



## PGA OF GREECE

The 24th instalment of a series that takes a look at each member PGA in turn.

# The Journey is Underway... thanks to Aegean Airlines

It would be impossible to calculate the immense service that the Aegean Airlines Pro-Am has provided for Golf in Greece during its four years in existence.

AS A RESULT OF THE INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS GENERATED BY ITS ANNUAL STAGING SINCE 2006, THE WORDS 'GOLF' AND 'GREECE' CAN NOW BE USED IN THE SAME SENTENCE BY THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE.

This has not always been the case. Before Mr. Theodore Vassilakis, Chairman of Aegean Airlines, took the initiative to stage the pro-am under The PGAs of Europe endorsement and the support of the PGA of Greece and the Hellenic Golf Federation, all efforts at growing the sport were a frustratingly slow process.

Without Aegean Airlines and other business sponsors, too widespread to list here, providing resources to stage a tournament that is always over-subscribed and capable of attracting an international field and teams from 16 different countries worldwide, those words 'Greece' and 'Golf' would still not be synonymous with each other.

The writer recalls being on holiday on the magnificent island of Rhodes in the mid 1990s

when, on passing a golf course (Afandou) en route from the airport, expressing astonishment and delight that 'they play golf on the Greek islands'. Most of us didn't know then. But we do now...

Here is a country, with its myriad of idyllic islands, boasting acres and acres of ideal potential golf territory but a sporting community that saw little beyond football and a government (presumably unaware of the vast potential income from golf tourism), seemingly reluctant to release the land to build more courses.

The Greek PGA is a mere 20 years old but during its comparatively short existence it has made strenuous efforts to establish and promote professional golf in Greece. Its head quarters are at the country's oldest golf club, Glyfada, in Athens, which dates back to 1962.

Corfu followed in 1972 and Rhodes a year later. The national PGA is a full member of The PGAs of Europe so, consequently, its members benefit greatly from such a prestigious status in terms of educational programmes, teaching and coaching seminars, development of golf academies, organisation of tournaments, golf management, cooperation with sponsors and the like..

Despite the best efforts of The PGA of Greece in consulting and supporting golf development in Greece, outlined in detail as long ago as the year 2000, in The PGAs of Europe Yearbook, progress was slow, mainly due to:

- the unattractive legal framework
- poor incentive scheme for potential investors/developers and, crucially
- the high cost of suitable land.

There were five golf courses back then with Crete and Porto Elounda (nine holes) golf clubs having been built on the island of Crete. And though the PGA were making every

attempt to introduce training programmes for juniors and for trainee professionals it was an uphill battle in coordinating with the Federation and the clubs.

Since then, however, determined efforts have resulted in the "working together" scheme of the Greek PGA and the Federation which is sure to bear fruit quite significantly in the years ahead.

When the fourth Aegean Airlines event was staged in early June at Porto Carras, on the mainland's Halkidiki Peninsula (see report page 3), after three years at Crete Golf Club in Hersonissos, yet another boost was given to the country as a seductive destination for tourism.

**Those involved, the Federation, the PGA and the relevant business community would still possibly say that it is a slow burn rather than a forest fire, but there are considerable signs that it's happening.**

## International Pro-Am Moves Again in 2010

**Greek golf's most effective promotional tool, the Aegean Airlines Pro-Am will be staged at the new location of Costa Navarino in 2010, its third 'home' in five successful years.**

Costa Navarino is developing in Messenia in the southwest Peloponnese, a region full of breathtaking landscapes.

The first phase will include two world-class waterfront sites, Navarino Dunes and Navarino Bay, which feature four 5-star resorts, two signature golf courses, and luxury facilities (spa, thalassotherapy, conference centres).

The second phase will see the expansion of Navarino Dunes and Navarino Bay along with the development of two more sites, Navarino Hills and Navarino Blue where the 5th Aegean Airlines Pro-Am will take place in June 2010!



## Keen Member of PGAs of Europe

Since The PGAs of Europe instigated the zonal forums, The PGA of Greece has attended all 'South' meetings organised so far. The picture above shows delegates at the second one at the BMW Open d'Italia in Turin, attended by Greek delegates Katia Avramidou, Vassilios Anastassiou and Gerd Schlembach.



## Junior Academies Bring Hopes for Future

**Currently, the main golf academy of 50 juniors is operated on the island of Rhodes in a training programme under the supervision of three professionals G. Diakou, K. Spanos and G. Anthoulas.**

In addition, the Hellenic Golf Federation and the Glyfada Golf Club are launching an academy training scheme for 25 juniors in Glyfada.

Crete follows suit with 30 newcomers in their local academy, thereby providing bright hopes for the future. Aegean Airlines is supporting all the above in its capacity as the main sponsor and the official carrier of The PGA of Greece dating back to 2007 and 2006 in terms of the Hellenic Golf Federation.

## PGA of Greece The Facts

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## A Whole in One... and golf clubs go free!

Since 2006 Aegean Airlines has marketed a holiday package cleverly entitled "Whole in One".

The promotional initiative for golf offers to its passengers combined services of travel, accommodation, use of golf facilities and car rental at a one favourable price.

Also for the past four years, all Aegean's passengers are exempted from excess luggage charge when carrying their golf bags!

Contact: [www.aegeanair.com](http://www.aegeanair.com)