

## Technology drives local golf school's success

By Patra Bucher, Contributing Writer

Most players are satisfied with a casual, fun-loving approach to the game of golf and their resulting mediocre handicap and occasional sore back. But local businessman David Forbes isn't one of them. In fact, his desire to perfect his golf skills led him on a quest: to build a better golf school.

"I have always loved golf," says Forbes. "I coached the Bishop England High School team for about 10 years as a volunteer. In the early 90s, I decided I wanted to start playing again, but I figured I'd lost all my skills, plus gotten a lot older."

To enhance his game, Forbes enrolled in many golf schools, but never found exactly what he was looking for. "I was disappointed in the schools out there because their programs were short and didn't offer individualized instruction," he says. "They were more like social or recreational golf in a resort setting. Everyone paid a premium for that."

In the mid-'90s, Forbes joined a tour school for aspiring pros in Orlando, Fla. "I met the owner, and he was not going to take me because I was an amateur and too old," Forbes says. "But because of my passion for the game, I finally convinced him to take me on. I went there for 90 days, and ended up buying the school."

After watching the Orlando school for a number of years from the sidelines, Forbes decided it was missing two important elements: serious amateurs and technology. That's when his passion for golf got the best of him, and he decided to build a new golf school—from the ground up.

Designed specifically for professionals training for tour play and serious amateurs driven to improve their performance, the American Tour Golf School opened quietly in the spring of 2002 on the driving range at Charleston National Country Club in Mount Pleasant. But the scope and vision of the school have caught the golf world's attention.

Technology is probably the greatest factor that sets the local tour school apart from others. "The main thing I've learned over time is what you feel is not real," says Forbes. "What you think you're doing, you are not doing. And what's really happening, you don't feel happening."

Forbes believes pictures don't lie and that video-capturing a swing, frame by frame, the quickest way to pinpoint the cause lackluster or inconsistent performance. After months of research, he purchased training equipment from Swing Dynamics, a leader in computer-driven golf performance technology.

*More on Page Two*

“When they came out with their most recent Ball Flight Monitor, it took club fitting to a whole brand new level,” he explains.

According to Forbes, the BFM provides shot data based on ball speed, ball spin and launch angle using algorithms to calculate carry distance, deviation from center and trajectory model.

In addition to the Ball Flight Monitor, Forbes purchased Swing Dynamics’ Swing Motion Trainer, a video/motion assessment golf instruction system, and the Putting Monitor, which maps the path of a putt. This equipment placed the school on the map as the only one in the world to operate all three pieces of technology in a single location.

But Forbes didn’t stop there. “We also have another piece of equipment called Swing Solutions, which can be seen on The Golf Channel,” he says. “It’s a multi-camera video capturing system that gives us camera views from the top, sides, back and front simultaneously.”

With the technology in place, Forbes implemented several programs that address the golfer’s mind and body. “The mind can accept new ideas, but the body has a hard time adopting them,” he explains. “Or our body is sometimes not physically able to do things. So we initiated Body Balance for Performance, a golf-specific program designed to enhance performance by loosening muscles so they can better do certain things. It’s physical therapy for the golfer.”

American Tour Golf School also employs Performance Consultants, a team of clinical sports psychologists who works with students. Charleston Eye Sports Vision teaches them how to compensate for aiming problems. Most recently, Forbes associated with Golfing by Design, a company that will customize clubs for students at the school’s technology center before the end of the year.

Since its opening last spring, professional golf players and serious amateurs from France, England, Norway, Germany, Canada, Korea, the Isle of Man and the United States have enrolled in the American Tour Golf School. A student can attend a two-to-eight week immersion program designed for him or her. Students work one-on-one with the school’s staff, which is headed by Kim Young, a six-year PGA Tour veteran.

Forbes recently made the school’s technology and private lessons available to local golfers through mini-programs. He sees this as an opportunity to introduce golfers to their potential in the sport. Playing the game right, Forbes contends, is far more rewarding than just playing.