

# Business Sunday



## NOT YOUR DAD'S GAME ANYMORE

Arcis' newly renovated Cowboys Golf Club has something for everyone, and it's part of a trend luring in a different kind of golfer. By ERIC PRISBELL, 6-7D



Elías Valverde II/Staff photographer

## Steps phone scammers are now using to learn all about you

I hesitate to tell Dallas' Bob Barrese what I learned about the scourge of scam telephone callers. He's already on edge. According to Barrese, some days he gets up to 15 calls.

He's done all the right things to fight them: He logged incoming phone numbers and reported them to authorities. He's complained to several federal and state agencies, but he only receives form letter replies, if at all.

I hoped to cheer him up, maybe tell him about progress fighting the phone-caller scammers. That's why I called Matt Mizenko, the managing director



**THE WATCHDOG**

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of Nomorobo.com. It's an award-winning call blocker that I've used for a decade.

But wait until you hear what Matt told me. His revelations detailed how artificial intelligence is making life for these scammers so much better, and making it worse for consumers. Here's what he told me.

"The bad guys have gone from a quantity focus to a quality focus. So they are not carpet-bombing vast

swaths of area codes and exchanges anymore," Mizenko explained.

"But what they are doing is being far more selective in targeting and who they're reaching out to. And so to some extent they're probably doing better than they had in the past because they're able to make good use of a lot of new tools to really target and hone in to particularly good targets," he adds.

"They're able to extract more by

doing less. The scammers are working smarter, not harder.

"Ten years ago these guys were blasting out calls to a lot of numbers. You saw a call on your Caller ID with your area code or your exchange, and you thought 'I'd better answer it.'"

"They are now far more sophisticated. With all the data breaches we've had basically all our data and

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### BOLDFACE NAMES

Dallas native Leah Collins lands TV network gig to dish out tough love on money matters.

3D



### PREMIUM SEATING

Frontline sports business 4Tops is reshaping the fan experience for Texas teams.

8D



### REAL ESTATE

New AT&T headquarters sparks controversy and soul-searching among Dallas officials. 4D

# Recreational golf and the multibillion-dollar 'mic drop'

Most people have a passing familiarity with professional golf and the figures who make the sport compelling — even if they've never actually set foot on a golf course (like yours truly).

But what often gets lost in being aware of boldface names like Scottie Scheffler, Rory McIlroy, and of course Tiger Woods is the fact that pro golf isn't actually where all the heat and light is. These personalities make golfing more interesting, but the smart money is increasingly flowing to the recreational side of one of America's favorite pastimes.

Courtesy of the National Golf Foundation (NGF), here's a rather mind-blowing statistic that showcases the power of recreational golf: Last year, over 48 million Americans at least 6 years of age played golf — both on and off-courses.

That number includes nearly 30 million who hit traditional driving ranges, simulators and entertainment venues like the ubiquitous Topgolf (a frequent subject of our coverage here at *The Dallas Morning News*).

"More people are playing more golf in more ways than [at] any time in history. The metrics of our game are getting their own 'mic drop' moment," the organiza-



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tion boasts on its website.

A particularly prominent beneficiary of that mic-dropping can be found right here in North Texas. Arcis — the subject of Eric Prisbell's cover story this week — has been on a tear over the last year, buying top-notch properties in Atlanta and Houston's Woodlands area, and flexing recreational golf's cultural and financial clout.

It also happens to be leaning into the mien of a sports-obsessed region — with one professional team in particular. Arcis has invested "well into eight figures" to re-envision a Grapevine property into something that's both a paean to the Dallas Cowboys, and to the changing nature of recreational golf — something that United States Golf Association president Fred Perpal told us at *The News' Business of Sports* event last month.

"Golf is getting decidedly more diverse and younger," Walker told Prisbell in an interview, "so really it's about making the game more approachable for everyone. So gamification like we're doing at Cowboys Golf Club, and putting courses like we're doing at [the club], are really the entry point into golf."

