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Issue Sponsor:



Following a virtual shutdown last spring, golf has come roaring back better than the industry could have hoped

John Rogers

The Enterprise

An ad currently running on Utah radio stations suggests that people have taken up a lot of new activities during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic — things like baking bread, doing jigsaw puzzles, doing their own auto repairs or learning a new language.

How about playing golf?

Incomplete numbers recently released by Golf Datatech, an organization that tracks such things, show that's what we've been doing. The market research firm reported a nationwide 13.9 percent increase in rounds of golf played in 2020 compared with 2019, with a large portion of the upsurge reported late in the year as the pandemic wore on. That's more than double the previous record year-over-year increase recorded since Datatech started tracking golf activity over 20 years ago. Datatech concluded that the rise was largely

due to golfers seeking recreational opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The natural social distancing afforded players in the wide-open spaces on golf courses seemed to attract those suffering from cabin fever brought on by the pandemic's lockdowns and job telecommuting.

Although final numbers aren't yet available, Utah golf courses seem to be running ahead of the curve. Datatech lumps the state in with Idaho, Wyoming and Montana in a region that collectively saw a 20.4 percent increase in the number of golfers hitting the links. The four Mountain states had an astounding 52.9 percent hike in rounds in December, due in part to mild weather in the normally colder climes.

"While the global pandemic wreaked havoc on many segments of our economy, the golf industry experienced a significant boost in rounds played and equipment sales," John Krzynowek, a partner at Golf Datatech, said in a release announcing the surge in rounds played. "On

the equipment side, sales increased by low single digits in both 2018 and 2019, but the double-digit gains in 2020 can only be attributed to the pandemic and golf being a respite for so many."

The yearlong gains happened despite golf being shut down in many states as the pandemic took hold of the nation in March and April. Rounds played in March fell 8.5 percent versus the same period of 2019 and rounds in April were down 42.2 percent, based on reports by Golf Datatech and the National Golf Foundation.

Then came the surge, as golf was recognized as a relatively safe escape during the pandemic. Rounds played were up 6.2 percent in May versus May of 2019, followed by gains of 13.9 percent in June, 19.7 percent in July, 20.6 percent in August, 25.5 percent in September,

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GOLF COURSES—SOUTHERN UTAH AREA

