



Leadership in sustainable sport and events

2018 U.S. Kids Golf

Venice Open



GEO Certified® Report

April 2019



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1. Introduction

The GEO Foundation is delighted to recognize the 2018 U.S. Kids Golf Venice Open as the first GEO Certified® Tournament in Europe, and the first smaller scale, amateur tournament globally.

A dedicated team effort has produced many practical and valuable social and environmental results, and the effort should be particularly applauded for engaging young people and families on such important issues.

The U.S. Kids Golf Venice Open has:

1. Met all the required certification criteria for sustainable golf tournaments
2. Successfully completed the official third-party verification process
3. Successfully passed the final GEO Certified® evaluation.

GEO agreed with the conclusions of the official verification report, that, having achieved 48 out of a possible 49 credits sought; achieved all mandatory credits; and with specific Continual Improvement Points set for the future, the U.S. Kids Golf Venice Open should be awarded GEO Certified® Tournament status for the 2018 event.

The 2018 U.S. Kids Golf Venice Open can therefore claim a position as a credible leader in advancing sustainability in and through golf - making important contributions in protecting nature, conserving resources and strengthening communities.

This official GEO Certified® Tournament Report summarizes the commitments made; actions undertaken, results generated and continual improvement points accepted for future editions of the tournament.

We congratulate all involved.

Jonathan Smith
Executive Director
GEO Foundation



2. Tournament approach to sustainability

The 2018 U.S. Kids Golf Venice Open was held on August 16 - 18, 2018 at Golf della Montecchia, Golf Frassanelle and Terme di Galzignano Golf Resort, in North-eastern Italy.

The event brings together over 800 participating children, as well as their families and guardians, for a week-long festival of golf, culture, fun and learning.

The event owners, partners and organizers have been eager to bring the themes of environmental stewardship, inclusion, and social responsibility into the heart of the tournament.

The sustainability programme is led by the highest level of commitment of the organizers, and supported by the management of the host clubs, the hotels and numerous other stakeholders and suppliers.

Coordination and delivery are overseen by sustainable golf expert, Stefano Boni - who liaised closely with organizers, venues, hotels, transport companies, caterers, the GEO Foundation, verifier and also the children and their families.

Together the team has delivered a significant body of work across the sustainability categories set out in the GEO Certified® Tournament Sustainability Criteria.

1. Planning
2. Venue operations and site protection
3. Procurement
4. Resource management
5. Access and equity
6. Communications, outreach and legacies

“We made a commitment to bring sustainability into our flagship events, including the Venice Open and we are delighted to see this connecting with the players and their families. We are excited about how we can help further pioneer sustainability as part of our development of children’s golf around the world”.

Dan Van Horn

CEO of the U.S. Kids Golf Foundation

“We are very proud to host this tournament, and it is fundamental for us to send the young players and families the message of the importance of respecting the environment”.

Paolo Casati

President of Golf della Montecchia

3. Verification and certification

The official tournament audit (verification) was carried out by the independent verification body PCSG, accredited by GEO for golf tournament verification in Europe.

The auditor was Susie Tomson, an experienced professional in the field of sustainability, sport and golf.

As a smaller-scale tournament (by comparison to professional events on the main Tours) the U.S. Kids Golf Venice Open was eligible for a *remote verification process*, with the normal certification points system and weighting being refined to respond to the lower levels of impact, risk and capacity of a smaller tournament. (See Appendix 1)

Verification involved the following activities, using the International Sustainable Tournament Standard as the guide to ensure comprehensive and consistent evaluation of performance.

- Review of the plans and activities undertaken during the event via an interview and electronic communications with Stefano Boni, Italian Golf Federation (sboni@federgolf.it)
- Remote, event-time verification of documents showing policies in practice and results
- Post-event evaluation of 2018 tournament data and results.

PCSG then submitted a detailed verification report for evaluation by GEO Certification Ltd, a subsidiary of GEO Foundation.

About the PCSG

PCSG was the accredited third-party evaluator for the tournament against the GEO Certified® Tournaments Standard. PCSG personnel are extremely experienced in driving sustainability in sport, across varying sizes and types of events; from the London Olympics 2012 to Land Rover BAR America's Cup. Find out more at: <https://pcsg.co.uk/tag/sport>

GEO certification review

GEO undertook a full review of all tournament and verification materials, and evidence developed by the tournament and PCSG, ensuring:

- **Comprehensiveness** - that activities undertaken touched on all elements of the Tournament Criteria
- **Consistency** - that the verification approach was balanced, well-weighted and with a consistent depth of evaluation across each theme
- **Accuracy** - matching the verification report with evidence submitted by the tournament to ensure statements and claims were accurate
- **Rigour** - as a remote verification for a smaller scale tournament, that the analysis and scoring were sufficiently rigorous.