And whenever a definitive trend emerges, lots of resources are sure to follow.



Elias Valverde II/Staff Photographer

With hundreds of courses and facilities, Texas is a destination for golf tourism.

A study commissioned by the Texas Alliance of Recreational Organizations found that Texas is reaping the benefits of a golf gold rush, creating over \$14 billion in economic activity and buttressing about 107,000 jobs. And with hundreds of courses and facilities at its disposal, the state is also a destination for golf tourism, according to TARO.

And it doesn't stop there. A country that still struggles to tame an obesity epidemic needs all the exercise it can get — and hitting the links are just the remedy.

"There is a renewed appreciation for the holistic benefits of the green-grass game, and tens of millions of Americans now recognize golf's public health benefit as one of the ultimate wellness activities," the NGF notes on its website. The sport combines "exercise, stress relief, challenge, self-improvement and community in a uniquely accessible outdoor setting."

In short, golf is real estate, tourism, physical fitness, family outings and growth all wrapped up in one. What more could an economy ask for?

## DATELINE | THIS WEEK

### Tuesday, March 24

- Grapevine-based **GameStop Corp.** tries to reverse the trend and adjust to a new retail environment for video games, as it reports quarterly earnings on Tuesday. Homebuilding giant KB Homes also gives results.
- Interabang Books welcomes Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist David Streitfeld to talk about his long-time friend and award-winning author **Larry McMurtry**, a giant among Texas writers and the author of *Lonesome Dove* and other novels. Streitfeld will talk about his soon-to-be-released book *Western Star: The Life and Legends of Larry McMurtry*.

### Wednesday, March 25

- Pet retailer **Chewy, Inc.**, co-founded by GameStop CEO Ryan Cohen, will give its latest earnings reports on Wednesday.
- A key federal report on **import and export prices** for

February will give more insight into the impact of tariffs.

### Thursday, March 26

- Federal Reserve Board of Governors vice chair **Philip Johnson** comes to town to speak with Dallas **Fed President Lorie Logan** about the economy as part of the Global Perspectives Series. The main event is from 6 to 7 p.m.

- Irving-based **Commercial Metals Co.**, Shoe Carnival, Lovesac and Dallas-based Lantern Pharma report earnings Thursday.

### Saturday, March 28

- Oncor CEO Allen Nye and Phillip Huffines of Huffines Communities will be among those inducted into the **Dallas Business Hall of Fame**, an event put on by Junior Achievement of Dallas. Past honorees include Herb Kelleher, Mary Kay Ash and Mark Cuban.

Kyle Arnold

## PROTEIN

# Do you even Mac & Cheese, bro?

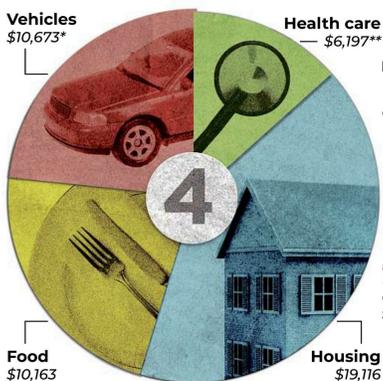


Kraft is taking Mac and Cheese from the cheesiest to the strongest. Amid a push from dozens of food manufacturers, Kraft is releasing a "PowerMac" product with 17 grams of protein per serving and 6 grams of fiber. New federal guidelines released under Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. upped the recommended amount of protein by 50 to 100%.

Kyle Arnold



## NUMBER OF THE WEEK



The number of major expense categories that account for 2/3 of all spending, according to data from the Consumer Bankers Association. For an average household earning roughly \$104,207 a year (about \$68,000 after taxes), the four categories are housing, shelter, food and vehicles.