Ranked by Slope



	Course Name Address	Phone Web	Slope (Back Tees)	Rating (Back Tees)	Par (Back Tees)	Tournaments Hosted 2020	Greens Fees per 18 Holes	Private or Public	Total Yardage from Tips	Dress Code?	Course Record	Amenities	Head Pro
1	Green Spring Golf Course 588 N. Green Spring Drive Washington, UT 84780	435-673-7888 greenspringgolf course.com	138	73.5	72	2	\$35-67	Public	6,859	N	62	Located within 40 minutes of Zion National Park, driving range, snack bar	Kevin Soderquist, Course Manager
2	Sand Hollow Championship 5625 W. Clubhouse Drive Hurricane, UT 84737	435-656-4653 sandhollowresorts .com	137	73.7	72	3	\$155	Public	7,315	Y	63	Practice bunker complex, clubhouse, wee course	Kris Burlingame
3	Coral Canyon Golf Course 1925 N. Canyon Greens Drive Washington, UT 84780	435-688-1700 coralcanyonogolf .com	136	74.2	72	4	\$60-100	Public	7,200	Y	61	Driving range, putting green, chipping green, lessons, pro shop, restaurant, full bar	Marco Leoni
4	The Hideout Golf Club 648 S. Hideout Way Monticello, UT 84535	435-226-1292 hideoutgolf.com	134	71.1	72	*	\$46	Public	6,654	N	67	Driving range, pro shop, snack shop	Tyler Ivins
5	Moab Golf Club 2705 E. Bench Road Moab, UT 84532	435-259-6488 moabgolfcourse. com	132	72.4	72	*	\$60	Public	6,875	N	61	Pro shop, practice facility, lessons, snack bar/grill	Rob Jones
6	Sunbrook Golf Club 2366 W. Sunbrook Drive St. George, UT 84770	435-627-4400 sgcity.org	131	73	72	30	\$44-74	Public	6,800	Y	64	Practice facilities, pro shop, grill	Reed McArthur
7	Entrada at Snow Canyon Country Club 2537 W. Entrada Trail St. George, UT 84770	435-986-2200 golfentrada.com	127	73.5	71	1	\$175	Private	7,062	Y	63	Golf shop, driving range, fitness center, restaurant, locker room, pickleball	Andrew Hopkins-Payne
8	Bloomington Country Club 3174 Bloomington Drive East St. George, UT 84790	435-673-2029 bloomington countryclub.com	126	71.3	72	20	\$90	Private	6,985	Y	62	Range, restaurant, lounge, pool, tennis courts	Mark Boggs
8	St. George Golf Club 2190 S. 1400 E. St. George, UT 84770	435-627-4404 stgeorgegolfclub. com	126	73.1	73	2	\$20-33	Public	7,217	Y	62	Full-service golf shop, practice green, snack bar, cart rental, club rental	James Hood
8	SunRiver Golf Club 4210 Bluegrass Way St. George, UT 84790	435-986-0001 sunrivergolf.com	126	72.6	71	6	\$69	Public	7,020	Y	59	Grass tees, driving range, chipping green, practice sand facility, putting course, restaurant	Larry Ricketts
11	Sky Mountain Golf Course 1030 N. 2600 W. Hurricane, UT 84737	435-635-7888 skymountaingolf .com	125	70.4	72	20	\$58	Public	6,392	N	63	18 holes, range, practice green, grill	Kent Abegglen
12	Palisade Golf Course 2200 E. Palisade Road Sterling, UT 84665	435-835-4653 golfpalisade.com	123	69.7	72	*	\$28	Public	6,333	Y	62	Full-service golf shop, driving range, restaurant	Jordan Van Orman
13	Dixie Red Hills Golf Course 645 W. 1250 N. St. George, UT 84770	435-627-4444 sgcity.org	119	65.9	34	1	\$22 for 9	Public	2,725	Y	*	Snack bar, driving range	Allen Orchard
14	Southgate Golf Course 1975 S. Tonaquint Drive St. George, UT 84770	435-627-4440 sgcity.org	118	69.1	70	20	\$51	Public	6,100	Y	*	Driving range, grill	Eron Beming

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SKY MOUNTAIN
Golf Course

TIP FROM THE PRO

That basket is good for more than just carrying balls to the range

A great drill you can practice at the driving range involves using a training aid that comes with your bucket of balls — the basket itself!

Next time you are practicing at the driving range, take the empty basket and place it against the top of your chest — open side against chest (see picture). Take your normal grip and then make half-swings, keeping the basket connected to your chest. The basket will help you do two things: 1. It will widen the arc of your swing on both sides of the ball, and 2. It will prevent you from throwing your hands at the ball.

The connection of the basket against your chest and the inability of your hands to overwork will force you to rotate your body and pivot nicely into your left side. I like to warm up with about 20 swings of every large bucket with this drill. The key is to not over-swing. This is not a full swing drill — just past halfway on the backswing to just past halfway on the follow-through is all you need.

Some courses (think Golf in the Round) have really large baskets. These won't work. You'll need a standard range basket.

Paul Phillips is the tournament director at Stonebridge Golf Club in Salt Lake City.



GOLF COMEBACK *from page 15*

32.2 percent in October and 57.5 percent in November. The numbers for December were just released, with rounds played for the month up 37 percent over December of 2019, which no doubt was helped by good weather in winter golf settings such as Florida, Arizona and California.

“Golf Datatech started collecting and projecting monthly rounds-played data in January 1998,” Krzynowek said. “We’ve never seen an annual increase remotely close to this, as the previous record increase occurred in 2012, a year when we had nearly perfect weather across much of the United States and rounds played grew by 5.7 percent.”

Golf Datatech said it’s important to note that gains aren’t spread evenly across the industry. Some resorts that rely on air travel have been hit particularly hard in the wake of the pandemic as golfers choose to drive to more local and regional destinations. And the percentage increases in rounds played don’t necessarily mean

equal increase in revenue, as many clubs have lost income tied to food and beverages as well as events such as weddings.

