

Charity golf big business

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA
Staff Writer

They take their hacks on a challenging golf course but the score doesn't matter.

What does is an opportunity to make new friends or business contacts, rub shoulders with a celebrity, share a few laughs, consume food and spirits and possibly take home a prize.

It all comes with a price — the entry fee.

Not new, charity golf events have been taking place on fairways around the world.

"First of all, it's meant to be a fun day," said Kevin Thistle, vice-president of Unionville's Angus Glen Golf Club. "Second of all, it's a great fundraiser. It's something that's close to our hearts — raising money for those who are less fortunate."

THANKS TO DOCTORS

Having a son, Calvin, born premature at less than two pounds, Mr. Thistle wanted to find a way to thank doctors and nurses who assisted in his delivery.

He has staged the NEC Mitsubishi Putting for Preemies event at his course for four years, raising more than \$100,000 for Women's College hospital.

"I owe my (son's) life to the doctors and nurses at that hospital," he said.

San Jose Sharks' forward Mike Ricci and his agent, Anton Thun of Unionville, had a good time

playing in the Make-A-Wish Foundation tournament a few years ago.

But Mr. Ricci, whose long hair and spirited play made him stand out in this year's Stanley Cup playoffs, wanted to do more. He launched the Mike Ricci and Friends Charity Golf Tournament for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Toronto last year at Angus Glen and raised \$27,000.

The second annual event was held Aug. 4.

"I don't golf a lot, but I use it as a day out to get out of the office and to hit the ball around," Mr. Thun said. "Also, by taking part in charity events, we need to give back, especially in Unionville where we live comfortably. Part of running Mike's (Ricci) event is that it is our contribution to make someone's life better."

Entry fees can range from around the \$100 mark to \$625 per player to play in Mr. Ricci's tourney.

Not only do charity golf events make money for their cause, but the courses also benefit and not just from a business point of view. These facilities feel good about doing something to lend a helping hand.

"To run charity events might help an organization purchase new equipment or set a budget for a new program. The list goes on and we're happy to be a part of that process," Kelly Wayling, Angus Glen Golf Club director of

key accounts, said.

"In the 185 days that we were open, we ran 450 charity events last year. That means we're really busy," he said.

There's competition between courses hosting tournaments.

Cost and location can also factor into a charity's decision to play at a specific course, Ian Wiber, events co-ordinator at Newmarket's Cardinal Golf Club, said.

The 54-hole public facility on Hwy. 9 frequently hosts charity events.

"We're probably the biggest tournament venue in this area. We've had the same number of charity events ongoing for a number of years. That shows the success, especially when you have events that come back for the last seven, eight or nine years. That tells us our product and price is right. That's what we can go on," he said.

SATURATION POINT

But Mr. Wiber thinks there is a saturation point.

"There are only so many golfers out there and so many charities. As a golfer, you can play in a charity event almost every day in the summer. You could get inundated with invitations," he said.

"I'm blunt. I say it's not easy to run a charity event. For an event run for the first time, they should start out on a smaller scale, say with 60 to 90 people."

Thomas no fan of salary cap

Steve Thomas wants to set the record straight.

The 20-year NHL veteran said in a TV interview Thursday the NHL and the NHL Players' Association should look to other pro sports as it heads for a possible work stoppage Sept. 15.

The Markham native was interviewed Thursday with other NHL players by The Score TV at a charity bowling event in Toronto.

"The fact that football and basketball both have a salary cap ... we can learn from how the day-to-day operations of those two entities work out and try and find some kind of a common ground between what they're going through and what we have right now," he said in an interview with The Score TV.

While some people might have construed the veteran forward as leaning toward favouring a salary cap, Mr. Thomas insisted his remarks were taken out of context.

TOTALLY INACCURATE

"I never have and never will support a salary cap and any reports that say otherwise are totally inaccurate," he said in a statement issued late Thursday by the NHLPA. "I have always believed that a marketplace is the best system for our sport and I still believe that today. The NHLPA members will never accept a salary cap."

Mr. Thomas appeared on The Fan 590 radio station yesterday, further distancing himself from supporting a cap.

"Don't fix something that's not broken," he said of the current NHL bargaining agreement.

He said he hopes "something will get done at the 11th hour."

The NHLPA also asked news organizations not to air the original interview that aired on The Score TV. Fan announcer Doug Faraway said

Mr. Thomas, who played last season



STEVE THOMAS: Markham NHLer clarified quotes he made at celebrity bowling event in Toronto.

with the Detroit Red Wings, is a free agent looking for a contract for next season.

He had 10 goals and 12 assists in 44 games last year.

Now living in Toronto and following his son around with his minor hockey career, The Economist and Sun has learned Mr. Thomas is slated to open a sporting goods store in Markham later this fall.

MARKHAM WAXER GRAD

Toiling two seasons with the Markham Waxers junior A club from 1980 to '82, Mr. Thomas signed his first professional contract with the Toronto Maple Leafs in 1984. He also played for the Chicago Blackhawks, New York Islanders, New Jersey Devils and Anaheim Mighty Ducks. As a member of the Ducks, he came within a game of winning his first Stanley Cup before the team was eliminated in the seventh and deciding game by the Devils.

In 1,235 regular season games, he has 421 goals and 512 assists.

—Mike Hayakawa

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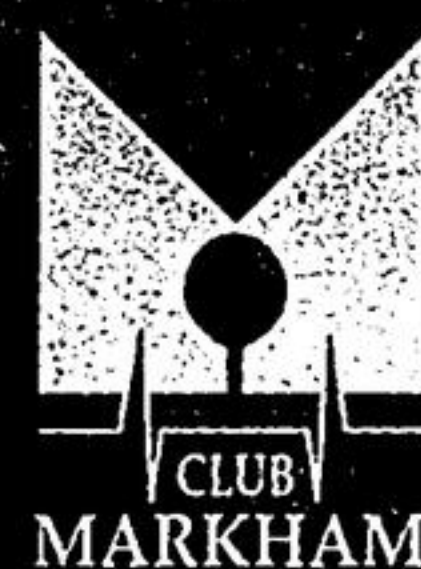
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