

By the numbers: Access

Transcript

00:00:13:05 - 00:00:34:16

MIKE WILBON:

Welcome to Grant Thornton's By the numbers. I'm your host, Mike Wilbon. We're going to explore a lesser known scorecard in golf and shine a light on the issue of access to the game so that we can move the game into the future. Historically, though, not everyone has had access to golf. It's a sport that is widely been seen as the pastime of privilege.

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MIKE WILBON:

But that's all changing. There are now more than 2500 municipal golf courses open to the public with no membership requirements or yearly dues in the US. Many of these courses are in parks or have created much needed green space in urban areas. Muni courses are often where local youth first have the chance to play golf. These courses are assets to the communities they serve, by providing a space for social functions and charitable fundraisers as well as employing a diverse workforce.

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MIKE WILBON:

Muni golf is essential to the game, but a lot of munis need to be championed. Why? Well, for starters, 46% of golfers stated they started on an 18 hole municipal pay and play course with another 21% starting on a nine hole muni. That's more than two thirds of golfers out there. Muni golf has brought so many different people to the game.

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MIKE WILBON:

In L.A., you can see this with the competitive club golfers like those at Griffith Park, to the wild ones at Penn More Social Club, both SCGA clubs. Munis with self-organized events. Just two of the 1300 you could join right now. You even have Random Golf Club where you can join just by supporting the "all are welcome" attitude and trying out their new field kit where they advertise. You can play anywhere.

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MIKE WILBON:

Talk about accessibility. Of course, famed rapper Macklemore took this too literally, tried playing during a concert. Look at him. All that crowd. He still couldn't hit the target. He actually made bogey there. Now, let's turn it over to someone who doesn't make bogeys very often. Let's talk with one of the top professionals on tour today and one of our Grant Thornton ambassadors.

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MIKE WILBON:

I am thrilled to welcome three time PGA Tour winner Cameron Champ. Access to golf is so much of what we're talking about now, and I know that has been a huge topic for you. Can you just start with telling people about your path, your access to golf from the time you picked up a club?

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CAMERON CHAMP:

You know, for me, there was just very few spots that was, again, for my family at the time, feasible for my family to afford and for me to actually, you know, get some good quality practice and to play a decent course. But that was what we had to work with. So for me, that was kind of a starting around, which I think personally it's helped me more in my career than any other thing.

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MIKE WILBON:

To start playing in a muni and not be a country club kid per se.

00:02:57:01 - 00:02:58:11

CAMERON CHAMP:

Yes, exactly.

00:02:59:00 - 00:03:10:13

MIKE WILBON:

Cameron, you know this ground better than just about anybody. What do we do to make golf more accessible, make people more comfortable who don't feel they belong at a range or even a muni?

00:03:10:21 - 00:03:32:18

CAMERON CHAMP:

Kids in the community I grew up in, they look to the basketball guys, they look to the baseball guys, the football guys, because that's what they see on TV. I think golf is slowly starting to transition into more of hip and fun and more engaging with the younger age groups. I would think for like getting where I grew up, that would help tremendously and then to go along with access.

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CAMERON CHAMP:

It's again, building certain programs to where kids in the community I grew up in have just even a chance to hit balls. Those kids aren't going to go to the range. To even buy a set of clubs is a couple thousand dollars for one. Then you got to buy balls, then you got to buy the shoes, then you got to buy gloves. And it goes on and on and on.

00:03:49:10 - 00:04:07:09

CAMERON CHAMP:

Certain programs just have to be set in place, kind of like how we're trying to do with my foundation. Just, again, it's bringing the game to them, but it's also the mentorship, the help on the other side with school books. And again, having somebody feel like somebody is there for them.

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MIKE WILBON:

Tell us the name of your foundation.

00:04:09:00 - 00:04:10:08

CAMERON CHAMP:

The Cameron Champ Foundation.

00:04:10:11 - 00:04:12:00

MIKE WILBON:

And people can reach it how?

00:04:12:00 - 00:04:16:13

CAMERON CHAMP:

Via socials – Twitter, Instagram and our website.

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MIKE WILBON:

Well, Cameron, yours has become not only one of the important games to watch through you in playing, but one of the important voices. So thanks for being here.

00:04:25:12 - 00:04:26:05

CAMERON CHAMP:

No, thank you.

00:04:26:19 - 00:04:36:21

MIKE WILBON:

What powerful words about how access is so vital in the game of golf for golfers today, but even more critically, for the future of the game. Till next time, knuckleheads.



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