

# Michigan Golfer Television – Five Years and 250 Shows Later

By Art McCafferty

In March of 2006, *Golfweek Magazine* sent out a press release indicating they they were starting the first Internet golf television show in the nation. Knowing differently, I immediately pointed out that the *Michigan Golfer* was the first golf television show and that we had begun our television programming some five years earlier. To prove my point I directed their PR firm to our link <http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show7/>. The link is to a show we did on the WJR Internet Advisor Show in March of 2001 announcing our new Internet television show.

GLSP, the parent company of the *Michigan Golfer*, had previously been a partner in two former television shows, *The Michigan Golfer Television Show* and *Golfing the Great Lakes*. The first show, the *Michigan Golfer Television Show*, was a partnership with Terry Moore, Tom Durant of Video Images and the *Michigan Golfer*. Our talent was Tom Cleary, who is now the voice of the Grand Rapids-based White Caps minor league baseball team, as well as a partner with Terry Moore and Jack Berry in a PR firm known as All About Golf. The show lasted a year as costs and revenues did not favorably add up.

The second foray into the tele-



Photo by Art McCafferty

**Bay Mills, Mike Husby and Judy Mason gave us a chance to cover our first professional tournament.**

vision market, *Golfing the Great Lakes*, was headed up again by Tom Durant of Video Images. There were a variety of partners that comprised the group, with GLSP being one of them. Our talent for the show the first year was Frank Beckman from WJR. In year two Larry Adderley, former Channel 7 sports anchor, took over. All told, the series ran eight years and produced over 65 shows on courses in the Great Lakes area. You can visit the remnants of the program at <http://www.webgolfer.com/golfgreatlakes/>. The shows were well liked and we had a nice run on the 30+ PBS station net-



**Ben Davis, when asked to talk about the discrimination he faced in golf, said, "I can't do it because thinking about it will make me cry."**

work. Once again, the economics of producing the shows paired with the non-commercial realities of public television, ultimately led to the show's demise.



**Bill Newcomb, who had just designed Calderone Farms, was our first interview.**

As publisher of GLSP and the basic sales person for the *Golfing the Great Lakes Shows*, I had first-hand knowledge of the frustration involved in producing and funding these shows. Our first year of the *Michigan Golfer Television Show* was placed on commercial television. For example, we were on WZZM-TV in Grand Rapids and had a great time slot. However, commercial time on a broadcast station is expensive. The shows were costing us a thousand dollars a week for the airtime. The financial clock was always ticking on that show. When we developed the *Golfing the Great Lakes* show, we decided to go with PBS stations. The cost of PBS station time was basically the cost of the satellite feed each week. However, the opportunity for making money on the show was lessened by the non-commercial realities of PBS programming.

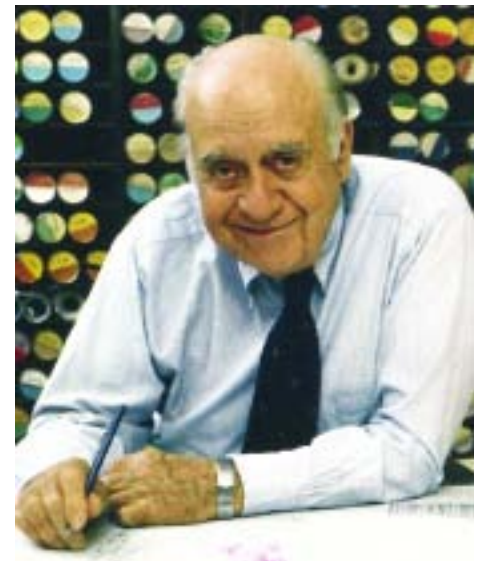
During the eight year run of *Golfing the Great Lakes*, we intro-

duced our audiences to many of the great courses in the Great Lakes area. Our cameras went to Eagle Ridge in Illinois; Juday Creek, Otter Creek and Sultan's Run in Indiana; Quail Chase in Kentucky; Bay Valley, The Bear, Bedford Valley, Black Bear, Black Forest, Boyne's Alpine, Bay Harbor, Heather and Moor courses, Captains Table, Chestnut Valley, Concord Hills, Dumaglas, Eagle Crest, El Dorado, Fortress, The Gailes, Garland's Fountains and Swampfire, The Classic, The Loon, The Lake, Hessel Ridge, High Point, The Jewel, Little Traverse Bay, Marsh Ridge, The Meadows, The Pohlcat, The Rock, Stonehedge, and Treetops' Smith and Jones courses in Michigan; Eagle Sticks and Maumee Bay in Ohio and Blackwolf Run and The Brute in Wisconsin. In all, we produced over 60 *Golfing the Great Lakes* shows.

