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### HAWAII GOLF – ADVENTURES IN PARADISE

**HONOLULU** – It's no surprise that the PGA Tour starts its season in Hawai'i with two tournaments – the Mercedes Championships at Kapalua Resort's Plantation Course on Maui and the Sony Open in Hawaii at the Waialae Country Club near the heart of Waikīkī.

Nor that the Champions Tour begins its year with the MasterCard Championship at the Hualalai Golf Club on Hawai'i's Big Island and follows it up, for the first time in 2005, with its first full-field event, the Turtle Bay Championship, at the Turtle Bay Resort's Palmer Course on O'ahu's North Shore.

Six professional tournaments are held annually in Hawai'i, and the LPGA Tour, which once had an event in the islands from the mid-1980s through 2002, hopes to return next year.

There's a good reason why Hawai'i is the favorite stopover as a working vacation destination for PGA Tour professionals, according to a poll conducted by *Golf World Magazine*.

"I love coming here. Two weeks in Hawai'i is great," said two-time U.S. Open champion Ernie Els.

The reason's simple: Every day's an ideal day for golf – especially when it's winter – and when the game is done, there's Hawai'i's vacation charms to enjoy.

Even the USGA added Hawai'i to its golf calendar, approving the U.S. Open sectional qualifying for men and women at O'ahu's two golf resorts – Turtle Bay's Palmer Course and Ko Olina Golf Club, respectively.

While Scotland, where the game began, may be golf's Mecca, Hawai'i is the ultimate golf vacation destination. It's a combination of Hawai'i's year-round summer, pampering world-class resorts, and more than 80 golf courses on six uniquely different and beautiful islands.

Perhaps the best selling point for a golf vacation in Hawai'i isn't just the "must-play" and "must-see" golf courses, says Jay Talwar, vice president of marketing for the Hawai'i Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB).

“There are an unending list of outdoor activities, particularly the water sports such as swimming and surfing for the rest of the family. Add to this indulgent spas, our distinctive culture and cuisine, world-class shopping, and a Hawai'i golf vacation is a multi-dimensional adventure like no other,” he said.

Eight of *Golf Magazine's* top 25 golf resorts in America are located in the 50<sup>th</sup> State. No other state has more than two. Many of golf's noted architects have utilized the islands' unique terrain to design memorable courses.

No one has done it more dramatically than the late Robert Trent Jones Sr. with his literally ground-breaking design of the Mauna Kea Golf Course, transforming it from a barren lava field to a lush green gem on the Kohala Coast of Hawai'i's Big Island.

Mauna Kea's signature par-3 third overlooking the Pacific Ocean is Hawai'i's most photographed hole and one of his personal favorite par-3s, according to Jones, who designed more than 400 golf courses.

Since then four major resorts have developed comparable first-class championship courses along the 30-mile coastline from Mauna Kea down to the picturesque fishing town of Kailua-Kona. The entire stretch of coastline more than rivals Palm Springs in the number of rainless days.

Jones' son, Robert Trent Jones Jr., has designed more courses in the islands than anyone – 10 at last count, including four on his favorite island of Kaua'i. His first was the 27-hole Princeville Makai Course, while another is the Poipu Bay Resort course, site of the PGA Grand Slam of Golf, involving the winners of golf's four major championships since 1994.

Another Jones' design is the Wailea Gold Course on Maui, home of the Wendy's Champions Skins Game.

Jack Nicklaus (Hualalai Golf Club, the Club at Hokuli'a, Challenge at Manele), Arnold Palmer (Kapalua Bay Course, Turtle Bay's Palmer Course, Hapuna Golf Course, Hawaii Prince Golf Club) and Ben Crenshaw (Kapalua's Plantation Course) are among the notable golfers who have designed challenging championship courses in the islands.

Playing a course that Jack and Arnie built should be motivation enough for any avid golfer. But having seen on television the same championship courses played by Els, Tiger Woods, Vijay Singh and other PGA touring pros should furnish an even greater vicarious thrill for any golfer.

“When Tiger and Ernie come here to play golf, that's an endorsement that can't be beat,” says Mark Roling, an NBC Sports golf analyst, host of the show “Golf Hawaii,” and Maui resident who's deeply involved in the local golf industry.

With three 18-hole courses, including the par-73 Plantation layout, Kapalua Resort is the state's busiest in terms of resort play and it isn't surprising.

"People see Kapalua on TV during the Mercedes Championships. Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, and all of the other top players," said Marty Keiter, Kapalua's director of golf. "There's a huge demand for the resort because of its recognition."

The same goes for the Sony Open in Hawaii which has produced a number of champions including Jack Nicklaus, Lee Trevino, Ben Crenshaw, Hale Irwin and Ernie Els. The tournament received new visibility in 2003 when 14-year-old golf prodigy Michelle Wie teed it up with the men and came within one stroke of making the cut. Wie, who is expected to carry Hawai'i's golf flag as her career continues to blossom, is bringing a renewed excitement to the future of women's golf with her exceptional talent.

Regarding the site of the PGA Grand Slam of Golf, Poipu Bay Golf Course Director of Golf Michael Castillo says that a "good 70 percent of the people know about us before they come to Hawai'i."

He added: "When they come here, they already know that they want to play here. It (the PGA Grand Slam) has had a huge impact on the reputation of the course."

M.G. Orender, president of the PGA of America which sponsors the Grand Slam, credits the event being in Hawai'i as the major reason for its success. It had never achieved the worldwide television popularity it enjoys now during its first eight years when the event was held in the continental United States.

The casual golfers, too, will enjoy a game at a number of semi-private, daily-fee and municipal courses, the latter including Ala Wai Golf Course, one of the world's busiest with more than 170,000 rounds a year.

Although 98 percent of Ala Wai's play is local, tee times for a walk-on visitor or two are more readily available than one would think at the friendly par-70 course, located just five blocks from Waikiki Beach.

Clearly, Hawai'i offers golfers and their families, a variety of things to see, do and experience besides playing some of the top golf courses in America.

"We've got the best weather in the world, the scenery and some of the best resorts with the most diverse property and some of the best golf courses in the world. In terms of a complete experience, Hawai'i's hard to top," said HVCB's Talwar.

"And the aloha spirit makes the experience even more special," he added.

The ideal climate doesn't only mean fewer rain outs, adds Roling.

“People can play their best golf here. Because of the climate, the golf courses are always in the best condition, day in and day out. Also, the ground is firm, so they can hit the ball farther. And with the lush conditions of the fairways, they can get the ball up in the air better because of the lies.”

Rolfing says it's fortunate that professional golf tournaments in Hawai'i are able to get such widely known companies – Mercedes, Sony and MasterCard – as title sponsors. It's a symbiotic relationship of sorts. Sponsors find it makes good business sense to take care of their guests.

Rolfing added: “When you think of electronics, you think of Sony. When you think of luxury cars, you think of Mercedes. Hawai'i as a brand name is powerful, too. When you think of vacation, you think of Hawai'i.”

For information about Hawai'i – The Islands of Aloha – visit HVCB's Web site at [GoHawaii.com](http://GoHawaii.com) or call 1-800-GOHAWAII.

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