

Villages, a retirement community in Lady Lake, Fla. "Everywhere I go, I have people stopping me to ask me about my car."

Biondi is one of a growing number of people upgrading from standard-issue golf carts to fancier customized vehicles. The trend dates to Jackie Gleason, who toiled around in a faux Rolls-Royce in the '70s, but sales have taken off the last couple of years, particularly in California, Hawaii and Florida. Ranging in price from \$11,000 to \$25,000, these hot wheels are being used not only on the golf course, but also in gated communities, which restrict cars and encourage carts to lessen congestion. Sports stars such as Deion Sanders and Joe Montana are buying them to get around their lavish estates. The cool carts are even popping up on Hollywood movie sets.

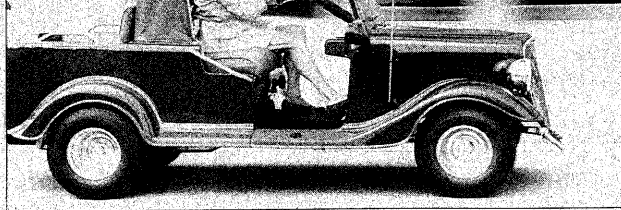
"We are booked. We even had to bring in some extra people to keep up with the demand," says Luis Martinez, sales director for Genesis Golf in New York City, which is licensed to manufacture mini Hummers, Lamborghinis and other exotic carts.

"People figure they are going to spend \$6,000 to \$10,000 on a regular cart, so why not get something nice?"

Extras like air conditioning, stereos with radios and CD players, built-in ice chests and leather interiors may not make customers better golfers, but they sure are attractive to those cruising the streets.

"My golf cart is my buddy. I just has everything. I don't think I would golf as much without it," says Vic Armstrong of Bloomington, Ill., who received his Elmo Royal Ride, modeled after a Rolls, as a birthday present from his wife.

"I have no use for a car at all now that I have my hot rod," Biondi says. "It's how everybody recognizes me."



By Scott Ausderque, AP



Beep, beep: Doris Biondi zips around her retirement community in Florida in a golf cart modeled after a 1934 Ford coupe.

Don Durlinger, a sales representative for Elmcro, based in Cooksville, Ill., credits the increase in custom cart sales to a great economy, golf's current trendiness and a recent 10% tax break on electric vehicle purchases. He says many models have become so popular that mom-and-pop cart dealers are making knockoffs and selling do-it-yourself kits for as little as \$500.

"There is definitely a lot more competi-

tion out there than there was ever before," Durlinger says.

Custom carts, once a small part of the \$600-million-a-year cart industry, now are 20% of sales, says Don Del Place, managing editor of *Golf Car Advisor* magazine.

"Each succeeding year, these carts just become more popular," says Del Place, adding they're in demand with baby boomers wanting replicas of cars that were

nately triggered some interesting ideas," says Ann Hanson, vice president of marketing/sales for Think Mobility, Ford's new electric vehicle division. "These vehicles are truly unique. They are as safe as a car, but can get around as easily as a golf cart."

The Think Neighbor will be released early next year, but consumers can check out the carts at the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., during the holidays, where they'll be used to move shoppers around.

"People want to be on the cutting edge, and this is a fun way to do that," says Hanson, who says that, at \$6,000, the trendy Fords are priced comparably to non-customized Club Car or E-Z-Go carts.

For Gary Leigh, developer of Walnut Brook, an upscale planned community in Rochester Hills, Mich., custom carts are more than a means of getting around. Leigh uses a Cadillac, a Royal Ride and an eight-passenger limousine as marketing tools to show off his models and community design to prospective home buyers.

"These carts just really create a nice impression on people. Many times people are shocked at how fancy they are," Leigh says. "They're just the greatest idea."

Larry Rogers, owner of LA Concept Cars in Tampa, says the custom carts can't help but exude prestige and gather gawkers.

"There are no limitations on what we can do," Rogers says. "As long as someone is willing to spend the money you will see these big-ticket carts being built."

"They are just really expensive toys for adults."

fordable options for playing. The clinics culminate with Tiger meeting one-on-one with area junior golfers and leading an exhibition for 2,000 or more local minority children and their parents.

The last clinic this year is Sept. 23-25 in Norfolk, Va.