“The event is a great showcase of what can be done at and through golf tournaments - on all levels and at all scales.

We were particularly impressed by the efforts to engage with schools, children and their families; to engage with caterers to provide local produce; identifying charities to support; and carbon offset projects to participate in.”

Susie Tomson

U.S. Kids Golf Venice Open 2018

Official Verifier



4. Summary of practices, highlights and outcomes

The event delivered a wide range of notable environmental and social achievements, which are summarized here as they relate to four key action areas for staging the tournament:

- 4.1 Venue management and site protection
- 4.2 Procurement and resource management
- 4.3 Access and equity
- 4.4 Communications, outreach and legacy



4.1 Venue operations

The U.S. Kids Golf Venice Open is unique in that it is played over three different golf facilities. The tournament organizers were praised for selecting golf courses and hotels with clear sustainability policies, activities and high-performance levels.

Highlights

Golf della Montecchia has held the GEO Certified® international label for sustainable club and course management for over six years.

Montecchia has also been awarded the 'Impegnati nel Verde' award from the Italian Golf Federation in recognition of its water-saving practices.

The Montecchia 'Green Course' is the first in Italy to be managed with the Biogolf protocol, avoiding the use of synthetic chemicals.



Frassanelle is participating in the OnCourse® sustainable golf programme, and actively working towards GEO Certified®.

Frassanelle has twice been awarded Impegnati nel Verde - for its landscape management and also for its cultural heritage conservation.

Galzignano is also following the OnCourse® programme for sustainability in golf facility management, and already delivers many of the best practices for conserving nature; saving water, energy and materials; and actively supporting the community.



The official hotels (JSH Group) have a clear sustainability policy, working across the spectrum of potential sustainability impacts in operations and management.

4.2 Procurement and resource management

The U.S. Kids Golf Venice Open is aware of the potential negative impacts that can arise through the range of activities undertaken to stage the event.

A range of policies and action plans are in place to ensure the environmental footprint of the event is as low as possible, and also to ensure as many social and ethical issues are addressed in the supply chain.

Materials, recycling and waste minimization

- Recovery of all recyclable materials and encourage players to reduce the use of plastic bottles thanks to the presence of water-filling stations, that was highlighted with information signs
- Installation of separate bins along Frassanelle's golf course, whereas Montecchia had already recycling bins for a few years. Additional bins were installed specifically for the event. All paper, glass, plastic and organic materials were collected and sent to recycling. The amounts were: Bottle-caps 7.9 Kg; Plastic 56 Kg; Glass 170 Kg; Paper and cardboards 36 Kg; Organic 216 Kg
- A specific bin was introduced for the collection of bottle caps. Bottle cap collection had the double purpose to recover plastic and to support the charity 'Team for Children'
- 70 percent of banners from the 2017 edition were re-used for the 2018 edition; all venues and hotels are using only non-disposable cutlery, with the exception of Montecchia and Frassanelle where napkins made with recyclable paper are used.

Water conservation

- A water conservation plan has been adopted by PlayGolf 54 not only for the event but for day-to-day management, and in recent years significant measures have been taken to reduce the all-round water consumption
- Montecchia and Frassanelle have switched to bermudagrass, reducing the amount of water used for irrigation by between 50 and 70%. Other measures for saving water include decompaction techniques and moisture sensors on putting greens
- Montecchia is ready to install an acidifier into the irrigation plant. A 15-30% decrease in the total amount of water usage (by bibliography) is foreseen
- Clubhouse water taps are controlled by photocells and WC and urinals are low-flow
- During the tournament, water refill stations were provided, reducing the demand for bottled water.

Energy, carbon and transportation

- Shuttle buses were provided by the event organizers, connecting the golf venues with the official hotels and the airport. This helped to save up to 70% of CO2 per customer and during the tournament, the shuttle bus service was able to carry 229 people. The use of group transportation was promoted through specific signs, which also highlighted the environmental benefits. Timetables and adverts were displayed at hotels, venues and on the website
- The venues are provided with a safe cycle-park, and during the event, 40 bicycles were provided to US Kids families by the JSH Group hotels
- The official hotels provided also the opportunity to charge electric cars with 3 charging points
- The total carbon from electricity and travel is estimated at 119 tonnes
- 20 trees will be planted on Frassanelle and Montecchia courses in order to partially mitigate the Carbon Footprint during the Venice Open. A total of 17% of the carbon will be offset
- The golf course of Galzignano will switch to warm-season grasses, and this measure will have a significant impact in terms of CO2 savings. The link between the use of warm-season grasses and CO2 saving has been demonstrated through a study conducted at Golf della Montecchia with the collaboration of Bologna University.

