

ENTREPRENEUR EARNS LIVING BY COLLECTING LOST GOLF BALLS FROM WATER AND DODGING ALLIGATORS TO GET THEM

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By Tom Evans

Glenn Berger says he has collected 15 million balls, selling them on for a healthy profit. If you think your job is hard - this man dodges alligators for a living. Glenn Berger's bizarre but lucrative business sees him dive down in the water hazards off some of Florida's finest golf courses to sell on lost golf balls.

The 40-year-old claims he's collected 15 million of them in a 14 year career to sell them on for a profit.

Depending on the type of ball he could make as little as 25 cents (around 15p) or as much as \$2 (£1.30).

But while Glenn hasn't disclosed exactly how wealthy he is, shipping two million balls a year internationally at those rates means he can't be short of a bob or two.



Haul: The businessman takes his life in his hands to bring these balls back home

He said: “It’s a great job. I’ve had a few run-ins with alligators – they’re a hazard in my line of work but it’s all worthwhile.

“They’ll float over me while I’m on the bottom but sometimes they’re curious - especially the smaller ones, they’ll dive down and bump me on the tank just to see what I am.

“Scuba diving is a dangerous activity as it is but when you add no visibility, no lifeline and alligators looking for a meal it only gets worse.

“I just try to not to think about them and focus on picking up golf balls.”

During the dives 6ft 8ins, 18st Glenn wears a black and blue wet suit, weights and an air tank he paints in a camouflage pattern to hide from any curious gators.

Glenn says that some of his most gut-wrenching run-ins include an alligator tangled in his diving gear, or becoming stuck to debris at the bottom of the lakes.

One time he thought one of the animals was on his back, but when he got out of the water he realized it was just his imagination.



Glenn has found all kinds of unusual things under water, regardless of the balls

Florida boasts more golf courses than any other state in the US – more than 1,250. Glenn, originally from Indiana, has dive contracts on about 30 of them.

Glenn said: "South Florida water hazards are like no other in the United States.

"I've seen alligators, venomous cottonmouth snakes, snapping turtles and even crocodiles. It can get tense sometimes."

In his time he's found chairs, tables, umbrellas, bird skulls, dead fish, lawn mowers and golf carts.

At his warehouse he dumps the day's harvest into a machine which conveys balls along an assembly line where they are bathed with bleach, water, a degreaser and a series of chemicals.

After the balls dry, he then has to sort the balls according to value and bags them up in his warehouse to sell on.

"My personal best is 17,000 balls in a single day," he said.

"It's a hazard and it's dangerous sometimes but it's well worth it."



Score: Glenn sells on around two million balls a year as part of his unusual business

Glenn has owned his company, BustinBalls, which sells the second hand golf balls for 14 years now and the quality brands can fetch up \$2 per ball if in good condition.

He also claims he runs into other dangers whilst in the lake, finding everything from the alligators to abandoned cars.

"The golden rule is to never put your hand inside," he told Today's Golfer. "My friend did once and he touched a body."