

# Wailea Golf attendants achieve parity with other resort golf course contracts

WAILEA, Maui—On March 23, 2005 new ILWU members at Wailea Golf Resort voted unanimously to accept their first union contract.

Before Wailea Golf ILWU members voted “Yes” for union representation last year, management did not respond to their requests for wage increases or fair treatment. “We were at a crossroads,” said union negotiating committee member Don Kloet. “Several times we sat down individually with management. They talked about giving raises but we never got anything in writing. Finally, we decided we had to take things into our own hands—and felt that becoming union was our only avenue to get what we wanted.”

After winning representation by secret ballot election in June 2004, the members submitted contract proposals centered around fair treatment and getting pay, benefits and contract language comparable to surrounding unionized resort golf courses. The ILWU represents over 400 members at golf courses on Maui, including the courses owned by Kapalua Land Company, Ltd., Wailea Resort Company, Ltd., and Kaanapali Golf Management, as well as The Dunes at Maui Lani, Pukalani Country Club, Grand Waikapu Resort, and Makena Golf at the Maui Prince Hotel.

## Tough talks, tough action

The union negotiating committee faced many challenges during contract talks. At first, management did not want to match the wages and benefits at golf properties in proximity to Wailea Golf. Management also declined to match the wages and benefits at Wailea’s sister courses—the Mokihana and Kiele courses at Kauai Lagoons—where the ILWU already had a contract in place.

## Informed members are key

The members used a postcard-writing campaign to put pressure on management by showing community support for a fair contract at Wailea Golf. Many ILWU members statewide helped by signing postcards. The workers also made sure to present a solid front to management and stood fast in their support of the negoti-



**Bradley Curtis, Gregg Miller, Tony Crislato and Don Kloet were among the Wailea Golf Resort members who participated in informational picketing and leafletting in support of a fair contract.**

ating committee. “One of the keys to keeping everyone together was keeping everyone informed about negotiations,” said union committee member Bradley Curtis. “We planned it so that at any point any one of the workers could step into negotiations and pick up the ball and know what was going on. We’re a team and we should all be on the same page—nobody was left in the dark.”

By January 2005, tentative agreements were reached on most of the basic contract language. However, three major issues—wages, back pay and medical plan benefits—were still not settled.

## Solidarity on the picket line

The workers again decided to take things into their own hands and initiated informational leafletting and picketing to let golfers know about their efforts to negotiate a fair contract. “The employees wanted to take action,” said Maui Division Director and negotiations spokesperson Willie Kennison. “And once they decided, all of them stuck together. Everyone came out to support their negotiating committee and spent time leafletting.”

The informational picket garnered media coverage and public support. Maui Division officers, organizers, pensioners, and International staff also volunteered on the picket line.

## Arnold Palmer speaks out

Wailea Golf’s Robert Trent Jones Jr.-designed Gold Course is the home course of the Wendy’s

Champions Skins Game, a major tournament on the Champions (formerly Senior) PGA Tour. The workers intensified their leafletting efforts in the weeks prior to the Skins Game, which was scheduled to be held February 5-6, 2005. According to the committee, Arnold Palmer stopped to ask one of the picketers why the workers were leafletting outside the property. When the picketer explained that workers were in negotiations and couldn’t get their contract, Palmer replied “We can’t have this.” Shortly afterward, management called the union to say “we got the message” and within two meetings both sides agreed to a tentative agreement.

The contract provides union shop language, significant wage increases, guaranteed portage fees for large groups (excluding *kamaaina*), daily overtime, a paid meal period, and much more. “We succeeded because the all members had solidarity,” Kennison said. “The credit belongs to them, and to unit leaders Bradley Curtis and Don Kloet. This is a real success story and these workers should be an inspiration to others who want to organize and get a good contract.”

According to Kloet, “There was an understanding among all the workers that we were in it for the long term. Anything worthwhile, you have to fight for a little longer. We are doing this not just for us, but for future workers at Wailea Golf.” ♦