It Started with an Invitation

By Mark Bennett, Assistant Tournament Director
Tri Palm Men's Golf Club

What began as a simple idea to bring two golf clubs together for a round of golf has turned into something much better than I ever expected.

A couple of months ago I reached out to the Second Season Golf Club, with a formal invitation to join the Tri Palm Men's Club and play together in our Thursday tournament. At the time, the invitation was simply for that one tournament. I followed it up with personal invitations to the Second Season members who were still here and playing golf throughout the summer.

The first week was simple, just a regular stroke-play tournament. Five or six Second Season players joined us. The next week, a few more showed up. By the third week, it was becoming obvious that this wasn't going to be a one-time get-together.

The conversations after each tournament became part of the experience as well. We started comparing notes about the different games each club played and how we ran our tournaments. One idea led to another, and before long we were talking about what we might try the following week. We also began using texts and emails to send invitations, tournament information and an occasional thank-you for everyone's participation and support. What started as simply playing golf together was becoming a sharing of ideas as well.

As participation grew, so did the fun. We started moving away from playing stroke play every week and began mixing in different tournament formats. This week we played a four-man, two-best-ball Yellow Ball tournament. Next week we'll return to stroke play, and we'll finish the summer season with a scramble.

Somewhere along the way, something else happened. We stopped thinking very much about which club everybody belonged to.

Participation is now pretty evenly divided between Tri Palm and Second Season players. Teams get mixed together, friendships have developed, and the competition has remained exactly what it should be—competitive enough to matter, but never so serious that we forget why we're out there.

Today may have captured that spirit better than anything we've done all summer. After the tournament, everyone gathered for pizza and beer to give our Course Starter and Marshal,

Tim Achter, a proper send-off. We presented Tim with certificates of appreciation, signed cards, and had the opportunity to thank him for everything he has done for all of us.

It was golf, pizza, beer, laughter, and a chance to recognize somebody we appreciated.

When I first sent that invitation a couple of months ago, I really didn't know what would come of it. I simply thought it might be fun to get the two clubs together and play some golf. It turned out to be much more than that.

I've thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and judging by the participation each week, I don't think I'm alone. My hope now is that what began as a summer experiment doesn't end when the summer does.

It started with a simple invitation.

Golf did the rest.