



Alternative Golf Association

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Silicon Valley heavy hitters launch Project Flogton – “a new brand of golf for the rest of us”

ORLANDO, Fla. (January 27, 2011) -- Alternative Golf Association Commissioner Scott McNealy, CEO Pat Gallagher and founder Bob Zider today unveiled a plan to engage online social networks for the creation and evolution of new games that could be played on existing golf courses.

"I love golf," said McNealy, a 3-handicap better known as founder and longtime CEO of Sun Microsystems. "I also believe golf is the hardest game on the planet.

"The Alternative Golf Association encourages 'golf for the rest of us.' We hope to preserve and promote all of the characteristics we love about golf while relaxing its rules, social restrictions and technological limitations to popularize a game – a competitive sport – where more of us can have success and more of us can have fun. And I think the AGA can do for golf courses what snowboarding did for ski slope operators."



The AGA will establish a brand that develops both rules and equipment with the help of its online community. It will uncuff inventors, engineers and scientists for the challenge of creating tools to take the average player to its goal of 25/100/200: “That’s 25 percent longer drives, 100 percent higher wedge spin and 200 percent more fun,” Zider said.

Project Flogton (“not golf,” spelled backward) was launched in 2010 with test outings and goes before the public today at www.flogton.com. The site includes areas for golf course operators and equipment developers as well as a social network application to open the dialogue with players, course operators and inventors.

The AGA has set aside current USGA conformance standards and seeks innovation on what might be possible, so any equipment on today's market may be used for Flogton. A set of four games on the site outlines instructions that range from using a mulligan on every hole to taking a 6-foot bump to teeing up the ball on the fairway. The games provide a foundation for players joining in the project, but the development team emphasizes its grassroots approach.

"We want new ideas, feedback, inventions," Zider said. "We aren't tied to any existing rules and we don't have to observe any current limits – everything is open to discussion, including our name and our logo, and especially the game formats and rules, and the equipment possibilities."

The background

Zider first envisioned Flogton more than 10 years ago, when the Harvard Business Review did a case study, Beta Golf, that convinced him that golf was a no-growth, dying industry. But the plans he drew up to launch an alternative sat in his files for 10 years.

Three years ago, Zider – an inventor whose biggest success story is Flexon, the durable eyeglass frame material – was called before the USGA after it reviewed one of his many patents and advised him it was probably an illegal club. Zider left the meeting frustrated at not receiving guidance or parameters for further advances.

Last year, he had lunch with his old friend Pat Gallagher, who had recently retired after 33 years as marketing and business leader of the San Francisco Giants. Zider pulled out his AGA concept and watched Gallagher's eyes light up.

"What I've finally realized is that although I do love baseball, it really never was about the baseball for me," Gallagher said. "It was about putting on a show that entertained and connected people in ways nothing else can. The AGA has the power to do that."

The more Zider and Gallagher researched the slump in the golf industry – the decline in rounds, the closing of golf courses, and of course the dearth in equipment advances that could help the player with the average score of 100 – the more convinced they became that the AGA's time had arrived.

The final pieces

The pair decided they needed to add another face to their new game, one that embodied the entrepreneurial, maverick spirit of Flogton. That would be McNealy, who plays at Zider's club, Sharon Heights in Menlo Park, though in a different league than the rest of the development team (described by Gallagher as "marginal golfers at best").

"I thought it was a great idea," McNealy said.

The AGA development team includes legal and internet consultant Damien Eastwood, and an advisory panel lists former Giants owner Bob Lurie and CourseCo founder/CEO Tom Isaak among supporters.

"I was hesitant at first to endorse this because I'm kind of a purist," said Lurie, who will play in the PGA Tour's AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am next month at age 82. "But as I got into it, I think it makes a lot of sense to a lot of people. This game is more fun than going out to fight the little ball the way you usually do."

"This is an intriguing idea from serious people who are also genuine golf lovers," said Isaak, whose firm oversees 20 golf courses in California and the Northwest. "Easing people into the complex and magical experience that is golf will be good for the game."

A recent test outing confirmed Flogton's appeal to a wide range of golfers and nongolfers. Using just two game formats and a few equipment variations – including long and straight nonconforming golf balls, driver face lubrication, and some alternative-face wedges participants affectionately nicknamed "the cheese grater" and "the sandpaper" – the players found the game easier and more fun than golf. Most were eager to try any future equipment innovations that could help them hit the ball farther, straighter and more precisely.

"The golf industry has allowed technology and innovation that could attract millions to the game to become trapped behind a dam," said Casey Alexander, author of www.caseyalexandergolf.com and Wall Street analyst specializing in the golf industry, who hosted today's announcement at the PGA Show. "This dam was specifically designed to hinder the touring professional, but it trapped everyone else in the bargain. Let the AGA burst the dam and amazing technology will pour through, and so will the fun."

Testimonials and samples of Flogton in action can be viewed on www.flogton.com, which also contains information on the Alternative Golf Association and a digital media kit with images.

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About the Alternative Golf Association:

The AGA formed in 2010 in Palo Alto, California, after inventor and entrepreneur Bob Zider recruited his friends Scott McNealy, Pat Gallagher and Damien Eastwood to join in creating a new game that would not be bound by golf's rules and equipment restrictions. After studying golf industry trends and listening to course owners, equipment companies and players concerned about lack of growth in the game, they concluded there was room in the sport for a more playable alternative to USGA golf. The AGA's mission is to return innovation and invention to the sport and encourage a style of play that stresses performance over conformance. For more information about "golf for the rest of us," the AGA and Project Flogton, visit www.flogton.com.

Development team profiles

Scott McNealy **Commissioner**

Sun Microsystems co-founder Scott McNealy presided over the Silicon Valley giant from 1984 through 2006 as CEO, and in 2009 sold the company to Oracle. Captain of his Harvard golf team, he has played in several AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Ams. Golf Digest named him Top CEO Golfer, a two-year title, four times beginning in 1996. One of his most important post-CEO projects has been Curriki, a nonprofit that open sources ideas for K-through-12 education curriculum, sharing lesson plans, books and chapters. He and his wife, Susan, have four sons ages 15 to 9: Maverick, Dakota, Colt and Scout, and live in Palo Alto, California.

Pat Gallagher **CEO**

Pat Gallagher gained acclaim as a sports marketing pioneer during a 33-year career as the top marketing/business executive with the San Francisco Giants. There, he originated promotions such as the Croix de Candlestick for hardy fans and developed plans for the first privately financed ballpark constructed in more than 30 years, San Francisco's AT&T Park. He lives in Palo Alto, California, and maintains part ownership in three minor-league baseball teams.

Bob Zider **Founder, equipment development and innovation**

Bob Zider was president of his class at Harvard Business School (1976) and went on to success as an inventor and entrepreneur in shape memory alloy products, medical devices and aircraft engineering. Founder of the innovative Beta Group, his many creations include Flexon, a breakthrough in durable eyeglass frames. A bogey golfer at Sharon Heights in Menlo Park, California, Zider ventured into sports with Pixl Golf. a pioneer in clubs designed for game improvement.

Damien Eastwood **General Counsel**

An expert in open-source software solutions and intellectual property protection, Eastwood brings over 20 years of experience in the technology industry, most notably as the VP/Legal at Sun Microsystems, where he created and managed many open-source projects, including Java, OpenSolaris, OpenOffice and GlassFish. He does not belong to a country club, has never broken 100 and declares himself a confirmed hacker.