

## Asian market perspective: E-Z-GO's Dan Boling weighs in

**D**an Boling is manager of Asian sales for E-Z-GO. Based in Singapore, Boling recently oversaw equipment contracts with two courses in China and a further two in India. As an insider of the Asian golf market, Boling was recently in conversation with *Golf Course News's* Trevor Ledger.

**GCN:** What is your perception of the state of golf in Asia right now?

**BOLING:** This economic crisis has affected all sectors in the golf industry

regardless of whether it's machinery, irrigation, golf carts, designers — it's had an effect on everybody.

I don't think this is something that will change in the next three to six months, this is going to take some time to sort out but it's a cycle and we feel that it will only be a short period of time before it starts to turn around.

**GCN:** Do you have a timeframe in mind?

**BOLING:** My opinion is that we haven't

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really hit bottom yet in some of the countries. I think that may happen around the first part of next year, and that will be a period of what I consider "flat line."

After that point, it should start to work its way back up and I would hope that would happen some time around the end of 1999.

**GCN:** You have just closed two deals in India and two in China. Are these the major markets in Asia right now?

**BOLING:** India, of course, is just coming on board. China did so a couple of years ago. China is now only second to Japan as a market for golf cars in Asia.

**GCN:** What happens next for E-Z-GO in Asia?

**BOLING:** We know this crisis is part of a cycle. We are in it for the long run and have developed new models which have considered specific designs for the Asian market.

I think that with the overall economic situation, the customers will remember who continued to service them instead of abandoning the region.



Dan Boling

**GCN:** What effect has the formation of Textron Turfcare and Specialty Products had on E-Z-GO in Asia?

**BOLING:** They are still undergoing their changes and we are not directly affected as yet. There is a turf side to Textron and a golf car side.

**GCN:** Do you foresee the success of E-Z-GO in Asia being used as a springboard for other members of the group such as Ransomes or Jacobsen?

**BOLING:** Already my office here is combined with different divisions of Textron. Although we are in different parts of the industry we are able, due to sharing an office, to look at each other's different types of business.

**GCN:** With the devaluation of many currencies in Asia, are the management companies taking advantage of cheaper property prices?

**BOLING:** It seems as though they might well be waiting for the market to hit rock bottom. A lot of people are looking and I would say, yes, there will be some purchases by foreign investors but I don't think the market has flat-lined yet.

**GCN:** When that low point is reached how do you see the new market emerging?

**BOLING:** I think that it will be a more cautious and mature market, but Asians love golf.

As a matter of fact, what most people aren't talking about is the fact that the golf courses are getting more play than they ever have.

Obviously the rates are cheaper now and, although we are not seeing much construction, there are enough golf courses in Thailand, for example, to allow people to get on a golf course quite easily.

Although the market is being hit by the economic situation, I think everyone agrees that golf is actually growing. There is still very positive growth in people playing.

**GCN:** So the crash has, in effect, allowed the market the opportunity to emerge in a much healthier state?

**BOLING:** Exactly, I believe so. The amount of people playing right now is proof that the sport is going to continue to grow and the reduction of green fees has lead the managers to realize that they need to keep them within the grasp of the average person.

When the tournaments are played — the Johnnie Walker Classic in Thailand, for example — I am sure you will see a very large crowd because the interest is still there.

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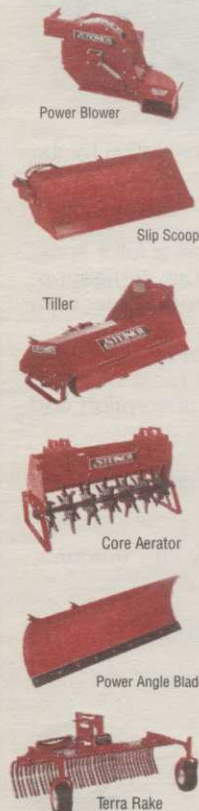
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