

InVICTA alliance provides marketing tool for owners

By DEREK RICE

SAN CLEMENTE, Calif. — The InVICTA Club World Alliance, an alliance of owners of golf, business, yacht, athletic and spa facilities, has signed a partnership agreement with Strachan Management Ltd. Under the agreement, Strachan will be allowed to market and expand the

InVICTA Club program in Canada and the northeastern United States.

Under the InVICTA alliance, 10 to 20 golf course owners are teamed in a local alliance and tied into the worldwide alliance. InVICTA Club members receive reciprocal playing privileges at private clubs as well as preferred

pricing and advanced booking privileges at daily-fee clubs.

"The alliance was designed for owners to drive members to their facilities," said Jim Hoppenrath, president of InVICTA Club Inc. "So now you've got a competitive advantage over those guys who aren't a member of this alliance."

The alliance currently comprises 50 member clubs, with 50 more agreements in various stages of negotiation, Hoppenrath said. The goal is to have 1,000 clubs in the alliance, which he said will not add any administrative costs, based on the Web-based nature of the InVICTA program.

"The key to this is creating a Web-based database to tap into

so that as a member, you can show up at any InVICTA facility and be verified and know your privileges at that facility within a half-second," he said.

If InVICTA tried to do this using a traditional call-center model, Hoppenrath said, the costs would quickly become prohibitive.

"With as many as 1,000 members, you could probably manage that, but if you're going to scale up to a million members, which is our goal, it's an administrative nightmare," he said. "You can't hire people fast enough and the cost is going to go through the roof."

A key feature to the InVICTA plan that should be attractive to club owners, Hoppenrath said, is that they don't have to give up any control at their clubs, and they can continue with business as usual.

"We're not just a third party trying to line our pockets," he said. "We're trying to help these guys gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace today. This is just another tool in their belt to be able to sell."

The major challenge Hoppenrath faces in trying to sell the idea of this alliance is the traditional nature of golf and golf course owners.

"These guys are fiercely independent," he said. "It does take a while to get them to realize they're part of a bigger group. You can break a single pencil, but if you put 50 of them together, you can't break them. They're much stronger together than they are by themselves."

Straight talk.

"We've done our homework. We've looked at all the other magazines serving the golf course industry, and we're advertising with *Golf Course News*. You are **the most professional book in the market**, and it is professionals who will buy our product."

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"As soon as I read the article in this month's *Golf Course News* about the IRS allowing the depreciation of greens, **a light went on**. I immediately sent the information out to my potential renovation and new construction clients to make them aware of the new tax advantages."

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ASL Golf Course Construction

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Ravisloe Country Club

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Golf insurance

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you have to fit our program."

Because Acordia was acquired by Wells Fargo Inc. last year, Connor said, it is able to offer its customers more than just insurance.

"We are currently developing relationships with our bankers at Wells Fargo so we can say to the golf course owner, 'You know all that maintenance equipment you lease? I know a few bankers within Wells Fargo you might want to talk with,'" he said. "We won't be too aggressive about it, but if you don't want to shop all over, we have it all." ■

VGM/First Tee

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the company to pursue that.

"We feel The First Tee program is an excellent program. We felt that their goals and accomplishments met our requirements for a partnership or relationship, namely is it good for the game of golf?" he said. "We believe they are in it for the right reasons." ■