

- Tom Cade: Hello, and welcome to pod for the course. I'm Tom Cade, the Senior Director of Communications for Washington Golf. Today we have with us, Jeff Simons, the Director of Operations for Bandon Dunes Golf Resort down there in the Southern Oregon coast. Jeff, thanks so much for coming on.
- Jeff Simons: Absolutely Tom, thanks for having me.
- Tom Cade: Yeah, you bet. So Director of Operations now, I knew you when you were the Director of Golf, last when I first met you. When did you become Director of Operations? And how does this change for you and what you're doing down there at the resort?
- Jeff Simons: It's been a couple of years now since I moved into the director of operations role and a lot of what I do is the same, ultimately it's making sure our guests that come to Bandon Dunes have the best experience possible. And as the resort has continued to expand and evolve, so have a lot of the roles of different staff members here. So, as you know from your visits down here, we've got so many great people that have been here for a long time. And one of the things that we've been able to do is continue to grow and evolve positions for people as well. And so I was able to take on a little bit more of responsibility and get a little bit extended beyond just the golf and touch on the overall operation as a whole.
- Tom Cade: Yeah. How long have you been at the resorts in total Jeff?
- Jeff Simons: I started back in 2004.
- Tom Cade: Okay. So it's been a while.
- Jeff Simons: I now consider myself an Oregonian having come over from Idaho.
- Tom Cade: Okay. Nice. All right. Well, it's been a very interesting year, I think for everyone and particularly for golf courses and particularly for resorts. I know then in the state of Oregon, golf courses did not need to shut down during the recent lockdown period, but Bandon Dunes chose to shut down the golf courses. And I think there are probably other issues involved other than just the golf courses. Like you did make that big step to do that, yes?
- Jeff Simons: We did. It was in March when we decided to have a temporary closure and we reopened in May 11th. And what we were really looking for was, knowing that our guests that come and visit Bandon Dunes are coming from all over the United States. And we wanted to make sure that as everyone around the country was starting to see COVID-19 and the pandemic spread across the country, we wanted to be able to hit pause essentially, and really get as firm of a understanding as we could and make sure that we were doing our part with the state of Oregon to make sure that we could, help flatten the curve and keep

people safe. And that was our staff members, our caddies, but also our guests in our communities, because we got 650 staff members and 300 caddies.

And at the end of the day, we all go home and interact with our community. And so we wanted to make sure that we were doing everything we can, and we wanted to be able to go through our operations and, all the different aspects of the resort and make sure that we could look at the different touch points and make sure that we were protecting the health and safety of everyone. And during this six week closure, we put together a very comprehensive plan and we're excited to reopen on May 11th and welcome people back to the resort.

We were really close to the same time where Oregon entered phase one, it was the first couple of days were different and it was still grab and go meals and whatnot when we reopened. But by the time we got to Friday, the 15th, Coos County had been in phase one and we were able to get people back in the restaurants obviously in limited fashion, but from where we are today, it's very much your typical Bandon Dunes experience with just a little bit of enhanced cleaning and sanitation and staff wearing masks and gloves in certain areas and social distancing has been going on.

So [inaudible 00:04:19] Bandon Dunes and have an absolutely wonderful time. We're just asking you to be a little bit more socially responsible with all the different parts to it.

Tom Cade: Sure. Did you change tee time, separation at the time, new tee times further apart? Or did you do anything with that?

Jeff Simons: We did not change the frequency of our tee times. We're at 10 minutes teatime intervals, the golf courses were mainly impacted from flying sticks staying in the holes. We've got the little foam stoppers inside of the cups, the way it rakes from the bunkering. And then golf shops we limited the number of people that could be in the golf shops at one time. And again, all of our guests have been fantastic at making sure that they were doing their part to help out. And, one of the beauties of being on a 2,500 plus acre golf resort with now five 18 hole golf courses is, there's a lot of natural social distancing happening just from tee times and space. And people being able to play golf from 7:00 AM until 9:00 PM. It's, it's not that we're seeing lots of people and small confined spaces they're spread out over a big area.

Tom Cade: Yeah. How does this affect the caddie and their role in serving your guests?

Jeff Simons: We were ... Being in Bandon Dunes golf resort where we don't have golf carts and walking is such a fundamental part and there's the caddie experience is really something that our guests enjoy. We've got guests that come every year and they request the same caddies and the caddie is there to help them out with their golf, but also has developed that relationship and a bond that they're buddies checking in with each other and having a great time. Our biggest thing

is we wanted to make sure our guests were comfortable with the caddie experience, and we wanted to make sure that the caddies were comfortable as well. So our caddies have masks on and most of them are wearing gloves as well.