Javier David

\*Vehicle costs, excluding gas. \*\*Health care, not including employer-related expenses. SOURCE: Consumer Bankers Association. Michael Hogue/Staff Artist

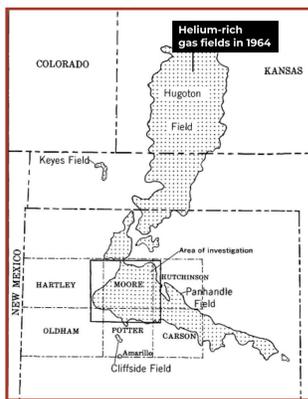
## FIGURE THIS

# It's been a gas, gas, gas for Texas

## Historic High Plains helium production



Helium is more than a dentist's laughing gas or balloon filler — it's a natural gas byproduct that's critical to producing semiconductors and medical images. Since the Iran war started, spot helium prices have doubled. Once upon a time, Amarillo was the helium capital of the world. According to historical data, back in 1964, an estimated 95% of the world's recoverable helium was produced within a 250-mile radius of the city, which housed the Federal Helium Reserve until it was sold in 2024.



MAP: 1964 USGS report, "Uranium and Helium in the Panhandle Gas Field Texas, and Adjacent Areas" Laurie Joseph/Staff Artist

## BUSINESS SUNDAY

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# COWBOYS GOLF CLUB A VISION COMES TO LIFE

Newly renovated course has a lot to offer

**G**RAPEVINE — Blake Walker's long-held vision to reimagine Cowboys Golf Club immediately comes into focus on the approaching drive to the property.

On the right, a driving range unlike any other, with golfers striking balls toward 60 yards of game-used AT&T Stadium turf and a regulation field goal post.

Walker is the chairman, CEO and founder of Dallas-based Arcis Golf, whose multimillion-dollar transfor-



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mation of Cowboys Golf Club over the past 10 months touches every aspect of the club.

Arcis, which purchased the club in 2014, last week gave *The Dallas Morning News* an exclusive tour of the renovated property — the only NFL-themed club in the world.

"It's a little bit surreal to see it completed, when five years ago it was really just an idea that I would talk about," said Walker, whose Arcis is the second-largest owner and operator of golf clubs in the United States with an 88-course portfolio. "I think people thought, 'We'll

believe it when we see it.'"

Arcis said its investment — characterized to *The News* as "well into eight figures" — is a realization of Walker's vision to make the sport more accessible to a broader swath of consumers, appealing to the seasoned golfer as well as entertainment-focused families.

The property, nestled in Grapevine's rolling hills, has reopened in phases since October.

"Golf is getting decidedly more diverse and younger," Walker said, "so really it's about making the game more approachable for everyone. So gamification like we're doing at Cowboys Golf Club, and putting courses like we're doing at [the club], are really the entry point into golf."

## Expansion

The Cowboys Golf Club wholesale redesign is significant, because it comes as recreational golf is experiencing a participation boom following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last year, a record 48.1 million people participated in golf either on courses or at driving ranges and entertainment venues like Topgolf, *Sports Business Journal* reported.

Arcis' strategy reflects a broader industrywide push to capitalize on this rising golf tide by attracting more families and demographics typically underrepresented in golf.

The transformation of the property, which opened in 2001, is also notable because it highlights another way in which the Cowboys, the world's most-valuable sports franchise with a \$13 billion valuation, monetize their brand away from the football field.

Calling the Cowboys "arguably the best brand in sports," Walker praised Arcis' relationship with the Cowboys' executives "from the [Jerry] Jones family on down."

The strategy with Cowboys Golf Club also reflects Arcis' nationwide priority with clubs, incorporating everything from gaming elements to social clubhouse-style gathering places and short courses.

That focus is complemented with enhanced food and beverage offerings and music.

Across its properties, Arcis Golf has invested more than \$175 million over the past four years on property



The redesign is a realization of Blake Walker's vision to make the sport r



Walk into the club and immerse yourself in Cowboys lore, like this Tom Landry fedora.



