

Case Study: A Patient Strategy

Penn Oaks Golf Club



**ConcertGolf
Partners**

Penn Oaks Golf Club | West Chester, PA

Brothers Stephen and John DiMarco, leaders of the Ownership Group for Penn Oaks Golf Club near Philadelphia, were not looking to sell their club several years ago.

Not even close.

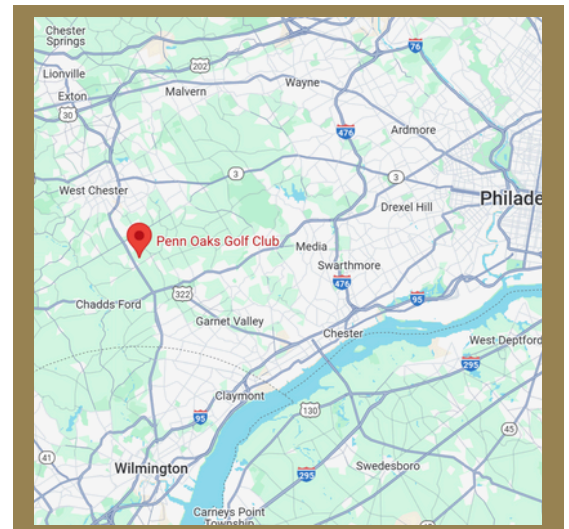
When they initially met Concert Golf Partners CEO Peter Nanula, their intention was simply to explore and understand potential future exit strategies in the country club space, knowing that such an opportunity was likely years away for Penn Oaks.

"I left that meeting with a feeling that Concert was a boutique operator with the same principles that I have," said Stephen DiMarco, who owned the club in West Chester, Pennsylvania for 22 years.

That initial conversation sowed a seed that shaped the framework for a special relationship. Over the years, Concert and the DiMarcos would speak periodically, as the line of communication remained open and the trust grew strong.



***Penn Oaks Golf Club
West Chester, PA
Acquired by Concert Golf
Partners: January 2025***



Fast forward to December 2024....

John, who once did mergers and acquisitions for Lockheed Martin, and served as President of the Government Services business for Day & Zimmermann, was 70. And Stephen, who invested with his brother to bring Freddy's restaurants to the East Coast, and was the owner of the locally popular Trader Steve's retail chain (among a parade of other businesses), was now 63.

Stephen was not yet ready to fully retire. Instead of a sunset, he was looking for a bridge to retirement, while John was ready to sell. A near-term exit strategy was now clearly needed for Penn Oaks. They turned to Concert Golf Partners, as a significant amount of trust was developed one conversation at a time through the years.

Still, a new comfort zone was needed to complete the deal. And it took both patience and persistence.

"I had to do my homework," explained Stephen DiMarco. "Concert didn't choose me, I chose Concert."

Main Line Today magazine calls West Chester "the hottest town" in Philadelphia's Western Suburbs, as evidenced by the town being ranked as the No. 1 market in the country for listings on Zillow in 2023. Its home base of Chester County saw average household income rise 8% YOY, according to the most recent study by Data USA (2022). U.S. Census data shows that median household earnings topped \$157,000 in 2023.

"It was not easy selling, I am not going to lie, but age started catching up with us," added John DiMarco, who cited the family atmosphere of Penn Oaks, especially with their members and staff.

The DiMarco's wanted to be certain that continuity was a part of the transition, so Concert added specific wording to the contract that protected both jobs for the staff and the traditions of the Penn Oaks' loyal membership. Stephen would also remain at Penn Oaks as a trusted consultant.

"It was part of our lives for 22 years, but we also realized that we didn't have a clear path for our employees, and they would be out in left field if we didn't do something about it," explained John DiMarco.

"We're proud of the relationships we've built with our membership and staff," said Stephen. "As we got to know the leadership team at Concert Golf Partners, it was clear they were highly committed to a vibrant future for everyone at Penn Oaks."



Historic Grounds

The unique culture of Penn Oaks makes it special.

Located on 130 acres of land granted by King Charles II to Pennsylvania founder William Penn during the pre-Colonial era, Penn Oaks is one of nearly 40 upscale private clubs to join the Concert Golf portfolio, and the fourth in the Pennsylvania-New Jersey region, following [White Manor Country Club](#) (Malvern, Pa.), [Philmont Country Club](#) (Huntingdon Valley, Pa.), and [TPC Jasna Polana](#) (Princeton, N.J.).

The club's storied history serves as an integral part of its essence. In 1965, the par 71, 6,610-yard championship golf course was designed by architect Russell Roberts and set along land that long predates the Revolutionary War. To pay homage, a distressed tree on the golf course was recently preserved and converted into a landmark—a wood-carved statue of William Penn. With a memorable and challenging track that traces its heritage, the course carries a 131 slope and 71.4 rating.

