

PRESS-REGISTER

A relief and an inspiration on Dauphin Island (editorial)

By **Press-Register Editorial Board** - Published: Friday, December 30, 2011

THE GULF Coast has lost many things to hurricanes, the oil spill and the recession, and the Isle Dauphine Golf Club appeared to be one of them.

On Dec. 19, the beautiful beachside course was shut down because the Dauphin Island Property Owners Association could no longer afford to manage it.

Fortunately, the closure was only temporary. On Thursday, the course reopened, buoyed by the commitment of more than 50 volunteers to maintain the grounds. It will be open for five days a week.

This came as a huge relief for the island and for local golf enthusiasts, who can continue to enjoy the course, which offers among the best views of the Gulf anywhere. Indeed, the loss of the Isle Dauphine would have left a gaping hole in the island's basic offerings for tourists.

However, it was understandable that the association made the initial decision to close. The 18-hole public course was losing about \$150,000 a year — an amount that was way too much for the property owners association to make up on a permanent basis.

Losses have been typical for the golf industry as a whole because of the national recession. Today, families just have less discretionary money to spend, said Dauphin Island Mayor Jeff Collier, who had also served as the golf pro and manager.

It didn't help that the island had suffered damage from hurricanes in recent years and from the incorrect perception that the island was covered in oil from the BP spill in 2010.

Saving the golf course can keep golfers and their families coming to the island and spending money there. It can also generate revenues for the golf course restaurant, the Gulfview Grill, which will be open for breakfast and lunch on the same days as the golf course.

Eventually, the course may get financial assistance to pay for a new manager and staff, according to the property owners association. But for now, the volunteers who stepped in deserve the credit for saving the Isle Dauphine.