On the retail side, as well, gains were not even across categories. While revenue for clubs, balls and other hard goods soared, with many equipment makers struggling to fill demand as inventories dwindled, some soft goods categories lagged in sales. For example, Golf Datatech reported that sales of apparel dropped 14.2 percent in 2020 versus 2019. Meanwhile, online sales of apparel rose, and despite the overall annual drop, the last two months of 2020 saw an 11 percent increase in apparel sales versus the same period in 2019.

“Given the state of the golf economy in late spring, anything in positive territory had to be considered a big win,” Krzynowek said, “and December data continues to impress and suggest the business may still have room to run in early 2021.”

And bodies on the course is not the only place golf grew in 2020. Last year also saw a big boost in golf viewing — on television, that is — because virtually all professional tour-

naments were played without galleries once the PGA Tour resumed play with the Charles Schwab Challenge in late June. Tournaments were suspended after the first day of The Players Championship on March 12.

In August, ESPN announced that the ratings for the 2020 PGA Championship were the best they had been in five years. The first round of the tournament averaged 1,246,000 viewers, making it the event’s most-viewed first-round telecast since 2015, and the second-best opening round in the past 10 years. The second day of broadcast, viewership rose another 42 percent.

ESPN broadcast its weekly football show “College Gameday” from the Masters for the first time ever and had a 31 percent increase in viewership over all of its other shows in 2020, according to ESPN’s Bill Hofmeier.

In May, prior to the resumption of PGA tour play, Turner Sports broadcast “The Match II” to benefit COVID-19 relief efforts. Golf legends Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson teamed up with NFL greats Peyton Manning and Tom Brady at Shadow Creek Golf Course in Las Vegas. (The

original “The Match,” between Woods and Mickelson, was held in 2018.) For many people, it was the first live sports event they had seen in months, and it showed. The event attracted a TV audience of an average 5.8 million, making it the most-viewed golf event ever.

“It’s amazing to see the growth the sport has experienced — even in the face of a global pandemic,” Adidas Golf President Jeff Lienhart said in an article from the National Golf Foundation. “The fact that people can play safely, get outdoors, social distance, etc., is certainly positive.”





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Salt Lake City, UT 84119
801-974-2403

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Salt Lake City, UT 84109
801-582-3812

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Salt Lake City, UT 84106
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GOLF COURSES—NORTHERN UTAH

