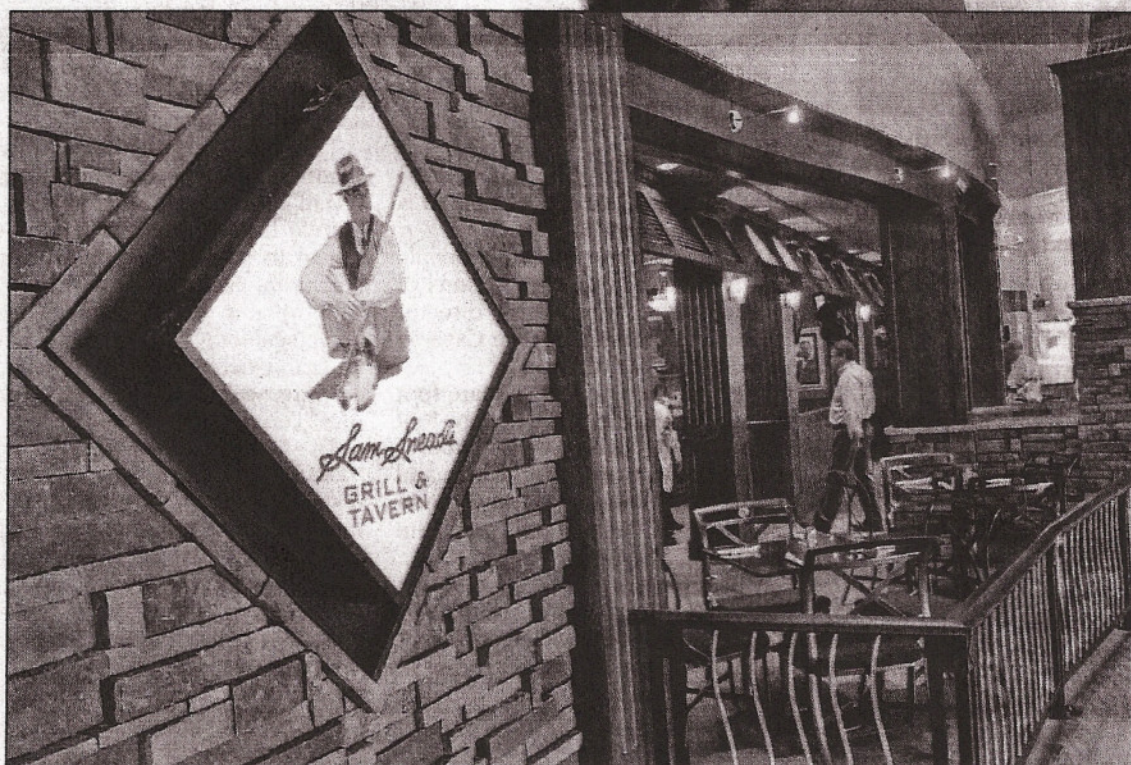
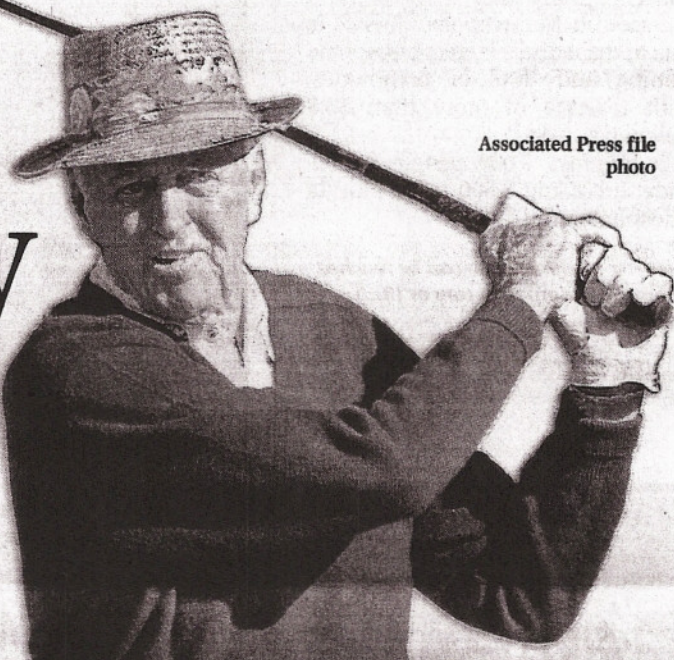


# A Taste Of History

Tampa International Airport's new restaurant, based on legendary golfer Sam Snead, aims to fit travelers to a T.

