

Making the Most of a Mulligan



Are-tee. A do-over. A reload. Whatever the name, anyone who's ever played the game has, at one time or another, taken that most popular of shots among hackers at large: a mulligan.

In celebration of this unofficial swat (the USGA doesn't recognize such swings, you know), Innisbrook Resort and Golf Club near Tampa, Florida, created National Mulligan Day.

On October 17, any overnight guest who played one of Innisbrook's four layouts—including the famed Copperhead Course—had the opportunity to play the same course again for free that day. Officials also offered various non-golf promotions throughout the resort, including two-for-one "Mulligan-tinis" at its bars, as well as spa, retail, practice range and tennis specials.

"The driving force [behind National Mulligan Day] was to develop something different, fun and interactive," says Matt Owen, corporate director of public relations for Salamander Hospitality, parent company of Innisbrook.

"After undertaking the research, we realized that nobody else had run such a package or promotion."

To promote the facility-wide "holiday," the resort established a free online poll (www.sportsmulligans.com), where visitors could vote on the sporting mishap they felt was

Facebook visits, Twitter "tweets" and Web site traffic all spiked.

"Golfers and golf writers loved the idea," says Owen, who struggles to draw comparisons to other resort promotions because National Mulligan Day "is by far the most unusual package" Innisbrook has ever offered.

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most in need of a mulligan. Candidates ranged from Bill Buckner's infamous error when trying to field a ground ball in the 1986 World Series to Chris Webber taking a timeout when none were left in the 1993 NCAA National Championship game to one of golf's most famous flare-outs: Jean van de Velde's triple bogey on the 18th hole of the British Open in 1999, which led to a playoff loss. Owen also leveraged the power of social media to generate additional buzz, encouraging people to share other mulligan-worthy incidents, sporting or otherwise, via Facebook and Twitter.

Though the company opted to not attach a specific revenue goal to the program or support it through advertising, officials did hope to garner press coverage and create social chatter—which they succeeded in doing. The package, poll and promotion appeared on wire services such as Reuters and on several golf blogs, while

"We had about 10 package participants (overnight rates, based on double occupancy, began at \$129 and included a suite accommodation and a round of golf), and much heavier traffic than usual in our bars, restaurants and spa. The revenue obviously exceeded our expenditure, and we believe that we can generate substantial business in future years with this idea."

—Tracy White

