

# Spirit Golf Management Company

## Soaring in New Jersey and Pennsylvania

By JOHN TORSIELLO

While Spirit Golf Management, based in Yardley, Pa., was founded only three years ago its roots run deep.

“The philosophy of Spirit Golf was born many years ago through my strong desire and passion as a PGA Professional to help promote and grow the game,” says Mike Attara, Spirit Golf president and founder. “Seeing a niche that was forming in courses needing to find new, creative ways to attract both new players and memberships, I felt we could fulfill that need by creating a management company that had its driving philosophy cemented in the area of community outreach and player development.”

Attara, a seasoned and respected veteran of the golf business, says that the company’s mission statement sums up Spirit’s Golf’s philosophy.

“It is our mission to help our clients grow their business. We are a spirited group of PGA professionals and golf executives who understand the game and business of golf. Our focus is to create the right atmosphere and to use the experience we have in growing the game to improve our client’s bottom line. Dedication,

a love for the game and business of golf, with an ability to follow through on our goals are key characteristics that our team brings to our clients to ensure profitability and overall success of the golf facility.”

Attara founded Spirit Golf in 2009 after 20 years of experience in growing the game of golf and player development.

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**Says Attara,**

there was a correlation between the success of the golf course and a strong focus on player development and growth of the game,” says Attara.

In the case of Spirit Golf, one success led to another. Eagle Ridge Golf Club in Lakewood, N.J., which Attara managed since it opened in 1999, has received national attention for programs and outreach that were established through a Golf Academy Attara started.

“I was fortunate to have a great relation-

ship with the Kokes Family, which owns Eagle Ridge Golf Club. The success we had at Eagle Ridge and my desire to expand our reach allowed for a natural transition to establishing the management company.”

Originally, the company was formed under the name Applied Golf Group to manage Eagle Ridge Golf Club. Later, the firm added Makefield Highlands (Golf Club in Yardley, Pa.), and in 2011 the accounts were transitioned under management to Spirit Golf, which is now a full-service golf management company that is making its mark for being able to provide a growth of the

game and community outreach solution for its clients.

Also under the Spirit Golf Management umbrella are Greencastle Golf Club in Greencastle, Pa., and Stony Brook Golf Course, located in Hopewell, N.J.

Says Attara, “It is the people who make the difference and I wouldn’t be here if not for the support of the Kokes Family and my previous partner. Spirit was founded on the idea of being able to create a fun and inviting culture and you can’t do that without a



great team of individuals. To that end, I have been fortunate to be able to surround myself with awesome people who love what they do. PGA professionals like Kevin Beirne, Sherri McDonald, Bob Doria, Ed Gibson, Joe Porter, Brian Boggs, and folks like John Goeke, Mark Peterson and Mike Porter, who are instrumental in our food and beverage and agronomy programs.”

Attara is one of the more respected members of the New Jersey/Eastern Pennsylvania golf community. He spent six years on the New Jersey PGA Board of Directors, as well as stints on the Board of the New Jersey Golf Foundation and on the Board of the First Tee of Monmouth and Ocean Counties. During his two three-year terms on the NJPGA Board, he spent most of his time chairing the Growth of the Game Committee.

While his role with Spirit Golf is president and founder, he adds, “I’m as much a golf course operator, PGA professional and marketing manager as anything else. I truly enjoy being a part of the everyday activities that happen at the club level. I don’t ever see myself not working alongside the team and always plan to keep an office at the golf course.”

Attara says the experience gained “in the trenches” enhanced his desire to form Spirit Golf and is “a part of our culture in maintaining a friendly, inviting atmosphere at our courses.”

Her adds, “My efforts have been rewarded many times over as I have been fortunate to have been the recipient of the NJPGA President Plaque five years in a row. It is hard

to imagine, but that honor has also opened the door for me to be able to become involved on the national level of the PGA by serving on the Golf 2.0 committee and speaking on behalf of the PGA at many industry events. As recently as late April, I was asked to present at the National Golf Foundation’s Fifth Annual Symposium on the subject of engaging the community to expand your business.”

Attara says that when people hear that the company’s “Get Golf Ready Programs” are the top three in the country at Eagle Ridge and that the firm took league programs at Makefield Highlands from zero to over 100 ladies and 90 men playing weekly, it’s hard for that news not to spread.



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“Eagle Ridge and Makefield have been great success stories of being able to reach out to the community and using our player development programs to grow the game and business. Hats off to Sherri McDonald, our Director of Instruction at Eagle Ridge, our assistant professional Bruce Fleming, and our Director of Golf Ed Gibson for all the effort they gave in getting the programs to these levels. We see ourselves continuing to provide this type of niche that other facilities certainly could use these days.”

Like all good management companies, Spirit Golf understands the importance of management and administration developing a strategic plan to either realign a troubled asset or to help a golf course reach its full potential.

“What makes us different is how we have been able to help our clients establish a position in the market by creating the right culture and finding ways to make their golf courses more inviting. My presentation was on this very subject at the National Golf Foundation Symposium. Octavio Jacobo, principal and founder of JaMer Hispa Marketing, wrote me afterwards and described it this way, ‘Your strategic approach to player-market development is as smart as it simple; both groundbreaking and obvious--maybe to those of us with a marketing and business development background more than those in the golf industry. I could not stop nodding my head in agreement during your presentation.’ Managing golf with a strong emphasis on player development and growth of the game is the primary philosophy behind the vision of Spirit Golf Management and is also what makes us stand out from our competitors.”

So where does Attara see Spirit Golf Management in, say, five to 10 years?

“The relationships we have with our ownership and building a great team at each of our facilities is at the heart of our business philosophy. I still see us managing the courses we have today with a measured growth of our portfolio. We want our executive team to continue to be involved in the day to day operations of the club, so we plan a measured strategic growth of the portfolio that will allow us to continue to add new courses each year and provide additional opportunities by expanding the role and increasing the number of PGA professionals who are part of the team.”