And from there, it would be open communication and dialogue with the guest from, "Do you want the caddie carrying your bag? Or putting it on a pushcart? Do you want the caddie handing you a club? Or just having conversation from that social distancing of six feet, letting you know what the yardage is, what the wind is doing, how to play the shot and then the player can pull the club?" And we've got guests doing a little bit of many of the different options, and we've been able to get the caddies out on a golf course. We were able to meet the expectations of our guests by them having that caddie experience. And it's worked out great.

Tom Cade: Yeah. Good. I know this has been a big year, planned here for Bandon Dunes resort, 2020. First of all with the opening of Sheep Ranch, the very anticipated opening of Sheep Ranch on June 1st. And we are now on June 11th at the moment. And so it's 11 days into this, how's it going?

Jeff Simons: Well, the Sheep Ranch has been a wonderful addition to Bandon Dunes golf resort. And obviously it's easy to listen to our guests and they say they love the place and think, Oh, of course it was a great addition. But again, as you open up a new golf course and you put Sheep Ranch in competition with the other four we have, you want to make sure that it lives up to the hype. And when Bandon Dunes opened in 1999, it was an absolutely unknown golf course opening up. And as we've spread across the years each new golf course opened with a little bit more publicity and a little bit more press, and Sheep Ranch is the first time we've had social media in our lives when we've opened a golf course. So, it was about as much followed of a golf course opening as we've seen and witnessed in the last couple of years.

And we knew the expectations that people would have for it and, with the closure that we went into, we basically had three weeks from when we opened the resort back up to when we were opening Sheep Ranch, and there was a lot of work and a lot of things that happened and certain supply chains were slowed down a little bit during the early onset of COVID-19 and the end result was a fantastic golf course opening regardless. So we were able to have a full tee sheet. We had golf starting at 6:20 in the morning, where Mick Peters, who hit the first tee shot and then the first group out at all five 18 hole golf courses [inaudible 00:09:12] and preserved plus Punchbowl. So we've been able to carry on that tradition for 21 years, and it was wonderful to see him and his family up there.

Tom Cade: How did that come to be with him doing that? [crosstalk 00:09:25]

Jeff Simons: In 1999, when ... He's a local barber, he and his son own and operate Mixed Hair Surgeons. But ultimately shoe back in the day when he was employee number two and going about, he basically is getting his hair cut and talked to Mick and said, "Hey, we got new golf course opening." And Mick said, "Oh, great. are there any tee times left?" And she says, "Actually, yeah the first tee time is open." So he said, "Great, I'll take it." And certainly at that time, I don't think he knew what kind of celebrity he'd become and how NBS golfers all across the world would be, [inaudible 00:10:09] when we're getting ready to open something, we let him know and say, "Are you ready to do it again?"

Tom Cade: Yeah. There you go. Nice. I also know something of a tradition that Mr. Kaiser himself, Mike Kaiser would be there on the first tee greeting the golfers on the opening of one of his courses, was he there?

Jeff Simons: Mike was not able to make it this year, but we had a full first tee, Chris Kaiser, who is my youngest son, and very actively involved with the resort was there on the first tee. Phil Friedman, who's the co-owner of Sheep Ranch was there along with us. And [inaudible 00:10:45] was able to make it out. And so, we had opportunities for people to have conversation with them. We had the opening day coins that we gave out, opening day score cards that are all kind of modeled in the same tradition that we started 21 years ago. So it was a wonderful day, sun was out shining. We had our typical summer band and day. The wind got up to about 20 and, it was just beautiful. And one of the unique things about Sheep Ranch or one of the many unique things is when you're at the clubhouse, you can see all the way up to the ocean right away.

So it's kind of perched up on top and the golf course is all underneath you. So, you can see right away that it's a very special site. And then you get out there and you realize you've got a mile of coastline, golf course that you got nine greens on. So, group after group we're coming off with big grins on their face and just very complimentary of the golf and the experience. And, it's one of those things that it was so great to have Phil Friedman there who has been a part of Sheep Ranch for 20 years for him to find [inaudible 00:12:01] . Ultimately give up from the cross-country golf and very intimate drop a ball, pick a whole routing that it's been for the last 20 years to seeing what resort golf happens on it.

Tom Cade: Yeah. So did I hear you mention there's already a clubhouse there at Sheep Ranch?

Jeff Simons: We do. It's very similar to the old McDonald clubhouse, roughly twice the size, but it's just a very understated and modest similar to our other clubhouses around the resort, but just beautiful architecture, beautiful views, and a great spot. We're still finishing up a fireplace and outdoor patio there. We're roughly a month away from people being able to enjoy that beer out there in a wind protected area and watch the sunset and golfers finish.

