

Title: **GOOD FOR BUSINESS**
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 Size: 78.89 square inch
 Hilton Head Island, SC Circulation: 20015



GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Hitt, Haley use the RBC Heritage to recruit businesses, lure jobs to South Carolina

By GINA SMITH

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A few years ago, Bobby Hitt, secretary of the state Department of Commerce, invited the top executives from tire giants Continental Tire, Bridgestone and Michelin to be his guests at the RBC Heritage Presented by Boeing.

While the three companies already had a presence in South Carolina, “they had never met each other,” Hitt said. “They had a great time talking. It really built a network that didn’t exist before.”

Those informal talks also gave Hitt and other state leaders a chance to be flies on the wall, gaining insight into the common challenges tire manufacturers face when considering South Carolina as a place to set up shop.

It’s perhaps one of the most under-appreciated aspects of the annual tournament. State leaders use it as a forum where they build relationships with existing S.C. companies and woo business prospects.

Each year, Hitt and Gov. Nikki Haley invite executives from the state’s biggest companies to mingle with business prospects at parties, in skyboxes and in villas along the course.

Over cocktails, state leaders lay the groundwork for new jobs and new tax revenue for the Palmetto State.

Often, business prospects get one-on-one meeting time with Haley who has made business recruitment and job creation a priority for her administration.

“Deals get closed across the board table,” Hitt said. “But an awful lot of business is about building and maintaining relationships. The Heritage is a chance to do that. It’s an iconic South Carolina event where we can bring existing businesses and business prospects. And we can talk unfiltered about what’s it really like doing business here and how we’re working to improve it.”

In the last couple of years, South Carolina has landed two more tire manufacturers — Trelleborg A.B. in Spartanburg and Giti Tire in Chester — solidifying the Palmetto State’s reputation as a tire-manufacturing powerhouse.

More South Carolinians are now employed by tire companies than in any other state in the nation, surpassing even Ohio, once the rubber capital of the world. The Palmetto State produces about 89,000 tires each day, according to Tire Business, a publication that covers the tire and automotive industries.

Efforts are also underway to rev up South Carolina’s car-making industry. Volvo could soon have a presence in the state, joining BMW that has been in the Upstate since 1994. Jaguar Land Rover is also considering a S.C. plant, according to trade industry reports.

Hitt is mum on which businesses prospects he and Haley will entertain at this year’s tournament. But he’s confident that they’ll be wowed by

the event — and the state’s business-friendly climate.

“It’s a beautiful tournament. It’s the major league for South Carolina. We have nothing else on that level in the state,” he said. “It’s good for business. It’s good for the state.”

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Bobby Hitt,
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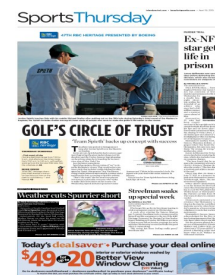
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S.C. Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt, shown here at a planning meeting in Charleston in 2011, often uses the RBC Heritage as a tool to recruit businesses to the state.

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 Author: ?? ?I?E ?CCO??S, ?ENDALL SALTER and STEPHEN FASTENAU
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HERITAGE NOTEBOOK

Weather cuts Spurrier short

By MIKE MCCOMBS, KENDALL SALTER
 and STEPHEN FASTENAU

Staff writers

University of South Carolina head football coach **Steve Spurrier** made his annual trek to Hilton Head Island to play in the RBC Heritage Presented by Boeing Pro-Am on Wednesday.

Unfortunately for the head ball coach, Mother Nature cut short his round on the 11th fairway when the horn blew for severe

weather on the way.

"I've been here 11 years," Spurrier said. "(Tournament director) **Steve Wilmot** keeps inviting me down, and I appreciate it. I always look forward to it.

Please see SPURRIER on 5B

SPURRIER

Continued from 1B

"I see some of the PGA pros. I don't know a lot of them. But I know a few."

Spurrier will be in town Friday, as well, for an event hosted by **Gov. Nikki Haley** at Wexford Plantation.

Spurrier and the Gamecocks just wrapped up spring practice, and the coach seemed satisfied with what he saw.

"It went pretty well," he said. "I thought our defensive guys learned some good solid defense, covering very closely, very tight coverage in the spring game. And offensive guys made some improvement. Quarterbacks, all three, looked pretty good at times.

"So we won't be picked to do much, and that's probably where we deserve to be. But I think we've got a chance

to certainly have a winning year, and maybe better."

KUCHAR'S ADJUSTMENTS NOT ALL POSITIVE

On Monday, defending RBC Heritage champion **Matt Kuchar** mentioned some tweaks he made to his game in the weeks leading up to the Masters. After a series of disappointing finishes over the past month, Kuchar was asked Wednesday just what was wrong and whether Harbour Town Golf Links would be the place to find a fix.

"It's been a little frustrating the last couple of weeks," Kuchar said. "I had worked on some things particularly for

Augusta, but it was more things that I thought would be beneficial week in, week out."

Among those things was focusing on hitting the ball higher and with more spin, which would improve his

chances, not only at Augusta, but at other courses around the tour. Unfortunately, he may have bought in too heavily to the new strategy.

"I think I got carried away with the joy of being able to hit the ball so high, and some bad habits actually started creeping in that weren't so good," Kuchar said. "But I had a great day today, a great practice session."

THE WORST WILL PASS

Stewart Williams, the PGA Tour's weather official, said Wednesday, "The worst of the rain will be the next several hours. Scattered showers overnight. Lingering showers in the morning, then it should be drier tomorrow afternoon. Mostly cloudy and cooler with highs around 70."

NICE SHOTS

Brian Stuard, playing in the pro-am, holed his second shot for eagle on the par-4 10th hole. He hit a 5-iron into the wind from 177 yards.

Bill Haas made a hole-in-one on No. 7.

RBC HERITAGE WEDNESDAY PRO-AM RESULTS

Morning Wave Winners

1st: Pro Bill Haas with amateurs Scott Haralson, Dave Ridley, Mike Wilson, Tony Parasida — 55

2nd: Pro Kevin Streelman with amateurs Garrett Crenshaw, David Land Sr., Brad Poe, Eddie Buck — 55

3rd: Pro Billy Horschel with amateurs Jim Saunders, Mark Williams, Bobby Williams, Robert Williams III — 56

Afternoon Wave

The Wednesday Pro-Am Afternoon wave was cut short because of inclem-

ent weather.

Front 9 Winners

1st: Pro Ben Martin with amateurs Bill Dunn, Rob Saunders, Eric Wasserstrom, Alan Wasserstrom — 28

2nd: Pro Steven Bowditch with amateurs Steve Paris, Mark Paris, George Paris, Ryan Cannon — 29

3rd: Pro Stewart Cink with amateurs Dan Lawrence, Greg Bowler, Hu Odem, Cory Jones — 29

Back 9 Winners

1st: Pro Jason Dufner with amateurs David Carey Thor, David Thor, Mario Torchia, Tim Stelzer — 27

2nd: Pro Freddie Jacobson with amateurs Ken Daniel, Tim Chapman, Dr. Robert Saul, Kent C. Wither Jr. — 27

3rd: Pro Ian Poulter with amateurs Brent McLaughlin, Neil McLaughlin, Lindsay Knowlton, Barry Hyde — 28

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THEOPHIL SYSLO • Staff photo

**Steve Spurrier tees off from the second tee
Wednesday during the RBC Heritage Pro-Am at
Harbour Town Golf Links in Sea Pines.**