The foundation, which also gives scholarships to local heroes, "is a way for Tiger and I to give back not only to golf but also to the communities," Earl Woods says. "Inner-city kids are constantly overlooked. We want them to appreciate and enjoy the benefits of our success. Too long, they've been conditioned to think they're nothing now, were nothing before and they'll be nothing after. We're here to change that."

A Tiger Jam concert to raise funds for children's charities is set for Oct. 7 at the Mandalay Bay Events Center in Las Vegas and features Christina Aguilera, LeAnn Rimes and Seal.

For details on the concert or the foundation, call 714-816-1806. There is a link to the foundation at www.tigerwoods.com.



Giving back: Tiger Woods and his father, Earl, created a non-profit foundation that uses golf to help children.

By Richard Drew, AP

With Tiger atop the leader board, a golfers' 'revolution' has begun

Continued from 1D

see gang kids at the driving range. Maybe some kid decides he doesn't want to be in a gang anymore.

With a beaming smile, the charismatic Woods has become the most engaging golf personality since Arnold Palmer or Nancy Lopez. His face adorns the current *Time*. Beyond attracting kids to the game, he has done what even golf lovers may have thought impossible: He's made the sport hip.

"Golf used to be an incredibly uncool sport, an elitist country-club kind of sport. Now it has become cool. It's undergone this great people's revolution led by Tiger Woods," says Michael Caruso, editor in chief of *Maximum Golf*, a new magazine aimed at young male golfers (18-39). Its September issue has Woods on the cover, too.

In terms of cachet, the game "is enormously more popular than it was 10 or 20 years ago," says Bob Cullen, author of the new *Why Golf? The Mystery of the Game Revisited* (Simon & Schuster, \$22). "It used to be thought of as being played by white-bread, blond, pink-polyester-wearing clones. Now the world's most dynamic and successful athlete is a multiracial golfer."

Woods' emergence "has certainly fueled" interest, making it more likely that families and younger people will give golf a swing than in the past, says NGF president Joe Beditz. But he suggests that increased TV coverage and celebrity preoccupation with the game also have energized a steady rise in the number of golfers. Since 1986, total golfers have increased from 19.9 million to 26.4 million, the foundation says.

An additional 40 million people would like to try

golf or have tried it and would like to play more.

"We're measuring our highest interest ever," Beditz says. "I think people have hooked into this idea that playing golf is a cool thing."

Golf attracts a who's-who these days, from Celine Dion and the Red Hot Chili Peppers to Clint Eastwood and Malcolm in the Middle's Frankie Muniz. Sports greats John Elway, Jerry Rice and Michael Jordan are avid golfers. Captains of technology such as Sun Microsystems' Scott McNealy and Microsoft's Bill Gates, who was seen in a commercial for club maker Callaway Golf, smack the ball around, too.

The sport's trendiness hasn't escaped clothing designers such as Giorgio Armani, Liz Claiborne, Perry Ellis, Tommy Hilfinger and Prada; all have new lines of golf attire.

"Younger people and fashion are definitely creeping into golf because golf is getting more mainstream," says Scott Rosan, 29, who owns The Nines, an upscale golf fashion shop in the trendy Manayunk section of Philadelphia. "Everybody is playing. You are hard-pressed to find a person who hasn't been exposed to game a little bit. You play and get hooked."

But clearly, Woods is driving much of the surge. Ratings records were set during all of his major victories, and Woods' eight-stroke victory at St. Andrews last month was the most-watched British Open ever, ABC

says. "In the TV age, there have been two people who have attracted viewers beyond their sport," NBC Sports chairman Dick Ebersol said after Woods' U.S. Open victory in June. "They are Muhammad Ali and Michael Jordan. Tiger Woods clearly is the third one."

Woods hopes to use his ambassadorship to break down golf's barriers. "The kids I'm trying to reach are in the inner city, and traditionally they've always been told, 'No, you can't achieve this, or 'You can't achieve that.' They aren't

allowed to dream because it's not realistic, and I think that's wrong," he says. "The traditions of the game, the morals and values that are instilled in you when you play the game of golf, I think that's what a lot of kids need in their lives."

