

DARDEN RESTAURANTS INC
 Form 4
 February 26, 2008

FORM 4 UNITED STATES SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION
 Washington, D.C. 20549

OMB APPROVAL
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Check this box if no longer subject to Section 16. Form 4 or Form 5 obligations may continue. See Instruction 1(b).

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP OF SECURITIES

Filed pursuant to Section 16(a) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, Section 17(a) of the Public Utility Holding Company Act of 1935 or Section 30(h) of the Investment Company Act of 1940

(Print or Type Responses)

1. Name and Address of Reporting Person *
 SMITH JACK A

2. Issuer Name and Ticker or Trading Symbol
 DARDEN RESTAURANTS INC [DRI]

5. Relationship of Reporting Person(s) to Issuer
 (Check all applicable)

(Last) (First) (Middle)
 5900 LAKE ELLENOR DRIVE, P.O. BOX 593330
 (Street)

3. Date of Earliest Transaction (Month/Day/Year)
 02/22/2008

Director 10% Owner
 Officer (give title below) Other (specify below)

ORLANDO, FL 32859-3330

4. If Amendment, Date Original Filed(Month/Day/Year)

6. Individual or Joint/Group Filing(Check Applicable Line)
 Form filed by One Reporting Person
 Form filed by More than One Reporting Person

(City) (State) (Zip)

Table I - Non-Derivative Securities Acquired, Disposed of, or Beneficially Owned

| 1. Title of Security (Instr. 3) | 2. Transaction Date (Month/Day/Year) | 2A. Deemed Execution Date, if any (Month/Day/Year) | 3. Transaction Code (Instr. 8) | 4. Securities Acquired (A) or Disposed of (D) (Instr. 3, 4 and 5) | 5. Amount of Securities Beneficially Owned Following Reported Transaction(s) (Instr. 3 and 4) | 6. Ownership Form: Direct (D) or Indirect (I) (Instr. 4) | 7. Nature of Ownership (Instr. 4) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| | | | | (A) or (D) Code V Amount (D) Price | | | |
| Common Stock | | | | | 59,174 | D | |

Reminder: Report on a separate line for each class of securities beneficially owned directly or indirectly.

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SEC 1474 (9-02)

Table II - Derivative Securities Acquired, Disposed of, or Beneficially Owned (e.g., puts, calls, warrants, options, convertible securities)

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| 1. Title of Derivative Security (Instr. 3) | 2. Conversion or Exercise Price of Derivative Security | 3. Transaction Date (Month/Day/Year) | 3A. Deemed Execution Date, if any (Month/Day/Year) | 4. Transaction Code (Instr. 8) | 5. Number of Derivative Securities Acquired (A) or Disposed of (D) (Instr. 3, 4, and 5) | 6. Date Exercisable and Expiration Date (Month/Day/Year) | 7. Title and Amount of Underlying Securities (Instr. 3 and 4) | 8. Price or Amount of Shares |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---|--|---|------------------------------|
| Phantom Stock Units | (1) | 02/22/2008 | | A | 297.96 | (2) (2) | Common Stock | 297.96 \$ 3 |
| Phantom Stock Units | (1) | | | | | (4) (4) | Common Stock | 0 |

Reporting Owners

| Reporting Owner Name / Address | Relationships | | | |
|--|---------------|-----------|---------|-------|
| | Director | 10% Owner | Officer | Other |
| SMITH JACK A 5900 LAKE ELLENOR DRIVE P.O. BOX 593330 ORLANDO, FL 32859-3330 | X | | | |

Signatures

Douglas E. Wentz, Attorney-in-fact for SMITH, JACK A., 5900 Lake Ellenor Drive, P.O. Box 593330, Orlando, FL 32859-3330 02/26/2008

__Signature of Reporting Person Date

Explanation of Responses:

- * If the form is filed by more than one reporting person, *see* Instruction 4(b)(v).
- ** Intentional misstatements or omissions of facts constitute Federal Criminal Violations. *See* 18 U.S.C. 1001 and 15 U.S.C. 78ff(a).
- (1) The actual conversion rate is 1-for-1. Each Phantom Stock Unit is the economic equivalent of one share of Darden common stock.
- (2) The Reporting Person elected to defer all of the quarterly Director's compensation under the Darden Restaurants, Inc. Director Compensation Program, to be paid out in cash upon the reporting person's termination of board service.
Includes phantom stock units acquired pursuant to a dividend equivalent reinvestment feature of the Darden Restaurants, Inc. Director Compensation Program. The number of shares reported is based on a plan statement dated January 31, 2008 and is derived from an undivided interest in a fund consisting of both Darden common stock and a small cash position that fluctuates from time to time. The number of shares reported may change based on the size of the cash position at the time of reporting.
- (3) The Reporting Person previously elected to defer certain Director's compensation under the Darden Restaurants, Inc. Compensation Plan for Non-Employee Directors, to be paid out in Darden Restaurants, Inc. common stock upon the reporting person's termination of board service, and the aggregate number of such Phantom Stock Units received pursuant to such deferrals is indicated.
- (4) Includes phantom stock units acquired pursuant to a dividend equivalent reinvestment feature of the Darden Restaurants, Inc. Compensation Plan for Non-Employee Directors.
- (5)

Note: File three copies of this Form, one of which must be manually signed. If space is insufficient, *see* Instruction 6 for procedure.

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