Tom Cade: Nice. Do you have a big event for the resort? Jeff of course, is the US amateur going to be held there in early August? And I know there was some question that it might not be built at all, and I'll bet there was a big sigh of relief and joy that the announcement came out from the USGA that, yes indeed it will be held.

Jeff Simons: Yeah, it was May of 2015, when we signed the contract with the USGA and were granted the 2020 USA amateur. So, it's been a major part of our operation for five plus years now. And something that I've been working on quite a bit for the last two years. And so as the NBA shut down at the first COVID situation happening and then all other major sports following it right away, we were actually having a USGA site visit here during that time. And the hard part is basically, all of the plans that we had had, we've had to scrap and basically you're starting over this week. And it was right around May 9th or 10th when the Governor of Oregon made the announcement that no live sporting event through to the end of September. So we had to make a lot of different adjustments and changes, and with the state never actually closing golf, that was certainly something that was in our favor and what we've had to end up doing is basically taking it from a live sporting event to just a golf day.

And we we've just recently had to announce that it'll be no fans, no spectators around the championship. We had 700 plus volunteers that had signed up to help, and it was just going to be an incredible part of the championship. And we had to let them know that we wouldn't be able to have them here onsite helping with the championship. So it'll be a little bit different, but you know, what we're really excited about is being one of the four USGA championships that happened this year. So it'd be the Women's Amateur, the US Amateur Bandon Dunes, the US Open and the Women's Open. And, as you mentioned, 2020 has been a different year, but to be able to still have these four championships and the US Amateur Bandon Dunes is something we're really excited about.

Tom Cade: Yeah. It's pretty special.

Jeff Simons: People will be able to follow along on TV, Fox does a great job on the broadcast and-

Tom Cade: So it will still be televised. Yes?

Jeff Simons: It'll be televised.

Tom Cade: Yeah. Okay. And I know that all of the qualifying to get into the amateur was canceled, which is unfortunate because you've got a ton of really good players there at the resort, some of the members, but also a lot of the caddies were really good flip players and they were looking forward trying to get in there. So that's little unfortunate, but they're still going to be out there probably working a little bit.

Jeff Simons: Yeah. We've hosted six previous USGA championships and every single winner has had a Bandon Dunes caddie on their bag. So we're expecting that the US amateur will be very much the same. Again, not having the qualifying sites happen all around the country. And, we're bummed from that, both from the championship, but we were also going to be one of the qualifying sites. So we had old McDonald set up and that certainly would have given a home field advantage to many of the great players down here on the South coast to be able to play at old McDonald and compete for qualifying spot. So, it is a bummer that that person that, gets hot at the right time or can put together a great 36 hole stretch and work themselves into the US amateur championship is not going to be able to happen this year. But on the plus side, we'll likely see the strongest US amateur field ever assembled. And looking forward to hearing how the USGA puts together their qualifying criteria.

Tom Cade: Right. It's through exemptions, is that correct?

Jeff Simons: Yeah. There's, through all of our different dialogues and conversations, there's so many different ways and things they're looking at to try and make it the most fair and most official way of putting together a US amateur field, and the other fields as well. So, I'm sure a lot of it will work on amateur world golf rankings, and then those exemptions that occur from, past finishes and where they'd been in previous USGA championships. So, yeah, I'm not sure what that final formula looks like, and we're probably only a couple of weeks away from hearing it.

Tom Cade: Yeah. So tell me again Jeff, what two courses are going to be utilized in US amateur, one with stroke play qualifying course? And also the match play course?

Jeff Simons: So Bandon Dunes will be the main host and then Bandon Travel Services/Play Companion Course, So we'll have 36 holes of qualifying on Bandon Dunes and Bandon Trails. And then once the cut is made after Tuesday's final rounds, [inaudible 00:18:30] Wednesday, August 12th, all play will be at Bandon Dunes, and that'll be where the match play happens. And, we can't wait for the matches to get underway knowing, as players get that 14, 15, 16, 17 area at Bandon Dunes, you just have some fantastic match play holes, where you can really throw the risk reward in there. And we'll see how players choose to try and either come back from a deficit or hold on for the win.

Tom Cade: Yeah. Jeff I really appreciate you taking the time this afternoon to do this. And again, I know it's been an interesting year and unusual year for everyone, and particularly in the golf industry and with so much going on at the resort with the Sheep Ranch opening and [inaudible 00:19:21] coming. I know that a lot of people have been keeping close tabs on what's going on down there. So, Jeff Simons, Director of Operations at Bandon Dunes Golf Resort, appreciate you taking the time Jeff.

Jeff Simons:            Absolutely Tom. Thank you for the call.

Tom Cade:            Yeah. Thanks again. Bye-Bye.

Jeff Simons:            Bye.