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Byron injects new life into Australian Seniors Champs

Seniors golf has found a home at Byron Bay Golf Club with the PGA of Australia signing an agreement with the club to host the Australian PGA Seniors Championship for the next three years.

The new agreement follows the successful staging of last year's event at the northern New South Wales club at which European Seniors Tour regular David Merriman prevailed to take the biggest share of the \$65,000 in prize money on offer.

Further adding to the significance, the agreement will see the 2008 championship prize pool increase to a total of \$80,000 with subsequent annual increments of \$10,000 to see a total of \$100,000 on offer for the 2010 championship.

"The unique hospitality offered by Byron Bay last year was an endearing feature of the 2007 championship and with the ongoing club and community support the next three years promises to be memorable for all involved," said Max Garske, Chief Executive Officer of the PGA of Australia.

With the 2008 Australian PGA Seniors Championship to be staged from December 11-14, initial planning is already underway for this year's event with Byron Bay Golf Club President Jim Black confirming 2007 naming rights sponsor Medidrain would continue their association with the tournament.

Black said the club was confident the level of additional sponsorship provided by local and regional business would increase significantly for both this year and those ahead due to the overwhelming success of the initial 2007 championship.

"The staging of the 2007 Australian PGA Seniors Championship event at Byron Bay Golf Club was seen as a major promotional boost for Byron Bay and the region and the club is delighted to have reached an agreement with the PGA of Australia to host the championship until 2010," said Black.

When notified of the new agreement, reigning champion Merriman said he was thrilled the Australian PGA Seniors Championship would return to Byron Bay Golf Club and confirmed he would return from the European Tour circuit to defend his title.

Ezpay releases inaugural Aus fitness industry event

On the opening day of FILEX 2008, the Australian Fitness Industry has taken a valuable step forward in understanding the business fundamentals and dynamics at work in its own industry.

The 2008 Australian Fitness Industry Survey (AFIS), developed, conducted and published by Ezpay, Australia and New Zealand's leading direct debit service provider, has supplied hard data on the operation of fitness centres throughout metropolitan and regional Australia.

"Whether it's fitness or the fitness industry itself, the only way to improve performance in any area is to measure current performance and create benchmarks. The purpose of the 2008 Australian Fitness Industry Survey is to make that very positive step. In reading through the report as a fitness business owner, we believe the insight will trigger numerous thoughts and ideas about where and how specific areas of their business can be improved," said Ezpay CEO Trent Brown.

The survey is based on 264 responses from clubs around the country, representing about eight per cent of the estimated 3500 health and fitness clubs, excluding personal training studios. Eighty-eight per cent of respondents were either the business owner or the club manager. It shows that the typical facility is between 201 and 500 square metres in size, has been operating between two and five years, and currently has up to 500 members.

The report details data covering a range of variables that have never been measured previously. Highlights of the report include:

- 'box clubs' at 200sq.m and less as an emerging class of club in Australia accounting for an estimated 34 per cent of the market. The growth of these clubs is being fuelled in equal measure by franchise operations and private ownership; and
- ten per cent of the market consists of clubs which have been in operation for more than 20 years, a testament to these clubs' ability to innovate and remain relevant to their communities.

"The growth in the smaller clubs is very telling. What we're seeing is a set of smaller clubs moving into the market that are specialising in fitness services to particular markets," Brown said.