

# TAILGATING



By Darren Johnson

## at **The Turn?**

**W**hen you think of tailgating the image of a smoking grill with exuberant fans in team colors in a parking lot outside a stadium or racetrack is what comes to mind. Well not at this tailgate party;

*imagine a full blown tailgate set-up at an upscale Florida country club on the #10 tee-box with screaming blenders, thumping dance music and smoking hot refreshment attendants.*



More on that after this TV timeout: Allow me to introduce myself to you the readers of this fine publication that is devoted to showcasing a good time. I experienced my first tailgate party in the 1960's as a mere child while attending the unlimited hydroplane boat races throughout the U.S. as my dad was a crew chief on a race boat. Not even knowing there was a word "tailgating" yet, I figured out many years later that was what those 100,000 people gathered on and around the lakes and rivers were doing for those three days of boat racing. In the 1980's I really started to fully embrace tailgating as a sport going to boat races, car races, The Reno Air Races, and Miami Dolphins football games. The 90's came along with my marriage into a fanatical Florida Gators family and now tailgating is as important as changing the peanut oil in my turkey fryer. As a 27 year producer of live corporate events my tailgating hobby has now evolved into a tailgating business called Tailgateville.com. That, my friends, is how I got invited to that crazy fund raising golf tournament.

Now back to the golf tournament. First I must tell you, this is no ordinary charity golf outing, it is one of the most recognized charities in sports "The Buoniconti Fund". In 1985 Barth A. Green, MD and NFL Hall of Fame linebacker Nick Buoniconti helped found The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis after Nick's son, Marc, sustained a spinal cord injury during a college football game. Today, the Miami Project is the world's largest, most comprehensive spinal cord injury research center, housed in the Lois Pope LIFE Center, a Center of Excellence at the University Of Miami Miller School Of Medicine. The Miami Project's international team of more than 200 scientists and clinicians take innovative approaches to the challenge of spinal cord injury. Committed to finding a cure for paralysis resulting from spinal cord injury and to seeing millions worldwide walk again, the Buoniconti family established The Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis in 1992, a non-profit organization devoted to assisting The Miami Project achieve its national and international goals.

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Every year in the spring my friend Nick Buoniconti Jr. hosts the annual B-Fund golf tournament in Orlando to help promote awareness of the Fund and raise money. This year 110 golfers contributed to another successful and crazy event. This event, besides being for a great cause is most definitely about having a great time. One particular hole-sponsor had taken the dreaded #10 "wait at the turn" to "I can't wait to get to the turn party". The Tailgateville.com crew set-up the tailgate trailer adjacent to the #10 tee box where golfers anxiously congregated to enjoy the festivities abound. There were blender drinks, margaritas, shots with the shot sticks, cold beer, mucho hottie bartenders and hostesses, meringue dancing, bootie shakin dancin, beer pong, cigar smoking and "DJ the DJ" (Me) laying down the tunes. We even had a professional golf cart driving exhibition as we witnessed some of our more spirited golfers attempt a 90 degree turn on the down hill slope the wrong way. The result was: "Kids Don't try this on your dad's golf cart".



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The really crazy thing was, just random people started showing up from the clubhouse who weren't even part of the tournament. They just wanted to dance and party. At any one time at our tailgate party there would be 12 to 16 golfers hanging out and probably 20 people just there partying. Needless to say when they did finally decide to go to the #10 tee box and try to hit their drive, it was anything but quiet. Tiger would not have been happy.



We did provide quite a home crowd support group for the golfers teeing off after rehydrating at our refreshment stand. Most drives on this par 5 hole were pretty underwhelming, not sure if it was the refreshment consumption, the music and dancing or the totally obnoxious tailgating gallery cheering on each hitter. As the day wore on and the quite colorfully attired golfers came through, it appeared that everyone who was there came to attend a tailgate party and a golf tournament broke out.



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When the last group rolled through and the checkered flag was waved, the number #10 tee looked like a good time was had by all. When we were packing up the party trailer some of the golf course maintenance guys came by and said "Man we've seen a lot of crazy golf stuff at a hole here, but we've never seen one like this!" I took that as a compliment as the maintenance guys and myself looked around at the remnants of the party, a flip flop, shirt, tennis shoes, a feathered boa, a visor and needless to say a lot of aluminum. I sure hope Nick invites me next year!



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