

## Lloyds gets Mike on the ball

How Golf Equip started and grew into an international business

**H**ow do you pick up thousands of golf balls at a driving range, and then clean them quickly ready to be used again?

Solving that problem - and others faced by golf driving ranges - has proved that businessman Mike Collins is really on the ball. It has brought him international success - so much so that his golfing products are now a big hit in much of Europe.

In just a decade his company, Golf Equip, has grown into a market leader, with the support and expert advice of Lloyds Bank an invaluable element of Mike's success. Now even the golf professionals are adding their vote of confidence in his products, by choosing them to help polish their game.

Mike's is the classic success story. Two decades in the motor trade saw him rise from mechanic to garage proprietor. He has also run a guest house, during the mid-70s he even worked a franchised bread round.

The inspiration for Golf Equip came while Mike was travelling the country demonstrating a machine for dispensing golf balls. Mike says he was appalled by the quality of equipment usually used on golf ranges, and believed he could make better, tougher products.

He began by designing extra-tough standing and playing mats, and perfected a new rubber tee with extra-long life. From those small beginnings the company grew, and today employs six staff, including Mike's wife and son.

Mike, a perfectionist, spent three years designing and perfecting his ball collecting machine, which is now a key factor in the efficient running of driving ranges all over the



country. He also adapted existing "all terrain vehicles" to act as tractor units for the machine.

Mike believes his equipment is good enough to allow range operators to use mechanical ball collectors all year round. His ball washing equipment gives them the capacity to collect, wash and re-use thousands of balls each day - the most basic requirement for range operators.

Professional golfers and international competition organisers also put their faith in his products. The Royal and Ancient Golf Club asked him to run the practice ground at the Open Championship in 1984, and soon to follow were appearances at the Four Stars Tournament, Dunhill Cup, Dunhill British Masters and Seniors British Open.

His ball collecting equipment is also hired out for the Dunhill Cup and British Masters, the Seniors and the Ladies Weetabix Open.

**G**olf Equip is also building up a solid export business - its machinery and equipment can now be found in Belgium, the Channel Islands, Denmark, Eire,

France, Germany, Holland, Iceland, Norway, Portugal and Spain.

Despite his hectic business life, Mike still manages to fit in the odd round of golf. He is captain of Littlehampton Golf Club, and has chaired its greens committee for the past three years.

He regards local Lloyds Bank manager Tom Adams as an important factor in his business success. He has come to rely on Tom's friendly advice and counselling, as well as the regular business account service operated by Lloyds Bank.

Expansion has also brought the need for letters of credit and foreign exchange services, as well as overseas credit references - all of which Lloyds Bank has provided.

Lloyds Bank is firmly committed to helping small businesses like Mike's. The number of new business accounts gained this year alone has more than justified the many initiatives taken - initiatives like commission-free banking for 12 months with new business accounts (whether in debit or credit), a year's free subscription to Dun and Bradstreet's commercial collection service and a special small business loan without any red tape.