The golf course itself reveals a complete renovation of the greens, along with revamped bunkers and tees.

upgrades, new amenities, personnel and training.

Cowboys Golf Club includes a redesigned course and the Cowboys-

themed, tech-infused driving range with AT&T Stadium turf from when the stadium opened in 2009.

It's 175 yards to the goal post, and when the ball hits the post, the sound is distinct — and loud.

The 60 yards of turf is a can't-miss attraction — an airline pilot even told Arcis executives he saw the range from the sky and figured it was a regulation-size football field.

The renovation also includes a reimagined short-game area and 18-hole putting course, The Huddle, which features an acre of Cowboys-blue turf.

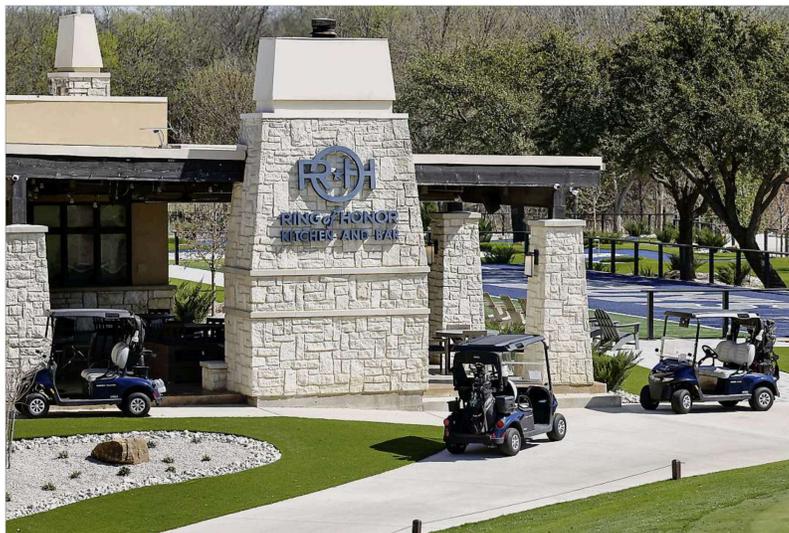
The day *The News* visited, Arcis executives said quarterback Dak Prescott had played the course that morning.

Cowboys players have designated parking spots at the property — and the influence of America's Team is everywhere.

## Entertainment

Walk into the club and immediately encounter touchstones from Cowboys lore: A Tom Landry fedora; a Texas-sized picture of the triplets, Troy Aikman, Michael Irvin and Emmitt Smith; and replica Super Bowl trophies. (Executives stress there's room for another.) There's also a ring of honor celebrating franchise luminaries near the bar.

Green fees — between \$250 and \$300 all-inclusive — include food and non-alcoholic beverages before, during and after golf, which executives believe is one of the club's dif-



The Ring of Honor Kitchen and Bar features a Texas fusion menu with a 23-foot smoker and wood-fired grill.



Photos by Elias Valverde II/Staff Photographer

more accessible to more people, from the seasoned golfer to entertainment-focused families.



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ferentiators.

There's The Huddle's Airstream trailer, serving frozen margaritas, local beers, and barbacoa tacos and sausages. The Ring of Honor Kitchen and Bar features a Texas fusion

menu. There's a 23-foot smoker and wood-fired grill. Guests can dine on the Five Points Patio, overlooking the new event lawn, putting course and practice areas.

"When you walk out of the dining

room, overlook the driving range and see the Cowboys' field and you think about, at a corporate event, you can actually eat on the field as well," Walker said.

"And when you see the putting



The club has on display a collection of replica Super Bowl trophies, and executives stress there's room for another.

course that is, again, it's blue turf, it is themed throughout. The experience is just very unique from an entertainment standpoint. It's unlike anything I've seen."

The driving range features 14 Toptracer stations, which executives said combine data, competition and entertainment. The short-game practice area was also revamped, including the addition of bunkers and expanded chipping areas.