Ranked by Slope



	Course Name Address	Phone Web	Slope (Back Tees)	Rating (Back Tees)	Par (Back Tees)	Tournaments Hosted 2020	Greens Fees per 18 Holes	Private or Public	Total Yardage from Tips	Dress Code?	Course Record	Amenities	Head Pro
1	Red Ledges Golf Course 205 Red Ledges Blvd. Heber City, UT 84032	435-657-4054 redledges.com	151	76.5	72	8	\$90 with member	Private	7,569	Y	65	Full dining, driving range, putting green, chipping green, two pools, tennis	Jon Paupore
2	Thanksgiving Point Golf Club 3300 W. Clubhouse Drive Lehi, UT 84043	801-768-7401 thanksgiving pointgolf.com	145	77.6	72	136	\$89	Public	7,716	Y	62	Bistro Grill, meeting space, practice facility	Tele Wightman
3	Soldier Hollow Golf Course Silver 1370 W. Soldier Hollow Lane Midway, UT 84049	435-654-7442 soldierhollowgolf. com	142	74.2	72	*	\$18-45	Public	7,355	N	62	Large practice area, pro shop, lessons, full-service restaurant	Chris Newson
4	Stonebridge Golf Club 4415 Links Drive West Valley City, UT 84120	801-957-9000 golfstonebridge utah.com	139	74.2	72	4	\$33	Public	7,134	Y	64	Driving range, banquet room	Clark Garso
5	Park Meadows Country Club 2000 Meadows Drive Park City, UT 84060	435-649-2460 parkmeadowsc. com	138	74.8	72	0	\$110	Private	7,422	Y	62	Golf practice facility, clubhouse, restaurant, locker room, pool, fitness, pickleball	Eric Johnson
6	Homestead Resort & Golf Club 700 N. Homestead Drive Midway, UT 84049	435-654-5588 playhomesteadgc. com	137	73.5	72	7	\$56	Public	7,095	N	62	Practice facilities, restaurants, lodging rooms, meeting space, Crater Hot Springs, swimming pools	Chris Richards
6	Willow Creek Country Club 8505 S. Willow Creek Drive Sandy, UT 84093	801-942-1954 willowcreekcc.com	137	73.3	72	2	\$105 with member	Private	7,110	Y	63	Driving range, three practice greens & short-range game, banquets, pool complex	Eric Nielsen
8	Riverside Country Club 2701 N. University Ave. Provo, UT 84604	801-373-8262 riverside countryclub.org	136	73.1	72	23	\$95 with member	Private	7,142	Y	62	Golf, tennis, pool, athletic club, dining	Chris Moody
8	Soldier Hollow Golf Course Gold 1370 W. Soldier Hollow Lane Midway, UT 84049	435-654-7442 soldierhollow golf.com	136	75	72	*	\$18-50	Public	7,719	N	62	Large practice area, pro shop, lessons, full-service restaurant	Chris Newson
10	Canyons Golf 4000 Canyons Resort Drive Park City, UT 84098	435-615-4728 canyons golfcourse.com	135	68.4	70	50	\$105	Public	6,035	Y	66	Restaurants, spa, lodging	Justin Johnson PGA
11	Jeremy Ranch 8770 N. Jeremy Road Park City, UT 84098	435-649-2700 thejeremy.com	134	73.7	72	11	\$85 with member	Private	7,129	Y	61	Full-service clubhouse, dining facilities, fitness facility, locker rooms, Nordic Track	Jake Hanley
12	South Mountain Golf Course 1247 E. Mike Weir Drive Draper, UT 84020	385-468-1480 slco.org/golf/ southmountain	133	73.8	72	20	\$48-51	Public	6,645	N	65	Restaurant, putting greens, practice facility, range	Brian Schramm
12	The Ranches Golf Course 4128 E. Clubhouse Lane Eagle Mountain, UT 84005	801-789-8100 theranches golfclub.com	133	73.1	72	8	\$46	Public	7,035	N	62	Practice facility, driving range, chipping & putting green, full- service grill & beverage cart	Robert Hammer
12	Victory Ranch Golf Course 7865 Victory Ranch Road Kamas, UT 84036	435-785-5030 victoryranch utah.com	133	74.9	72	*	*	Semi- Private	7,599	*	*	Restaurant, double-sided driving range, short-game area, putting green	Chris Brandenburg
15	River Oaks Golf Course 9300 S. Riverside Drive Sandy, UT 84070	801-568-4653 sandy.utah. gov/golf	132	70.4	70	30	\$36-52	Public	6,287	N	62	Cafe, catering/banquets, driving range, conference room, A/V	Matt High
16	Eagle Mountain Golf Course 960 E. 700 S. Brigham City, UT 84302	435-723-3212 eaglemountain gc.com	131	71.7	71	10	\$32-46	Public	6,770	Y	62	Full driving range, two practice greens, full-service snack bar	Chris Marx
17	Riverbend Golf Course 12800 S. 1040 W. Riverton, UT 84065	385-468-1460 slco.org/golf/ riverbend	130	71.7	71	0	\$34-36	Public	6,372	N	64	Pro shop, practice facilities, restaurant, lessons available	Tim Fernau
18	Bountiful Ridge Golf Club 2430 S. Bountiful Blvd. Bountiful, UT 84010	801-298-6040 bountifulridge golf.com	129	70.6	71	5	\$32+	Public	6,595	Y	59	Cart rental, grass range, clubhouse	Kent J. McComb
18	Mt. Ogden, Golf Course 1787 Constitution Way Ogden, UT 84403	801-629-0699 ogdencity.com	129	70.4	71	12	\$30-32	Public	6,432	N	*	Putting green, pitching/chipping area	Todd Brenkman

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