

SPORTS BOARD

SPORTS, GAMING, HORSERACING

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BUSINESS IN THE BLACK

by Charles E. Belle,
Business Editor

AT&T Chance for a 'Hole-in-One' Accent on Corporate America \$\$\$

Monterey Peninsula — The AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am tournament caused more of a stir for its strange sounding name than the switch from "The Crosby" name of yesteryears. They have already changed the name to the new sponsor for all 44 previous years in the official record books of the Professional Golf Association (PGA). That's the power of money — \$750,000 to be exact. This year's contribution to the Monterey Peninsula Golf Foundation for professional golf players purses (\$108,000 for the winner) and about a million bucks to charitable causes on the charismatic cypress coast of the Monterey Peninsula. "Putting" the Pebble Beach Tournament on top of the PGA circuit. Those of you who still call it "The Crosby" in honor of the late singer Bing Crosby go sit in a corner next to those who still think of this as a minor sport. Corporate America has become the standard by which, among other things, American professional golf can be judged to succeed as a sport.

Some other prestigious (pretty big purses) tournaments include the Anheuser-Busch, Classic, The Bob Hope-Chrysler Classic, Cannons Sammy Davis Jr.-Greater Hartford Open, The Shearson-Lehman Brothers (American Express) Andy Williams Open, Seiko Tucson Match Play Championship, Kemper Open, USF & G Classic, Panasonic Las Vegas Invitational, Manufacturers Hanover Westchester Classic, Nissan Cup, Vantage Cup (R.J. Reynolds), Nabisco Challenge, Hertz BayHill Classic, Honda Classic, MONY Tournament of Champions, Mazda

Classic, a Buick Open, and Walt Disney World/Oldsmobile Classic clearly reflect the runaway influence of major corporations in golf.

AT&T for its part "would like to keep a low profile," according to Steve Cross, public relations man at their weather beaten tournament. Fuzzy Zoeller, who went from drinking Coca-Cola to Scotch, when he was announced the winner due to a shortened series of play, probably expressed the most honest reaction during the entire water logged weekend of Pebble Beach play. One player who did not play was Calvin Peete, the Black American who is one of the hottest players on the current professional tour according to Mark O'Meara, 1985 Crosby err AT&T Champion. Calvin apparently cancelled, leaving the tournament with one Black American professional golfer in the expanded field of 180 professional players. Jim Thorpe, Buffalo, New York, finished tied for 10th place winning \$15,000.

Professional Black American golfers are few and far between, since Charles Sifford and Lee Elder broke the ranks opened for them in the 60s. Lee still labors in the seniors bracket now with its slower and fewer purses, while Calvin

has come along to collect a few buckets in the big time bracket (\$1,859,602 career total). Finishing third in total money winnings for 1985, with \$384,489 in cash in his pocket, plus capturing at La Costa Country Club for \$90,000 makes Calvin the top challenger for all courses. Calvin also has the most tour victories (nine) by any Professional Golf Association tour player in the last three years (1982-85).

Johnny Mathis, Bryant Gumbel, Willie McCovey and Willie Mays make excellent examples of the celebrity contingent in The Pebble Beach amateur players, but Black Americans can play professional golf as well, if not better than many of the pros on the current PGA tour. Corporate America has planted its feet firmly into an embryonic arena and has a chance to clean up the act or continue the corruption. Crowds have not kept pace with the growth of the PGA golf circuit, so some positive stimulation is definitely needed to help the sport grow. Getting Americans of all races, colors, and creeds involved is bound to heighten the public's awareness and enthusiasm for golf. Pebble Beach is one of the best places to watch golf grow or grow to like golf. Great people. Great golf. Great opportunity.

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Runnin' Rebel Alumni Fever Returns Aug. 28

The Runnin' Rebel Alumni take on the Michigan State Alumni at 8 p.m. Friday, August 28 at UNLV's Thomas & Mack Center.

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Reggie Theus (Sacramento Kings), Freddie Banks (Detroit Pistons), Sidney Green (Detroit Pistons) and Mark Wade will play for the Rebels with Jay Vincent (Washington Bullets), Sam Vincent (Boston Celtics) and Scott Skiles (Indiana Pacers) committed for the Spartans so far.

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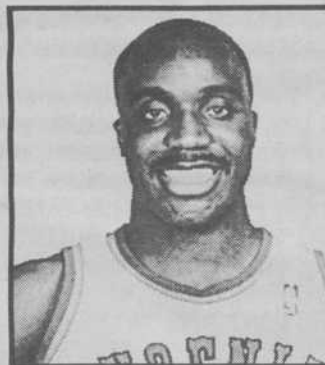
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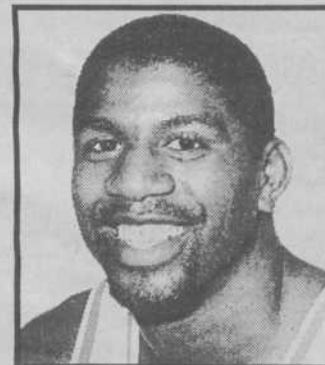
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