

People to Know: Dave Brannon, WM Phoenix Open's Zero-Waste Orchestrator

Written by Cassie Brucci

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For many attendees of the WM Phoenix Open, the best part of the tournament is the famous 16th hole. For Dave Brannon, WM Phoenix Open's zero-waste orchestrator, his answer is a little different.



Dave Brannon, WM Phoenix Open's zero-waste orchestrator

"When the sun just comes up, and the course is clean," says Brannon. "There's an enormous sense of pride in knowing what it takes to get that done every day. It's my favorite part of the tournament."

As the lead who oversees WM Phoenix Open's zero-waste efforts at TPC Scottsdale, Brannon helps ensure "The Greatest Show on the Grass" is also the greenest. That's no small feat, given the sheer size of the WM Phoenix Open (in 2022 alone, tournament attendees produced more than 1,000 tons of compostable, recyclable or donatable materials). But Brannon, a Waste Management veteran of over 16 years, is happy to play a role in this vital initiative: "The WM Phoenix Open is a very prideful event for anyone working at Waste Management," he says.

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people attend the WM Phoenix Open. Ensuring an event this large goes off without a hitch takes months of preparation — 10 months, to be exact. Once a tournament begins, Brannon and his 500-plus person team became part of 24/7 operation to make sure attendees don't know what lay there the night before. "Sometimes, you can't even see the grass on the course. It looks like a silver Coors Light sheet," says Brannon.

Starting each morning around 5 a.m., Brannon works between 11–15 hours daily to help his day crew keep the grounds clean and organized during the tournament. Once his shift ends, a night crew brings all materials to Waste Management's Deer Valley Transfer Station for further sorting. During Phoenix Open week, the Deer Valley Transfer Station allots half of its facility to Brannon's team, helping to guarantee everything ends up in the proper place. "We're meticulous with tracking the materials coming in and make sure nothing leaves without going to a compost facility or a recycling facility," says Brannon.



In the seven years since Brannon joined the WM Phoenix Open, he's seen the event eclipse its original goal of keeping trash out of landfills to become a bonafide zero-waste tournament. The evolving mission gives Brannon's team the space and freedom to innovate. In recent years, they figured out a way to get creative with water conservation: "We now capture ice that melts at the 16th hole's stadium bars and use it or repurpose it," he says. And in 2023, the WM Phoenix Open will only have trucks using clean CNG natural gas on-site; this was a goal Brannon started was years in the making. "Sometimes you have to set those pie-in-the-sky goals and push the boundaries of where you currently are," says Brannon.

Brannon credits the success of the WM Phoenix Open's sustainability program to a tremendous amount of planning, organization and great partnerships and believes any company can become more sustainable with the right tools. Waste Management currently works with the likes of the NBA, NASCAR and TopGolf to execute comprehensive sustainability Partner to the PGA TOUR. Given sustainability's relevance in today's world, Brannon isn't surprised that others are looking to Waste Management for guidance. "I think it's a great thing."

For more information about the WM Phoenix Open's sustainability program, click this [link](#).

This feature is in our special edition IN AZ 2023 issue. Read the full issue online [here](#) for more inside intel on where to stay, dine and everything in between IN AZ this sporting event season.

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Photos courtesy of WM Phoenix Open