

U.S. Golf Association Goes 'Soft'

Erroll Morris directed latest spots with voiceovers by Ed Burns

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By Steve McClellan

NEW YORK As the U.S. Open golf tournament gets under way, the U.S. Golf Association is launching a \$10 million ad campaign designed to take some of the starch out of the game's image. New TV spots debut tonight on ESPN.

The campaign was developed by Omnicom's Fathom Communications, New York, which won the account in April after a review that included Kirshenbaum Bond + Partners. Incumbent BBDO did not defend.

Four new TV spots air this week on ESPN's prime-time coverage and during NBC's weekend afternoon telecasts of the final two rounds (June 14-15).

In addition to the new commercials, directed by Academy Award-winning director Errol Morris (*Fog of War*), the campaign will utilize online, direct mail and experiential components.

The spots (with voiceovers by actor Ed Burns) are designed to soften the game's elitist image and demonstrate that anyone can play. In one ad, kids are shown playing. In another a couple is playing a round and it's the woman who has the handicap, not her male partner. But while everyday folks are featured instead of the celebrity-laden spots featured previously, the "For the good of the game" tagline, developed by BBDO, remains.

The overall campaign will focus on the core functions of the USGA, which include writing the Rules of Golf, establishing the USGA Handicap Index System, conducting 13 national championships, and maintaining the history of the game through the USGA Museum and the new Arnold Palmer Center for Golf History in Bernards Township, N.J.

Commenting on the new campaign, USGA chief business officer Pete Bevacqua said, "We are excited about the energy, creativity and vision that Fathom has demonstrated. We look forward to working very closely with them as we unveil additional components of our campaign over the coming months."

Peter Groome, president of Fathom Communications, said. "Our focus for the USGA is to develop a complete communications plan that will create a stronger connection between golfers and the USGA at all points of contact and well beyond their most visible medium, television."