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Driving force behind SHO will be missed this year

March 31, 2009 - Steve Timms still misses the phone calls. They became one of the highlights of his day, a personal milestone of each inch of progress for the Shell Houston Open.

This spring, our little golf tournament is world class in almost every way: beautiful course, terrific field, great hospitality.

We've got 12 of the top 14 golfers in the world. We've got Greg Norman and Fred Couples, too.

Unfortunately, one of the things the SHO won't have this year is David Shindeldecker, a driving force behind the move to Redstone and the transformation of a course and a tournament.

He died last October at 59, and two days before the start of the 2009 Shell Houston Open, some of the people who knew him best gathered at the course Tuesday morning to help his memory endure.

They named the First Tee campus for him, and along the way, they laughed some and cried some.

"He would be honored," said his widow, Pam Shindeldecker. "This meant a whole lot to him."

Her husband was remembered as a man of charity and action, a man who worked behind the scenes for countless hours on youth programs.

"He worked extraordinarily hard and expected absolutely no recognition," the Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell said. "He did things for people, and they didn't know who had done it until he died."

Houston's First Tee program has impacted more than 50,000 kids and is in 91 elementary schools this year. Shindeldecker was involved with the YMCA as well.

Now about those telephone calls. Timms, president of the Houston Golf Association, would announce at, say, 10 a.m. that Phil Mickelson had committed to play in the SHO.

Sometime later that day, Shindeldecker would call to make sure it was true, to confirm that the tournament he envisioned was on its way to becoming a reality.

"He'd be proud that we're continuing to make progress," Timms said.

Shindeldecker's involvement in the SHO began about a decade ago when the Houston Golf Association began looking for alternatives to The Woodlands.

The group met with Shindeldecker, then CEO of the Redstone Companies, about making the Houstonian the tournament's headquarters hotel.

One conversation led to another . Along the way, there was a plan to transform the El Dorado into a PGA-caliber course.

“We literally did the deal to move the tournament on a handshake,” Timms said. “He grasped his own vision of what he thought we needed to do to put together a facility that was incomparable as far as tournament staging anywhere else in the country.”

Three years ago, the SHO was shifted to the week before the Masters. With that move came a course redesign as the SHO attempted to copy the short roughs and fast greens of Augusta National.

Timms said the thing he misses most is how much Shindeldecker would love hearing golfers praise the course and the tournament.

For instance, defending SHO champion Johnson Wagner.

“Honestly, I’ve never played a better conditioned golf course,” he said. “That’s why you see such a good field here because people have heard how well it prepares you for that event.”

David Shindeldecker won’t be at this week’s SHO except in spirit. Yet that spirit is strong and proud, one of the enduring strengths of a terrific golf tournament.

“He would love this day,” Redstone CEO Robert Henricksen said. “He wouldn’t admit it, but he would love it. His life wasn’t just about golf. It was about teaching kids life skills, which is more important than playing the game of golf.”

POSTED BY RICHARD JUSTICE IN THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE (richard.justice@chron.com).



Brett Coomer Chronicle

The First Tee campus at Redstone Golf Club has been named for the late David Shindeldecker, who was remembered by friends Tuesday for his charity and his dedication to the Shell Houston Open.

About The Redstone Companies

The Redstone Companies is a privately-owned company located in Houston, Texas with a focus on hospitality, real estate and private equity. Redstone Companies Hospitality brands include The Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa; Houstonian Lite; Shadow Hawk Golf Club; The Houstonian Golf & Country Club; Redstone Golf Club, and BlackHorse Golf Club. The Real estate division is Redstone Real Estate and the Private Equity group is Redstone Capital Partners.