

South Fort Myers JV squad finishes season undefeated, 7-0, after thrilling 28-27 win over Fort Myers

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Lee Memorial CEO Jim Nathan discusses the health benefits of walking, the Start! program

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Check out reader submitted fishing photos from across Southwest Florida

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SATURDAY

THE BANNER

Serving Bonita Springs, Estero, South Fort Myers, North Naples

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No name change needed

By **VALLI FINNEY**
Banner Correspondent

Pride. That's what Mayor Ben Nelson says will do more for Bonita Springs than a suggested name change for the city. Sure, he says, Hickory Island and Bonita Beach has its own little sub-identity, but has advantages of being part of the whole.

"We've always had this dynamic as Bonita Springs in its entirety," Nelson said.

Bonita Springs resident Bill Stauffer pitched his idea before the City Council during its Wednesday meeting. No action was taken on Stauffer's proposal.

Stauffer was quoted in a previous newspaper report as saying he was not asking for the name change that day. He clarified his statement as saying he does not dislike the name Bonita Springs, but thinks a change to Bonita Beach would improve tourism and bring in more money to the city.

Nelson, who gave Stauffer 10 minutes to pitch his proposal, said later Wednesday that the city spent a lot of time "branding" the city over the past 18 months.

During the branding process, the city learned it has no different demographics than Cape Coral or Lee County proper, Nelson said. And crime has been reduced in recent years and is half Naples' crime rate, he added.

"We don't need to change our name," he said. "We need to change the attitude."

David Piper, who is a fourth generation Bonita Springs resident and whose family owns Everglades Wonder Garden, doesn't see a need for a name change, but can understand both sides of the issue.

From a public relations standpoint, yes, it might be better to have the word Beach in it. But with the BP Oil spill still fresh in many people's mind, it may have an adverse affect.

The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico had a big impact on the European tourists coming to the Gulf Coast states, Piper said. Some businesses reported that as much as 75 percent of typical European vacationers did not come in July and August as compared to previous years.

Ironically, it isn't only the European tourists who have thought twice about whether there is tar or oil on Southwest Florida's beaches.

Barbara and Gerald Ropka of Wheaton, Ill., arrived Oct. 15 and were at Bonita's beach on Wednesday afternoon. They didn't know until they came to the area that oil and tar had

SPOTLIGHT



SUBMITTED

David Crook was a first place winner in the Kayakers-on-the-Trail category in the 2010 Calusa Blueway Photo Contest. The Calusa Blueway Paddling Festival is one of the region's top outdoor events and runs from October 30 through November 7 and features waterway recreation events and ecological programs throughout the county. See story and more winning photos on Page 4B.

Coconut Point Mall shines as testing ground for solar powered golf cart

By **LAURA J. GATES**
Banner Correspondent

When listing Southwest Florida's assets, two things likely to make the top 10 would be the sunshine and the area's plentiful golf courses. So, what happens when you cross the two? You get solar powered golf carts.

As businesses search for ways to trim down operational costs, one local company is looking to the sun as a constant, free source of energy. While solar energy is not new, the technology has advanced in recent years, making it more practical, and economical, to go green.

"We are looking at solar power that really makes economical sense," said Hans Holzmann, executive vice president of Gulf City Solar in Bonita Springs, which makes a "peel and stick" solar panel for powering golf carts.

The young company, founded in 2009, has teamed up with Coconut Point Mall to test its products as they come to market. Coconut Point has converted the first of five golf carts it uses for maintenance into a solar-powered "green machine."

Gulf City Solar also is installing a solar-powered aeration



SUBMITTED

Hans Holzmann of Gulf City Solar and John Kennedy, area director of operations for Coconut Point Mall, sit in the first golf cart to be outfitted with GCS's solar golf cart kit. The flexible, stick-on panel provides all-day power without needing electric charging.

system in the development's artificial lake this week.

It's a triple win: Gulf City Solar gets to fine tune its product while in action; Coconut Point gets cutting-edge, cost-saving technology, and the environ-

ment does not get polluted or depleted.

While the company has yet to solidify a major contract with a golf club, the market is ripe. There are an estimated 260,000 golf carts in Florida.

"We're like a cow in a meadow," Holzmann joked, adding that converting 50 golf carts to solar could save golf clubs \$50,000 a year. Solar power also is easier on batteries and may double their life.

"With solar, it gets constantly charged. The batteries don't deplete over normal circumstances, so there's no sulfation," Holzmann explained.

Gulf City Solar promises golf carts powered by its solar panels will run all day without charging, even on cloudy or rainy days. Coconut Point Director of Operations John Kennedy put that claim to the test last week during the Taste of Coconut Point event.

"During the day on Sunday, it never stopped operating," he said, adding that several guests inquired about the cart's solar capabilities.

By saving on energy costs, golf cart owners should expect to recoup the initial \$1,400 investment for the solar kit within two years, according to Holzmann. Converting to solar also comes with a tax credit, and the state of Florida does not charge sales tax.

While the outlook for solar powered golf carts is bright, Gulf City Solar isn't stopping there. The company is installing a solar-powered lake aeration system at Coconut Point