Associated Press file photo



Tribune photos by GREG FIGHT

**Sam Snead's Grill & Tavern opened July 2, serving travelers at Tampa International Airport's Airside A. The golf-themed restaurant's menu includes breakfast through dinner at prices that range up to \$30.**

By TED JACKOVICS  
The Tampa Tribune

**TAMPA** — Tampa International Airport might seem like an unlikely venue to open a restaurant themed on the Hall of Fame golf career of Slammin' Sammy Snead, whose game was at its peak from the late 1930s to the early 1960s.

But the robust golf-oriented demographic of Tampa Bay area residents and visitors laid the groundwork for the latest Sam Snead's Grill & Tavern, which opened at the airport last week.

Florida leads the nation with more than 1,060 golf courses, a National Golf Foundation survey shows, about 150 more than runner-up California. Florida claims 1.6 million golfers, so there's enormous interest in golf.

The Sam Snead concept also creates an option for the nongolf crowd who may want to eat in a comparatively upscale airport restaurant at Airside A, which serves AirTran, Continental, Frontier, JetBlue and Northwest Airlines.

Whether or not patrons have heard of Sam Snead, those dining in the 124-seat restaurant with oak and pine paneling and furnishings can pick up a quick sports history lesson along with breakfast through dinner at prices that range up to \$30.

Snead, who was 89 when he died in 2002, played golf for 60 years. He won 185 tournaments, including a record 82 PGA Tour victories. Snead



Memorabilia and photographs — such as this one of golfer Sam Snead, left, and comedian Jackie Gleason — decorate the walls of the 124-seat restaurant.

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A report shows projected annual sales of \$2 million.



Tribune photo by GREG FIGHT

**Tampa International Airport director Louis Miller says the Sam Snead's restaurant is part of an overall renovation of concession areas at the airport. A report shows the new restaurant projects \$2 million in sales annually.**

## SAM SNEAD'S

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made 42 holes-in-one and set 164 course records, shooting a .59 in a USGA tournament in 1959.

"We trained our staff to tell people Sam Snead was the Tiger Woods of his era," said Charles Mansir, director of food and beverage for Pat Casey & Associates in Windermere.

The walls of the 1,681-square-foot dining area in the 3,800-square-foot restaurant are covered with memorabilia such as clubs, scorecards and photos from Snead's career, more in style with a fashionable museum than themed restaurant décor.

"Check out Snead with Jackie Gleason," said Tampa International Airport director Louis Miller of photographs that have become favorites of the initial restaurant clientele.

Gleason's comedic reign, which helped popularize TV during the 1950s, paralleled Snead's epic, televised golf course battles with Ben Hogan during the same era. Those pushed golf into the Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus eras.

Travelers Tom and Mary Corn of Tampa, who enjoyed lunch at Sam Snead's on a recent trip through Tampa International, said they were drawn in part by finding an airport restaurant with atypical fare. The wide-ranging menu includes Angus beef, seafood, chicken, and salads and sandwiches.

"Sure, we've heard of Sam Snead, too," Tom Corn said.

The Sam Snead restaurant concept took off after Pat Casey, a longtime restaurant entrepreneur in the Orlando area, met Snead in the golfer's hometown of Hot Springs, W.Va., where Snead and his son opened a restaurant in 1980.

Casey opened his first Sam Snead tavern at an Orlando golf course in 1992. Today, Casey's Pike Corp. of

Windermere licenses Sam Snead's taverns at three Florida airports — Tampa, West Palm Beach and Jacksonville — and five other Florida cities, including Sarasota. Four more Sam Snead's are located in Georgia, Indiana, Pennsylvania and Hawaii.

A Tampa International Airport document shows Snead's projects local sales of \$2 million annually. That would surpass recent annual revenue at The Wharf, a restaurant at the main terminal that was closed to make way for the opening of a Carrabba's in November. Many of The Wharf's former employees are among 45 employees at Sam Snead's.

The new restaurant is part of an overall renovation of the airport's concession areas, Miller said. The Hillsborough County Aviation Authority reported \$4.5 million in food and beverage revenue in May, with TGI Friday's, the top revenue generator, reporting \$618,324 in sales.

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**CHARLES MANSIR**

*Director of food and beverage for Pat Casey & Associates*