to introduce the new product in Ohio and really get the buzz going," he said.

As part of its first year of involvement with the Memorial, Allstate is paying an undisclosed amount to sponsor the Memorial's Clubhouse Kids Golf Tour.

It will also join Kroger, Coca-Cola, Keebler and television stations WSYX and WTTE as co-sponsors of the Kroger Junior Golf Clin-



JANET ADAMS ■ BUSINESS FIRST
Mindy Derr, of Fore Hope, uses the Memorial Tournament to raise about a quarter of the nonprofit's \$300,000 budget.

ic during tournament week. Support for those sorts of causes is part of the Memorial Tournament's tradition, said Derr, who founded Fore Hope in 1989. The nonprofit organization uses golf to help rehabilitate people with disabilities.

Since 1991, Fore Hope has held a fundraising breakfast featuring PGA Tour pros during tournament week. The Memorial donates tickets to the day's practice round so they can be distributed to those attending the breakfast, which is held at Wedgewood Country Club in Powell.

Proceeds from the breakfast account for about 25 percent of Fore Hope's annual budget of \$300,000.

Financial support aside, Derr said the Memorial is the place to be at this time of year in Central Ohio.

"It's really the beginning of the golf season here," she said, "and kicks off an atmosphere equivalent to the Kentucky Derby."

The Memorial's cachet is important to Columbus, said Susan Roper, marketing manager for Powell-based New Product Innovations. The company helps clients create products by integrating design, development and manufacturing.

"Columbus doesn't have all the draws of a major city," Roper said, "but the Memorial Tournament does, such a fantastic job. Everything is so top-notch and first class. It really provides a nice experience for your client."

New Product Innovations has been hosting a business roundtable for clients and prospects during tournament week for the past three years, she said.

"We try to make it more of an educational event for clients and less of a sales pitch (for the company)," Roper said. "The Memorial provides the vehicle to get people here. You're more likely to get people to an event when a little fun is mixed in."



MEMORIAL TOURNAMENT

Schedule: Practice rounds, May 30-June 1; tournament play, June 2-5

Course: Muirfield Village Golf Club, Dublin

Par: 36-36-72

Yardage: 7,265

Purse: \$5.5 million

Winner's share: \$990,000

Defending champion: Ernie Els

Presenting sponsor: Morgan Stanley

Founded: 1976

TV: 3-4 p.m., June 1, Golf Channel; 4-7 p.m., June 2, ESPN;

3-6 p.m., June 3, ESPN; 3-6 p.m., June 4, CBS; 2-6 p.m., June 5, CBS

Tickets: Practice rounds, \$30 at the gate. Tournament badges are sold out.



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