Guardians of the game plan to capitalize on golf's current boom. The NGF, course operators, equipment makers and the professional tours are collaborating on a national initiative to increase access with welcome centers providing instruction on golf skills, rules and etiquette. The program is expected to offer affordable avenues to the game for kids and families, while increasing retention of newcomers.

Already, experts are debating the Tiger Effect on the future of golf. In sheer numbers, "it might be several years before we see how many people who wouldn't have taken up the game have taken it up because it is cool," says Larry Dorman of Callaway Golf.

Some wonder whether Woods' popularity is enough to offset the barriers associated with the sport. Playing golf "is a lot harder than Tiger makes it look," says author Cullen. "He certainly might have an impact on the number of people who play once in a while, but I'm not sure how much that will affect the

number who become steady-to-avid golfers."

Cost is a factor, too. Children's golf clubs can be had for as little as \$12 to \$15 at used sporting goods stores but can run \$300 or more for a set. Although some sports groups offer free youth lessons, individual sessions typically start at \$25 and go as high as \$500 for week-long camps. Courses have kids' discounts, but a round of golf is seldom available for less than \$10.

"Unless you find a way for kids to play occasionally for a limited amount of money, all the clinics Tiger holds in the world aren't going to make a difference," Cullen says.

Golf remains a symbol of affluence, says *Maximum Golf*'s Caruso, but he's hopeful that could change, having noted at the British Open that golf is a working-class game in Scotland. "Here in America, it took this weird turn and became an elite, snobby sport. We're trying to reclaim the sport for the people."

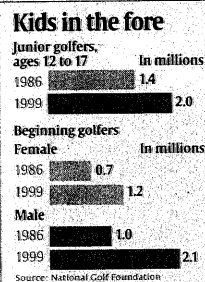
And in the end, if golf becomes too popular, could that harm the character of the game?

"Golf has a particular culture, and if it's watered down either through a lot of new people coming to the game or through technology, a great deal would be lost," says Russell Bowie, a New Orleans golfer and parent whose kids participate in a junior golf league.

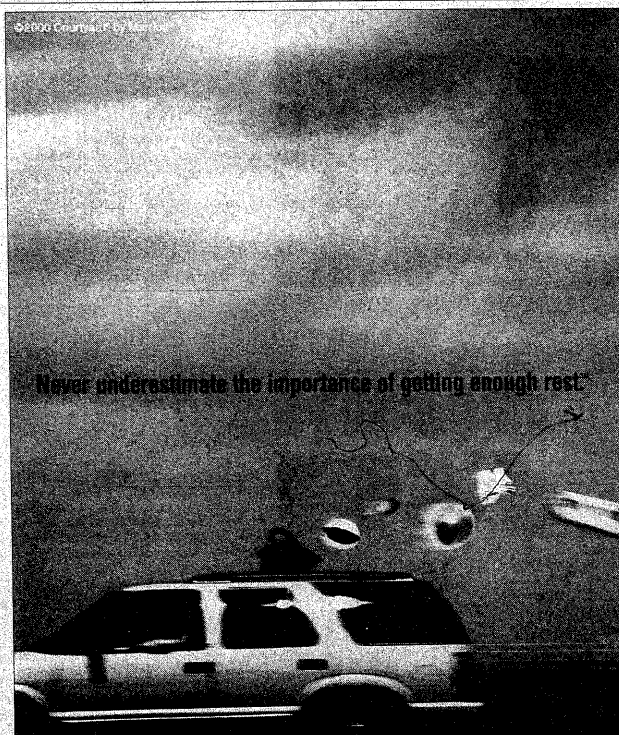
But at Woods' clinic in New Orleans, Edwin Turner is content to savor the moment. As a teen, he worked as a caddy. After hours, Turner says, "we did what they call sneaking onto the golf course. We wouldn't play no more than two, maybe three holes, and then we would get run off."

Watching Woods' ascent got his son, Raynell, 15, interested in the sport, too. "I try to copy Tiger's attitude," Raynell says.

The elder Turner gestures, taking in a group of black men accompanying their children. "Every one of those men out there, they didn't have an opportunity to play," Turner says. "Now (the children) have an opportunity. They get their kids to play, and if their kids win, then they, too, are winning."



By Julie Sneider, USA TODAY



Or getting breakfast included this weekend with the Breakfast Lovers® Special.