While PBS stations offered a quality delivery system for the shows, the problems inherent in utilizing their platforms were significant. We put the shows up on a satellite feed each week, but they were not necessarily shown that week. Many stations taped the shows for later broadcast. As a result, it was difficult to promote the show times on the 30+ stations. Thus, many clients missed seeing their show, and we had to wait for word of mouth to get back to them from people who did see the shows. While this happened frequently enough for resorts to do additional courses, it was always a problem. We also never knew until the end of the season, what stations were carrying the show. PBS stations were required to get back at the end of the season to tell various

feeder stations, in this case, Detroit's WTVS, what outstate stations were carrying the show. It was then that we knew that PBS stations as far away as Huntington Beach, California and Bozeman, Montana carry the show.

Finally, there was the problem with establishing ratings for the show. PBS shows typically do not have ratings big enough to measure



**Our Robert Trent Jones interviews were very well received across the country.**

and really are not driven by ratings anyway. As the salesman for the show, it was always difficult to persuade courses to buy into our programming because I could only offer anecdotal evidence of the show's success. After, we canceled *Golfing the Great Lakes* in 1999, the thought of creating an Internet television show on golf began to enter my mind.

The challenges for Internet video programming at that time were substantial. The technology that would allow such a media was

just coming on board. While you could view video on dial up Internet connections, it was too slow and small to be useful. The broadband connectivity needed for video was running at about 9% when we started, but we felt that in a few years, this would change dramatically. Also, people were used to getting everything free on the Internet and therefore a new revenue paradigm had to be created. There was also the problem of the limited sophistication in Internet technology for most of the population which by default included the leadership in the golf industry. Therefore, not only did we have to create this new product, but we also had to provide an education of its value and potential to our customers.

On March 9th of 2001, our first *Michigan Golfer Internet Television* show went online. Our team consisted of our host, Dr. William Shelton, former President of Eastern Michigan University and an avid golfer, our director, Joe Yunkman, of Michigan Media, Jennie McCafferty, the one responsible for understanding how all this technology was going to work, our editor Catherine Jones, Thad Gutowski our salesman and finally myself, as the producer. Bill Newcomb was our first guest and we featured that show— <http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show1/> as part of our display at the Michigan Golf Show. On March 10th, our team visited the studios of radio station WJR to appear on the Internet



**Our crew in 2001, Jennie McCafferty, Joe Yunkman’s assistant, Bill Shelton, Joe Yunkman, Art McCafferty, Chris Lahiri and Thad Gutowski.**

Advisor show, with Foster Braun and Gary Baker. It was then that we announced that we had begun our programming. When we launched our *Michigan Runner Television* show in June of that year, we became the 2nd Internet television network in the world, the first being *Pseudo.com*, a show that was featured on *60 Minutes*.

Since our debut in March of 2001, our viewership has increased substantially. Then again, when you start with zero, the only way is up. Since the technology was so new, there were not many networks or shows around in which we could compare the traffic with. Thus, we are comparing traffic within our own network for now. Since we launched our network, we have put up over 600 Internet video shows on our five channels. Listed below is the viewer response we have had with our network in 2005.

<b>Show</b>	<b>Channel</b>	<b>Viewers</b>
Michigan Golfer Television	<a href="http://michigangolfer.tv">http://michigangolfer.tv</a>	541,475
Michigan Skier Television	<a href="http://michiganskier.tv">http://michiganskier.tv</a>	54,413
Michigan Travel Television	<a href="http://michigantravel.tv">http://michigantravel.tv</a>	164,074
Michigan Runner Television	<a href="http://michiganrunner.tv">http://michiganrunner.tv</a>	250,038
Running Canada Television	<a href="http://runningcanada.tv">http://runningcanada.tv</a>	<u>112,088</u>
	<b>Total Viewers</b>	<b>1,127,975</b>



The Loon was our prototype for our “Architect and Their Courses” series.