Catering

- F&B preference is given to local, organic and seasonal food. This policy is also followed for marketing reasons, in order to create a better 'sense of place' and experience among customers
- Partnership with a new catering provider for the opening ceremony, which was selected also for its environmental certification
- Nautilus Fish and Wine have a comprehensive sustainability policy including a number of locally based charitable activities. They also carry out a number of environmental activities including recovery of oils for biodiesel, 50km sourcing target, minimize waste and implementing energy efficiency measures
- Wine, meat, milk and dairy product, and most of the vegetables are produced in local farmlands.

4.3 Access and equity

Accessibility, inclusion and camaraderie lie at the heart of the principles of the U.S. Kids Golf Foundation, and this ethos is carried through all aspects of the Venice Open.

- All entry to the event is provided free
- Work, membership policy and access to the event are free from discrimination across age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, and ethnic background
- The tournament has been an opportunity to involve the local schools and provide students with the opportunity for work experience
- Every venue has a defibrillator and had an ambulance with a doctor for the duration of the event. Both Montecchia and Frassanelle have a first aid room. Galzignano's first aid room is available at the official hotel, adjoining the course.
- All venues and the official hotels have an evacuation plan and safety signs have been installed along the course
- The tournament organizers provided people with disabilities the possibility to follow the tournament on a golf cart together with a volunteer
- All car parking (venues and official hotels) are provided with parking lots for people with disabilities.



4.4 Communications, outreach and legacy

The Venice Open is pioneering sustainability in and through golf tournaments, and particularly in smaller scale, non-professional events. The voluntary leadership being displayed by all partners is being actively communicated and with concerted efforts to build partnerships and leave lasting legacies, in the local area, nationally and also internationally across the sport of golf.

Communications

- Specific press releases have been delivered through the following channels: Golf Business News, Italian Golf Federation's website, Gazzettino Newspaper. On-site signs were disseminated at all three venues using the GEO OnCourse® Tournaments logo. The commitments were also displayed on specific paper sheets. Communication on sustainability commitments was spread through official social media and during the official presentations. During the tournaments, some LED screens were used to highlight the sustainability and ecology features of the venues
- Health was promoted through the catering with healthy menus; through the Montecchia Performances Center, that offered wellness programmes, physiotherapy treatments and golf performance lessons at a special price for the event (50% less). The official hotels for the event provided the option to take thermal baths
- An article (in Italian) about the post-tournament sustainability results was prepared for Professione Golf Club, a quarterly magazine addressed to club & course managers which was printed at the end of October 2018
- Two different green questionnaires were designed in order to raise the awareness of the sustainability efforts through players and families and to know their opinions on specific environmental topics. The first was filled out at registration, the second after the conclusion of each round of golf.

Outreach

- All stakeholders, including local authorities, were informed about the sustainability plan for the event, including its economic, social and environmental goals
- U.S. Kids Golf Italy has been directly involved and has participated in the initiative, including investment in the activities
- Volunteers from the local school were in charge of translating the green questionnaire, promoting and overseeing its completion, analysis and tracking the results
- Caddie Master and Greenstaff were in charge of the waste management
- A specific social media manager was in charge of the sustainability communications
- Training for the school volunteers was made at a pre-tournament meeting, whilst the other staff were prepared in the build-up months
- Montecchia has started a collaboration with Padova University regarding the maintenance of the service roads with the use of a biological weed control
- The caterers recorded their preference to use local suppliers
- PlayGolf 54 has a well-established business community based on local partnership. i.e. 14 of 16 sponsors/partners of the Venice Open were local
- Family and participants received free entry passes for Esapolis, the largest living insect museum in Europe. Local tours were advertised at all the venues and the official hotels.

Legacies

- U.S. Kids Golf is aiming to include this kind of work in other tournaments on its circuit
- A local charity has been supported - "Team for Children" provides psychological and financial support to the families of children affected by blood cancer. €750 was raised during the event.