"When we bought Penn Oaks, our goal was to create a world-class hospitality experience centered around a terrific golf course," said John DiMarco.

In addition to a short-game practice facility and driving range, Penn Oaks is home to "The Nest," a stunning 18-hole putting course on real grass. The course evolves and changes every two days for a fresh challenge each visit. Ideal for both casual players and serious golfers, it combines fun with skill-building, resembling the strategic play of pool, but with a golf twist.

Penn Oaks was honored in recent years by both The Knot "Best of Weddings" and Wedding Wire's "Couples Choice Awards" as a 5-star setting for brides and grooms. With crystal chandeliers, a large dance floor, white fireplace, and a scenic view of the golf course, the club's signature William Penn Ballroom is elegant and spacious. The club's covered patio features a bar corner and an open deck for cocktails, with a trail to a gazebo that sets the scene for a highly elegant wedding venue, one of the most coveted along the Main Line.

Over the years, they would add an outdoor seating area with fire pits and The Nest. Unlike most clubs that were closed on Mondays for events and course maintenance, Penn Oaks thrived like every other night.

"We tried to create a down-to-Earth, family friendly atmosphere—The Penn Oaks Family," said John. "The last few years, we didn't take a back seat to anyone."

Their management style remained unique and fun. "Steveisms" became the law of the land—catch phrases Stephen would make on a regular basis that became part of Penn Oaks lore. For example, he points to his team's GPS: "Guest Point of Sight." This key mantra focuses on hospitality and attention to detail—whether it be picking up trash in sub-zero temperatures by making "figure eights" in the parking lot before the members see it or opening the club 15 minutes early and staying open at least 15 minutes after closing time.

"I hire smiles," said Stephen. "If someone is friendly, I can teach them everything."

After purchasing Penn Oaks from the Iacobucci Family in the early 2000s, the DiMarcos were so impressed by golf course superintendent Mark Williams' ability to improve the course conditions that they offered him partial ownership of the property.

"He had sweat equity," stated Stephen.

The DiMarco's also saw that with the four clubs currently in the Philadelphia-New Jersey area under the Concert umbrella, their staff at Penn Oaks would have new opportunities for upward mobility, while their members would have reciprocal access options to top courses across the Concert Golf network.

"I was an entrepreneur, and I look at things in a different way," explained Stephen DiMarco. "I like to work with people and understand them. We're in the people business. We're in the entertainment business. They're here to be entertained. After all, everyone has green grass and good food."

"Stephen's people skills are his truest asset," stated Andy Curry, a Penn Oaks Member for nearly 40 years. "John is behind-the-scenes. Anything that Stephen needs to do, he backs him up. Everything they do is first class."

One of A Kind

The DiMarco's style of management is unique and reflective of their historic club. Yet, Stephen DiMarco noticed a mirror image with Concert Golf. "It's a family atmosphere. The people are nice, and there are a lot of great people."

Based near Orlando, Concert Golf Partners is highly selective about the clubs it adds to its portfolio. As the only purely private club owner, Concert Golf delivers its signature level of service to its exclusive member clubs. When selling a club, it is imperative to partner with industry experts who specialize exclusively in the upscale private club industry.

"This is another step forward in our mission, as we look to preserve the legacy and heritage of Penn Oaks, enhance its amenities, and enable the club's membership to thrive," said Concert Golf Partners Senior Vice President of Corporate Development, Jordan Peace. "We're absolutely ecstatic that the ownership group at Penn Oaks selected Concert as their trusted successor."

"I'm proud of Penn Oaks," said John. "I think it's great we did a deal with Concert Golf. It's a great organization, and the people treat you with respect. Penn Oaks has found a good owner to continue our traditions."

Highly regarded as the industry's "go-to" private club experts, Concert invests its own capital to fund projects and build new amenities. Concert sets the standard for impeccable quality by continually elevating the stature of both its existing clubs and acquisitions, so that its members can access the finest private clubs and enjoy one-of-a-kind experiences.

"This reflects our commitment to 'The Concert Way,' an innovative, multi-step program that Concert Golf pioneered and perfected over the years to welcome clubs into our network, and facilitate a smooth transition for both members and the previous ownership," explained Concert Golf Partners COO, Susan Dunnivant. "Concert makes annual capital investments in our clubs aimed at elevating the amenities, service levels, and overall member experience, while building and maintaining a thriving club environment."

"On the Operations side, it starts with Susan on down," said Stephen DiMarco. "She says what she does, and it drove me to Concert."

To learn more about Concert Golf Partners, visit concertgolfpartners.com or contact Jordan Peace at jpeace@concertgolfclubs.com.

