

# NEWS

## For Immediate Release

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### **AS BUICK HELPS GM CELEBRATE ITS CENTENNIAL, IT ALSO MARKS 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST BUICK OPEN**

GRAND BLANC, Mich. – Buick, the automaker that served as the foundation when General Motors was created in 1908, is celebrating more than GM's centennial this year. Buick Motor Division is also commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Buick Open golf tournament.

When Buick executives, then headquartered in nearby Flint, decided to sponsor a professional golf tournament here in 1958, one reason was to help GM, Buick's corporate parent, celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. Today, the PGA Tour credits Buick as its first corporate sponsor – and Buick officials say they believe the Buick Open was one of the first events in any sport to be named for a corporate sponsor.

"It's a great event for the fans, as demonstrated by the big galleries we attract every year-crowds that certainly benefit the economy of southeast Michigan," said Larry Peck, manager of golf marketing for Buick. "It's a great event for the fans, as demonstrated by the big galleries we attract every year – crowds that certainly benefit the economy of southeast Michigan. The players love the course and the total event, as you can tell by the fact many of the biggest stars consistently return. The tournament generates millions of dollars for charities – and it's a perfect sport for marketing our cars."

From the beginning, the Buick Open was seen as a fitting event to showcase Buick. The upscale and family-oriented image of golf was exactly in line with the image of the Buick automobile – a premium car for the entire family. The tournament quickly became a major annual tourist generator in southeast Michigan with its combination of star players and low ticket prices.

Crowd favorites in the early years included Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, Sam Snead and twice-winner Tony Lema. In recent years, the huge popularity of Tiger Woods has been credited with significantly boosting attendance. In 2006, when Woods won the Buick Open for the second time, it was his 50<sup>th</sup> PGA Tour victory.

The Buick Open is annually played at Warwick Hills Golf & Country Club in Grand Blanc Township south of Flint, the city where Buick was headquartered between 1903 and 1998. (Its marketing offices were then moved to Detroit's Renaissance Center, along with those of other GM vehicle divisions.) When the inaugural Buick Open was played at Warwick Hills in 1958, the course, which had opened only the year before, was the longest on the PGA Tour at 7,280 yards.

The tournament drew huge crowds in the early years with low admission prices and free parking. Times have changed but crowds still usually surpass an estimated 100,000 for the tournament, especially in years when Woods is entered.

The purses have grown dramatically as well. The first tournament, held June 19-23, 1958, offered a purse of \$52,000 – unusually rich for the times – and drew 24 of the Tour's top 25 money winners. Arnold Palmer's record 67 was rained out and Billy Casper won, receiving \$9,000 – more than the 1958 U.S. Open champion.

Half a century later, this year's Buick Open -- June 23-29, 2008, at Warwick -- will have a record purse of \$5 million – with the first prize \$900,000 and a new Buick. Besides stimulating the southeast Michigan economy and helping Buick market its new models, the Buick Open generates millions of dollars for charities. Since 1982, when the tournament began keeping track, more than \$9 million will have been raised for Buick Open charities by the end of this year's event. Many of the charitable organizations in turn provide volunteer help by handling such activities as transportation and ticket sales. When Buick Open donations are added to those of other Buick-titled golf tournaments over the years, the total is nearly \$40 million.

The Buick Open was held from 1958 to 1969 at Warwick Hills. After a hiatus, it was re-established in 1977 at the Flint Elks Club. It returned in 1978 to Warwick, where it has been held every year since.

Besides the Buick Open and Buick Invitational (La Jolla, Calif.) tournaments, Buick also participates as the official car of the PGA Tour (since 1984), and official car of the PGA of America and PGA Championship (since 2002), in addition to having a partnership with Tiger Woods as a Buick advertising spokesman (since 2000).

The man credited with selling golf to Buick was Waldo E. McNaught, then Buick's public relations director, who embarked on his plan after watching the 1957 Carling Open at the Flint Golf Club. The following year the Carling Open became the Buick Open and was moved to the new Warwick Hills. In 1959, Buick signed a six-year agreement with the PGA Tour – the longest and largest single financial sponsorship deal in professional golf at the time.

Gerald H. Rideout, who succeeded McNaught at Buick, was general chairman of 12 Buick Opens, starting in 1960, before retiring in 1978. He is generally credited with keeping interest alive after the tournament was canceled after the 1969 event and helping bring it back in the late 1970s.

“There were no golf millionaires in those days,” Rideout once said, describing the tournament's early years. “Most pros figured they were fortunate to earn \$5,000 a year. Even the British Open offered a tiny purse. Buick's contribution has been good for the game and good for Buick. We were on the ground floor of the boom. It's rewarding to see how golf has come such a long way since our early involvement.”

Recalling the first tournament, Rideout said, “None of us knew much about running a golf tournament. For example, the ‘media tent’ was confined to the dressing room of the swimming pool that was under construction. The course was in such poor shape that the maintenance crew virtually ran out of lime that outlined unplayable lies.”

Conditions deteriorated further because of rain during the second round. A Detroit-area pro referred to Warwick as “a cow pasture with greens.” Conditions were so bad that pros were allowed to play “winter rules,” getting free lifts to clean balls. Again, times have changed. Today the pros consistently praise Warwick Hills as being at or near the top of the best-manicured courses on the annual tour.

The first two experimental Buick automobiles were built in Detroit between 1899 and 1903, when David Dunbar Buick’s tiny Buick Motor Co. was bought by James H. Whiting and other directors of the Flint Wagon Works in Flint. In the fall of 1904, after Buick had built fewer than 40 cars, William C. Durant, Flint’s carriage “king,” was persuaded by Whiting to take over the faltering firm. Within four years the super promoter and salesman built Buick into the country’s largest producer, and on Buick’s success, Durant founded General Motors on Sept. 16, 1908.

General Motors Corp. (NYSE: GM), the world’s largest automaker, has been the annual global industry sales leader for 77 years. Founded in 1908, GM today employs about 266,000 people around the world. With global headquarters in Detroit, GM manufactures its cars and trucks in 35 countries. In 2007, nearly 9.37 million GM cars and trucks were sold globally under the following brands: Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, GMC, GM Daewoo, Holden, HUMMER, Opel, Pontiac, Saab, Saturn, Vauxhall and Wuling. GM’s OnStar subsidiary is the industry leader in vehicle safety, security and information services. More information on GM can be found at [www.gm.com](http://www.gm.com).