5. Continual Improvement

The concepts of continual improvement and innovation are important aspects of GEO Certified® Tournaments and reflect a commitment from organizers to continue to extend on a year by year basis. A number of Continual Improvement Points have been identified for the Venice Open and agreed with the organizers.

Planning & communications

- It would be advisable to more formally document the Sustainability Policy and Plan. This would enable clarity of the programme objectives and wider participation in the programme. Without any documented procedures it is harder to ensure people are following the overall commitment. These can and should remain clear and simple and should not be overly complicated. It is recognized that because the tournament is relatively small with limited additional infrastructure and third-party suppliers, it is relatively easy to communicate the points. However, a simple poster of the commitment and that year's targets would be good
- It would be good to see how the results of the questionnaire will influence the 2019 planning. This is where a documented plan would come in useful.

Site protection

- As above, it is recommended that a target and timeline is identified for Golf Frassanelle and Terme di Galzignano Golf to achieve OnCourse GEO Certified®

Procurement

- Suggest a simple procurement code that sets out ambition around minimizing waste from materials and packaging and healthy, local, seasonal and eco-certified foods as part of the Sustainability Plan. This would provide direction and clarity to those making procurement decisions. It will also enable the event to identify the area of either high sustainability risk and/or spend
- A resource and materials plan would be useful to track year-on-year materials consumed and be able to target improvements annually.

Resource management

- As above, a resource plan would help track and manage waste more effectively. Ensure the results captured this year and used to minimize waste in subsequent years
- Complete the carbon footprint with electricity and gas - the data is available and relatively easy to achieve. Again, a simple tracker of the key performance areas/targets would be useful for the event to continually measure progress year-on-year
- Extend the carbon target and a roadmap for the event to become carbon neutral/zero carbon event
- Strive to secure a 100% renewable energy provider.

Access and equity

- Evidence and promotion of these aspects in the event literature would be good to see. This may encourage people with disabilities to attend who may not have realized the event was accessible.

Communications, outreach and legacy

- Prepare and disseminate a post-event report that highlights the positive social, economic and environmental impacts from the event and that can help track progress annually
- Follow up with the schools to track learning and experience outcomes and plan further innovative projects and points of engagement.

6. About GEO Foundation

GEO is an international not-for-profit organization entirely dedicated to advancing sustainability in and through golf, collaborating with the golf industry worldwide to:

- **Strengthen the social and environmental contribution of golf**
- **Help the sport credibly communicate its commitment and value**
- **Champion sustainability in front of a large audience.**

GEO manages and assures the OnCourse® programme for facility and course management, new golf development and tournaments - currently used in 100 countries worldwide.

In addition to the delivery of programmes and solutions, GEO's wider activities include research and innovation; communications and reporting and support for strategy and policy.

GEO also administers GEO Certified®, the international mark of credible and comprehensive sustainability in golf, and part of an elite group of well-known ecolabels which include Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, and Forest Stewardship Council. After completing OnCourse®, a golf facility, development or tournament can apply for this international distinction.

Appendix

Application of International Certification criteria to a smaller, amateur golf tournament

The following principles are applied when evaluating smaller golf events against the international certification criteria (standard). They are designed to ensure that credibility is retained, while also making the programme accessible.

OnCourse® Tournaments and GEO Certified® Tournaments are designed to be scalable to all types of golf tournament, from the largest professional events to the smallest amateur events. This is an important part of the GEO Foundation mission to advance sustainability in and through golf around the world.

Capacity

We understand that smaller events have considerably less capacity to plan, record, report and communicate, so whilst the same sustainability principles, action areas and best practices apply to all types and sizes of tournaments, in smaller tournaments we make allowances for the volumes of documented evidence.

Practical action and real outcomes

We prefer that available resources are allocated to identifying and successfully implementing practical actions to generate real social and environmental outcomes, rather than being allocated to documenting plans, records and reports.

That said there are key plans, records and reports that are beneficial at all levels of event operation, and the system is designed to ensure that these are being delivered at the certified event, or in the first year of Continual Improvement Points (CIPs).

Remote verification

A decision can be made to allow a remote verification. This is based on an assessment of event scale, context and risk. Risk is evaluated on the following criteria:

- Event and venue locations
- Climatic and environmental factors
- Levels of expertise in the event staging team
- Experience of the available verifier in golf events.



A valued leader in advancing sustainability in and through golf

Fostering nature
Conserving resources
Building healthy, sustainable communities



GEO Certified[®]
TOURNAMENT



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