

Work on PGA Tour Global Home continues



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By Garry Smits

There are no golf balls in the air for the PGA Tour for the time being, but there's plenty of dust and noise in the air along County Road 210 as the construction of the Tour's 187,000-square foot "Global Home" continues on schedule.

Laborers for Clark Construction and other subcontractors were hard at it on Wednesday, both on the shell of the \$65 million dollar building that will serve as the new headquarters for the Tour and more than 800 employees, and on projects such as the man-made lake that will surround the building.

"Construction on the Global Home of the PGA Tour continues as scheduled," said Kirsten Sabia, the Tour's vice president for Integrated Communications in an emailed statement.

The workers at the site are taking the usual precautions laid down by health authorities during the current coronavirus crisis. Most of the work is being done outside.

"We're rocking and rolling," said one worker with a huge smile on his face as he left the premises for lunch.

"We are proceeding under the direction of local authorities, working within the confines of construction as allowed," Sabia said. "Clark Construction is also taking all precautions to adhere to social distancing regulations."

During his state of the PGA Tour news conference on March 10, Tour commissioner Jay Monahan said the building was on target for a move-in by Jan. 1. Sabia built some leeway into that timetable in her statement, understandable given how fast developments regarding the virus have moved since Monahan had to cancel The Players three days after his news conference.

“We have no indication of substantial delays at this time, and are still hopeful for a Q1 [first quarter] move-in,” she said.

The Tour has since canceled eight other tournaments and the earliest return date possible for golf is May 21-24 with the Charles Schwab Challenge in Fort Worth.

When former commissioner Deane Beman moved the headquarters from Washington, D.C., to Ponte Vedra Beach in 1976, he had around a dozen employees and operated out of a rental condo. After the TPC Sawgrass was built in 1980, the Tour staff had grown to 100 and occupied 24,000 square feet in the two buildings within sight of the first hole on the Players Stadium Course.

The Tour staff has grown by eight-fold since then and has its employees spread out among the two main headquarters buildings and 17 other satellite offices, most of them in office parks surrounding the Sawgrass Village Shopping Center.

When it moves into the Global Home, the Tour has pledged to add 300 new jobs over a 10-year period, part of the deal to receive around \$3 million in economic incentives from St. Johns County.

The incentive package included fast-track permitting, an economic development grant of up to 100 percent of impact fees and water and sewer connection fees and four years of ad valorem taxes on capital improvements and tangible personal property.

Although estimates could change depending on the depth of any economic downturn, St. Johns County officials estimated when the project began in 2018 that they could expect a return of around \$7 million to the general fund over a 20-year period. The Tour said the new jobs, mostly in technology and tournament support, would have an estimated average salary of \$79,442 and would eventually pump \$26 million in tax revenue into the county coffers.