

American Golf to grow Nike Golf Learning Centers concept

By ANDREW OVERBECK

SANTA MONICA, Calif. — In response to the success of its Nike Golf Learning Centers, American Golf Corp. is set to open 25 new ones this year. The company already has 40 centers in operation, and has introduced

more than 7,000 new players to the game of golf this year.

"We are outperforming the expectations of our business plan," said Mike O'Donnell, director of operations. "We expected to convert 30 percent of our students into 'new golfers' — that is people

who play 10 rounds of golf each year. Right now we are doubling that."

Most of the learning centers are located in the western United States, but that will soon change.

"Our overall strategy was to move from west to east," said O'Donnell. "Right now we are assessing our courses to determine if they have the facilities necessary to run the program and

whether they have a need for the program. Our regional directors in New York and Minnesota are very interested in the program. It is in high internal demand."

Nike Golf Learning Centers will expand eastward this year and facilities will be created in Charlotte, N.C., Atlanta, Orlando, Fla. and Chicago. Additional centers will come on stream in southern California and Texas. The com-

pany plans to expand into the Northeast in 2002.

SAFE HAVEN FOR NEW GOLFERS

The point of the learning centers, said O'Donnell, is to build play and create a demand for tee times at American Golf facilities.

"Depending on the numbers that you look at, there are 40 million people that are interested in playing golf and want to take lessons and there are 21 million people that watch golf on television but don't play," he said. "That is eight to 15 percent of the population that is ready to play. But they need a place where they can go and learn and not be intimidated. We aim to be a safe haven for new golfers."

The instruction program consists of six hours of group lessons that take place over a period of four weeks. If at the end of the program a golfer is not ready to play on course they can repeat the program free of charge.

"The program content is focused on teaching transition-to-play components," said O'Donnell. "We include time on the course and practice swing mechanics, but 50 percent of our time is spent on teaching students how to book a tee time, how to drive a golf car and what to do on the course. Our focus is on producing technically good students opposed to technically good golfers."

Following the initial lessons, there are programs at the centers designed to keep the new players coming back.

"We have Play Days where they get a free 30- to 45-minute topical clinic and then go out and play on the course with the golf pro," he said. "We also have new golfer scrambles, and one of our courses just did a night 'glow golf' tournament. We try to make it fun and break down the stereotypical stodgy image of golf."

ClubLink

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"These agreements with Canadian Country Club Communities allow ClubLink to realize the value of its surplus residential land at four of its Greater Toronto Area golf courses," said Bruce S. Simmonds, ClubLink president and CEO. "These transactions transfer the cost and risk of land development to Canadian Country Club Communities while ClubLink remains focused on its core golf business."

Canadian Country Club Communities is a private company that has associations with leading developers and house builders, including The Kaitlin Real Estate Group of Toronto, one of the Greater Toronto Area's most distinguished developers and homebuilders. ■

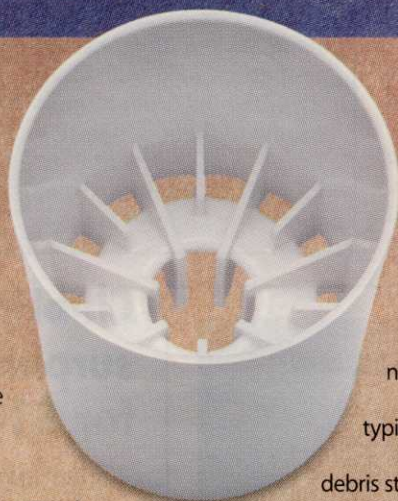
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