Photo by Art McCafferty

Bill Shelton and Mike McCafferty as “The Haig” created a great Ryder Cup series for our viewers.

To be sure, the early years were a struggle. When we started, Michigan only had 9% of its people on broadband Internet. Now, that figure is close to 70%. That fact, plus the ability of search engines to help people find us, have helped us tremendously in getting traffic. Traffic led to clients interested in our products. After five years and over 600 shows on five channels, it looks like this is the year we will turn a profit. And as we all know, “Happiness is Positive Cash Flow.”

After five years, we submit these shows as our benchmarks.



Bucks Run was one of four Jerry Matthews courses we put online.

### Bill Newcomb Interview

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show1/>

The first of our 600+ shows.

### Internet Advisor Show

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show7/>

We announced our modest, yet inspired venture into Internet television on the show.

### Robert Trent Jones Series

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2001shows/show19/>

We were able to use video we had taken 12 years earlier and repurpose it for Internet Television. It was our first hit show.

### Bay Mills Open

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2002shows/baymillsopen/>

Mike Husby, Bay Mills Tournament Director, hired us to provide our first coverage of a professional golf tournament.

### Walter Hagen and the Ryder Cup

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2003shows/hagen/>

The Hagen series featured our host Bill Shelton and our son, Mike

McCafferty, who played Walter Hagen. When Bill Shelton was President of Eastern Michigan University, he awarded Michael an Appreciation of Merit Award for his work in EMU's Communication and Theater Arts program. It was a fun project for both of them. It also gave us an opportunity to create a series of shows.

### The Bull

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2003shows/thebull/>

This was our breakout video on golf courses. It featured the deft hand of our director and videographer, Joe Yunkman. He captured the course and the course designer, Jack Nicklaus, perfectly.

### Jeff Daniels Comedy Golf Jam

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2003shows/show22/>

We flat out had a great time taping this show and working with Jeff and his staff.

### The Loon

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2005shows/Loon/>

Once again, Mike Husby came through with a budget that allowed us to create one of our best shows.

### Ben Davis

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2005shows/davis/>

This show featured another look at the history of Michigan golf. Ben Davis and his recollections of being a minority in the golf business were riveting.

### Ryder Cup Celebration

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2005shows/irish/>

The greatest golf event in the world allowed us to operate in the big leagues and have some fun while recording some Michigan history.

### Jerry Matthews Video Gallery

<http://michigangolfer.tv/2005shows/irish/>

Our video gallery allowed us to display an array of courses designed by the same architect. It provided a canvas of his work for future and past clients.

There you have it— a quick look at the history of the *Michigan Golfer Television* show during its first five years of existence. We hope you enjoyed the journey and we hope you join us or continue to join us on our *Michigan Golfer Television* channel in the future. **MG**

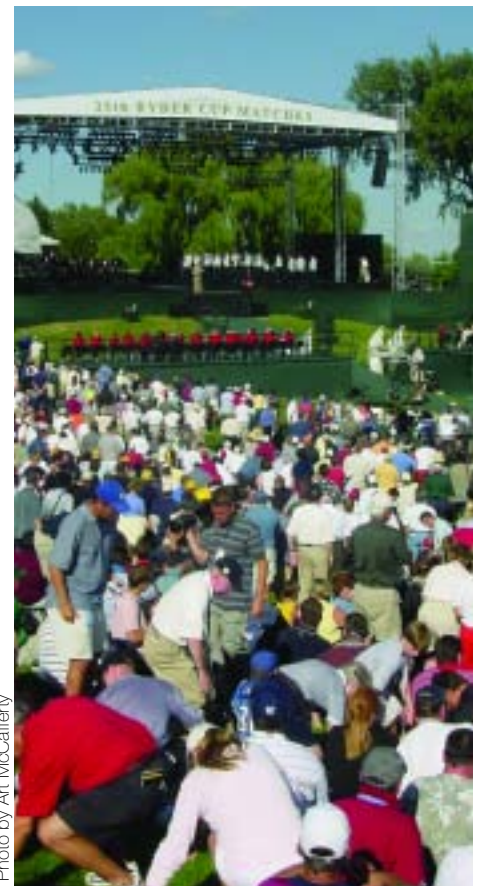


Photo by Art McCafferty

Ryder Cup Opening Ceremonies