Arcis commissioned renowned course architect Beau Welling to redesign the layout, with the company's in-house design and construction team overseeing implementation. They also worked with Graham Construction & Engineering.

Opening the doors to more guests has been a priority, Walker said, because golf has been "somewhat insular" over time. The goal was to achieve that while also enhancing the course for longtime golfers.

"When one thinks about an NFL-themed course, and Super Bowl trophies and rings and synthetic putting courses, in the past it would have diluted credibility in terms of the championship quality of the course," Walker said.

"They wanted to enlist a designer to put some teeth back into the course and create a championship course but also add the entertainment and gamification piece that leaned heavily on the Dallas Cowboys."

Jeff Levine, senior vice president of operations for Arcis Golf, was on site during the renovation. He said it was like watching an orchestra perform a large-scale operation over just a few months.

"There were vehicles going in all directions, and it almost looked like a highway, because you had material going in, material going out," Levine said.

"There was a point where there were 86 people on property working on the golf course; it was just non-stop."

### Cowboys' star

The golf course itself reveals a complete renovation of the greens, along with revamped bunkers and tees.

They changed the flow and routing of several holes. They addressed greens where the slope was especially severe, as well as pin placements. They brought some bunkers to the original shape, eliminated others and added some. They also added contour to fairways, and squared off tees for a more traditional look akin to what they consider a championship course.

The marquee hole may be par-3 No. 3. Bunkers were relocated to the front of the green, allowing the hillside backdrop to show the Cowboys' star logo.

No. 4 offers a scenic view with the highest elevation on the course.

"There's some courses that I've played that are so difficult you walk away and say, 'I never want to see

that again," Levine said. "This is the kind of golf course where you play it and if you play it well, you're excited, but then if you miss a shot, you're like, 'Man, I want to try that again.'"

After the course closed for renovations in June, the tee boxes, greens, bunkers, and cart paths were rebuilt or reshaped. Welling refined design elements in the field, while seven Arcis crews simultaneously executed the transformation. All 18 greens were expanded with contours.

Cowboys Golf Club is the first in the nation to feature TriED Bermuda — a hybrid Bermuda grass designed for putting green playability — on all 20 greens [18 holes plus the practice facility].

"The most important piece of this whole element is to come back with greens that exceed expectations," Levine said.

Five sets of tees were rebuilt with a classic square design, while every greenside bunker complex was repositioned to better frame the greens.

There is little residential development around the golf course. And Arcis has partnerships with area hotels for reciprocal recruiting.

### In-season revenue

Before founding Arcis Golf in 2013, Walker served as chief investment officer and chief executive officer of several global private equity-backed leisure firms. With Arcis, Walker said it has been committed to incorporate amenities and "lifestyle experiences."

He said that is reflected in its mix of private clubs and resorts to its public and municipal courses, which are often situated in inner-city communities.

Arcis — which last year had a valuation of \$2 billion, according to Bloomberg — has acquired 18 clubs since August 2021, including Atlanta-area clubs Country Club of the South, The Manor Golf & Country Club and White Columns Country Club; The Woodlands Country Club in the Houston area; and Champions Retreat Golf Club near Augusta, Ga., among others.

Arcis owns eight clubs in D-FW: Bear Creek Golf Club, Lantana Golf Club, The Golf Club at Fossil Creek, The Club at Frisco Farms, Gentle Creek Country Club, Lake Park Golf Club, Mansfield National Golf Club, and The Golf Club at Twin Creeks.

With Cowboys Golf Club, Walker said they decided to renovate last June and forgo in-season revenue because they wanted to complete the redesign properly and all at once. The course opened in October, the driving range recently opened and the putting course is being finished.

"We hope consumers see that as a commitment, given the millions of dollars we've expended in the middle of the season and shutting down the golf course because we want it to be special," Walker said. "We want it to be very experiential. It's not merely just a golf experience."