Imagine a delicious breakfast. Anything from eggs and bacon to hot, crispy Belgian waffles. Now, imagine all of that included in the incredible weekend package rates we're offering this summer at Courtyard by Marriott. It's called the Breakfast Lovers® Special. It's certain to leave you satisfied, set, and ready to make the most of whatever the day has in store.



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Norwegian Tourist Board

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Photos by David Rae Morris for USA TODAY

By Mike Snider
USA TODAY

Thwack. Wussssssh. Kerplunk. With each towering tee shot that Tiger Woods sends through the air and each putt he sinks, the 24-year-old wunderkind is revolutionizing the game of golf. Not content with re-writing the record books, Woods is on a mission to spread the game's reach.

On this stormy morning, he huddles under a tent with more than two dozen junior golfers, giving tips until lightning forces the action indoors.

Those kids and 2,000 more pack into the city's Municipal Auditorium this afternoon to watch Woods demonstrate how he bounces a ball on his club in a popular Nike commercial, adding a 180-degree spin to the routine.

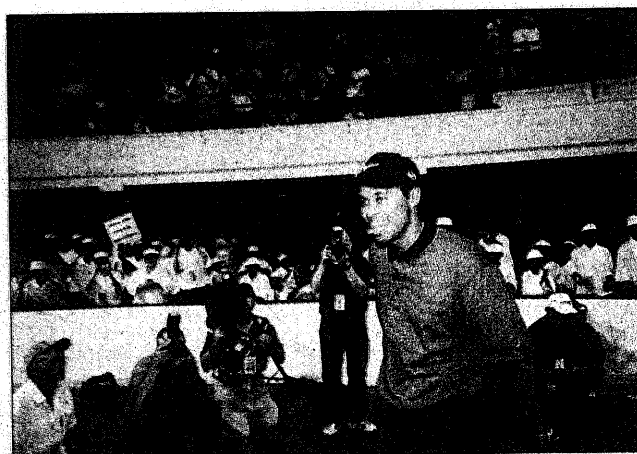
He takes more questions, and one gets to the crux of his crusade:

Why aren't girl golfers taken more seriously? Madalyn Radlauer, 14, wants to know.

"Golf needs to be more inclusive, but that takes time," says Woods, who conducts several junior golf clinics each year through his Tiger Woods Foundation. "My advice is to keep fighting for what's right and keep playing — because the better you play, the more they

On the fore front

Tiger Woods has fired up kids' imaginations. By the thousands, youngsters are teeing up to learn the suddenly cool sport of golf.



Pied Piper of the sport: When bad weather forced a New Orleans golf clinic indoors, the youngsters followed Tiger Woods into the Municipal Auditorium.

let you in."

Later, Madalyn, who started playing two years ago, says she thinks Woods' powerful presence will draw more children to the game. "Because he is black, Tiger playing says it doesn't matter what you look like, it doesn't matter if you're a girl or a guy. It just matters that you go out there, have fun and do well."

The cartoons-and-wrestling crowd have been glued to Woods' exploits lately on TV and are begging their parents for lessons so they can be like Tiger. "I consider him an interracial Pied Piper," says Tiger's father, Earl Woods, who nurtured an interest in golf that his son had even as an infant. Tiger's impact on kids and golf, he predicts, "will get bigger instead of smaller."

Kids are the fastest-growing category of golfers, according to the National Golf Foundation, which says that 836,000 children ages 5 to 11 played last year. That's more than double the 333,000 who played in 1986, the NGF says.

"He's got kids coming out of the woodwork," says Bill Dickey, president of the National Minority Junior Golf Scholarship Association and a mentor at the clinic coordinated by the Greater New Orleans Sports Foundation. "You

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Retirement communities ditch grub for gourmet

Sophisticated seniors eschew cafeteria fare

By Maria Montoya
USA TODAY

Food & wine
Local tastes, 10D

chefs to build a better menu. Maureen Boyle, a consultant for retirement food services, says this trend will only gain momentum as baby boomers age. "Some of these consumers have been



ber, Shell Point will complete two more dining areas — there currently are five — to meet the demand of diners.

"Now we are not only competing with the resident kitchens, but we are also competing against restaurants in the area," says Al Slickers, hospitality director at Shell Point.