

# Myrtle Beach Classic to be first PGA Tour stop in Grand Strand starting in 2024

- By Danny Kelly and Megan Fernandes, The Post and Courier, Myrtle Beach
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MYRTLE BEACH — The PGA Tour for the first time will host an event in the Grand Strand, with the Myrtle Beach Classic debuting next year at the Dunes Golf and Beach Club.

The PGA Tour FedExCup event will feature a purse of \$3.9 million. The event will continue for at least four years.

The Post and Courier first reported on the deal in February. Discussions and negotiations over a tournament have been ongoing for months, but PGA Tour and Myrtle Beach area officials officially announced formalized details at the Dunes Golf and Beach Club on May 10.

PGA Tour President Tyler Dennis said that the debut of the Myrtle Beach Classic is an exciting new opportunity for the organization's members. He views the Classic as "a first-class tournament at a championship venue."

"With its incredible passion for golf, the Myrtle Beach community is a natural fit to bring this tournament to life," Dennis said.

The Myrtle Beach Classic will be part of the 2024 FedExCup Regular Season as a full-field additional event played the same week as a designated event. In addition to the purse, 300 FedExCup points will be awarded to the champion.

Dates for the Classic will be announced later along with the full 2024 FedExCup schedule. The season begins in January with the FedExCup Regular Season, followed by three FedExCup Playoffs events in August and the FedExCup Fall starting in September.

Visit Myrtle Beach president and CEO Karen Riordan does not yet have an estimate for the economic impact the event will have, but she said the Classic will likely be at capacity, citing the popularity of the sport on the Grand Strand.

Visit Myrtle Beach will serve as the title sponsor of the event.

“Myrtle Beach has long been described as the golf capital of the world with over 90 courses for golf enthusiasts,” Riordan said. “We see the Myrtle Beach Classic as a great opportunity to show the world what an incredible destination we have.”

Along with local economic impact, it remains to be seen where the Myrtle Beach event ranks with other PGA Tour stops.

“Where you probably find yourself in the pecking order is kind of in that John Deere Classic kind of realm,” said Gemini Sports president Rob Yowell, who runs major events such as the Waste Management Phoenix Open and the Fiesta Bowl.

He was referencing an annual July tournament in Silvis, Ill., which includes 500 FedExCup points and had a \$7.1 million purse in 2022. The Myrtle Beach stop shouldn't expect golfers like Justin Thomas and Jon Rahm to show up right away, but to expect a solid field with recognizable names, he said.

“You’re not going to get a lot of the top 20 guys,” Yowell said, “but every once in a while maybe you’ll get a local South Carolina pro golfer (who) wants to play a home match kind of thing.”

Myrtle Beach will be one of two stops in South Carolina for the PGA Tour in 2024, along with the RBC Heritage at Harbour Town Golf Links in Hilton Head. That event, which debuted in 1969, was held in April a week after The Masters in Augusta, Ga.

“We’ve been supported tremendously in this state, and just to be able to bring an event to this area, this part of South Carolina, (I) couldn’t be more excited,” said PGA Tour vice president Kelly Jensen.

Duane Parrish, director of the state’s department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, said that the tournament is a “big win” for the Grand Strand and beyond, as it solidifies South Carolina’s reputation as a golf tourism destination.

“The Myrtle Beach Classic adds a third annual event in our state, behind the RBC Heritage and the BMW Charity Pro-Am,” he said. “In a time where golf is riding a high we haven’t seen since the 90s, this is a prime opportunity to attract golfers looking for their next golf trip.”

Golf tourism is a growing economic engine for the state, with visitor impact extending beyond the fairway. In 2021, golf had a \$3.3 billion economic impact statewide in 2021, and the state continues to invest heavily in marketing South Carolina as a golfer’s paradise. Roughly 20 percent of total state advertising budget is spent on golf advertising and partnerships alone.

Parrish said that attracting tournaments, and the exposure received from it being a televised event, is a magnet that draws golfers to courses across South Carolina. The RBC Heritage tournament alone typically generates roughly \$105 million in

economic activity and is traditionally the largest annual sporting event in the state, Parrish said, noting that the Myrtle Beach Classic also has a lot of potential.

Adjustments will be made to the course to make play more challenging for PGA golfers, according to Dunes Golf and Beach Club president Collins Wakefield. The course will likely be a par 71 for the event.

Course changes will include:

- the tee box at hole No. 1 will be elevated with brick and mortar backing;
- the tee box at hole No. 2 will be moved back roughly 30 yards;
- the tee box at hole No. 6 will be moved behind the blue tees, adding roughly 15 yards;
- a new tee box for hole No. 8 will be built behind the hole No. 7 green and will be 453 yards, making it a par 4; and
- the tee box at hole No. 14 will be raised and moved back 45 yards.

The short game area will also be enhanced and the putting green will be enlarged. The course's famous 13th hole, nicknamed "Waterloo," will remain untouched.

"We're proud to partner with the PGA Tour in hosting the Myrtle Beach Classic and are extremely honored to have been selected as the host course among the many high-quality championship venues offered along the Grand Strand," Wakefield said.

Parrish said that the Dunes' experience as a PGA host, combined with its reputation as a Robert Trent Jones-designed course and its location in the Grand Strand make it an ideal location. The city will join the ranks of other South Carolina golf destination spots that have hosted a top-caliber professional golf tournament.

“Hospitality and tourism thrive in Myrtle Beach and provide so much for visitors to do and see here,” Parrish said. “It’s a beautiful course and we have the fan base built up. The RBC tournament sold out every single day, and we expect this to be successful too. Hilton Head, Charleston, Myrtle Beach – they are very different coastal destinations with golf as a common thread.”

This is the second round of PGA news in the last month. Discover South Carolina agreed to a five-year marketing deal last month totaling \$12.5 million that designates it an “official tourism sponsor” of the men’s professional circuit. The \$2.5 million annual agreement will market the Palmetto State’s golf tourism industry during PGA and DP World Tour tournaments, putting the state in front of a national and international audience.