

GOLF EQUIPMENT & TOUR NEWS

GOLFGEAR NEWSWIRE

Spike on Golf 3.6

By Steve Pike

It's always nice to see a small equipment company succeed in the golf industry. It's also good for the industry as it keeps — or should keep — the big boys on their toes. Alec Pettigrew's Groove Equipment Limited is one such small company. The former chief executive officer of YES! Golf putter company, Pettigrew last year launched his GEL line of putters that feature horizontal grooves milled into a soft aluminum insert.



GEL putters were one of the more popular products at the PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando this past January and Pettigrew said that momentum still continues.

“People are sort of familiar with the brand from the past year,” Pettigrew told Spike on Golf. “They’ve seen companies come and go so the second year they take you a bit more seriously. We made money the first year, which is a great achievement. This year, since Orlando, we generated sales we sort of didn’t expect to generate. We’ve now got almost total global coverage in terms of distribution.”

It probably helps, too, that the inserts on GEL putters are bright blue for men and bright pink for women.

“The insert makes the putter very identifiable on TV,” Pettigrew said. “We messed around with a lot of different materials and a lot of different faces. The feedback we got from people was that (with the insert) it just felt better.

“The groove technology is far superior to flat-faced technology, that’s been proven. What YES! Golf did reduce the skid time from about 18 inches to about four inches. The way we’ve changed the groove pattern now makes the ball top-spin almost instantly off the club face. And it’s top-spinning the right way regardless of where you hit it on the club face.”

Guess you could say GEL is on a top-spin roll.

TMAG GOES NORTH: TaylorMade adidas Golf and the Royal Canadian Golf Association have signed a three-year agreement in which TMAG will become the official golf equipment and apparel partner of the RCGA. The agreement builds on an existing partnership between TMAG and RCGA that has the equipment and apparel company as both an Equipment Sponsor and the Official Apparel Sponsor of the RCGA National Amateur Team Program.

As part of the agreement, TaylorMade adidas Golf will be the exclusive supplier of volunteer uniforms for the

RBC Canadian Open and CN Canadian Women's Open. TMAG will also supply golf equipment, golf balls and footwear for Pro-Am gifting at both of Canada's national Open championships. The agreement will also have TMAG as the Official Headwear Supplier for the RCGA's amateur championships; the supplier of range balls and preferred supplier of apparel at the RCGA Four Seasons training Facility in Calgary; and the exclusive supplier of all RCGA staff and governor uniform apparel.

TPC TAMPA BAY TO HERITAGE GOLF: The PGA Tour has sold the TPC Tampa Bay to San Diego-based Heritage Golf Group. The sale represents the fifth TPC property acquired by the Heritage Golf, led by Bob Husband, as part of a strategic alliance between the two parties. Under the terms of the deal, TPC Tampa Bay will be owned and managed by HGG, but will continue to operate under the TPC brand through a license agreement.

BAGGAGE CLAIM: Traveling with golf clubs will get more expensive beginning in May 5. That's the day US Airways will begin charging passengers \$25 for a second checked bag. The company cited (what else?) the rising cost of oil as a reason for the change. US Airways said customers will be expected to pay for the service charge at an airport kiosk with a credit card or at the check-in counter. Customers who already purchased tickets for travel after May 5 are exempt from the new service fee on their current itinerary.

GOLF BOOM? If the PGA of America wants to look for places to successfully grow the game, maybe it should look to India. The Johnnie Walker Classic was held on the sub-continent last week and Vijay Singh and Colin Montgomerie told the locals they each plan to design signature courses in India. Monty's course reportedly is still in the negotiation stage; Singh said his course will be in tourist state of Goa.

"Hopefully I can get a lot more opportunities to design golf courses here," Singh told the Johannesburg (South Africa) Citizen. "I'm doing a few more in the Asian region but here in India, that's the first one and probably after that we'll see if we can get some more."

The Classic was held on the Arnold Palmer-designed DLF Golf and Country Club. Jack Nicklaus and Greg Norman have also designed course in India and Nick Faldo and Ernie Els have designs in various stages of planning.