



'Tigermania' Takes Hold

Six golf campaigns roll out nationally

By Nancy Coltun Webster

In perhaps the first sign that "Tigermania" is taking hold in the direct response TV industry, a new infomercial for the Angle Iron, a training device made by Level Best Golf in Sarasota, FL, and featuring Butch Harmon, personal swing coach to the already legendary golfer Tiger Woods, began testing this month.

Script To Screen, a DRTV producer in Santa Ana, CA, shot the show, its fifth golf equipment infomercial in the last year. The company, which produces golf infomercials for between \$250,000 and \$350,000 each, is riding a wave of growing interest in DRTV marketing among golf equipment manufacturers. Its sixth golf infomercial for a putter made by ProGear Golf is due out in the next few weeks.

"Golfers are considered a desirable market segment," said Ken Kerry, co-founder and creative director of Script To Screen. Nearly 25 million U.S. golfers spend an estimated \$16 billion a year on equipment, related merchandise and fees, according to statistics from the National Golf Foundation in Jupiter, FL. About \$2 billion of that is spent on clubs.

The typical golfer is a 39-year-old man with a household income of \$56,920 or more. He plays about 20 rounds of golf per year.

"Golfers are an amazing lot, if you give them a credible presentation, they will pay almost anything to have (the product)," said Jack Kirby, co-chairman and president of Quantum Television, a division of National Media Corp. that is based in Encino, CA.

Although golfers tend to be a wealthy market segment, analysts predict that Tiger Woods, who is young and multiethnic, will act as an ambassador for the game and generate interest among a more diverse demographic group.

"There's a boom in the game of golf and it's had a big impact on the direct response industry in the last year and a half," says Adam Anthony, chief operating officer of Prime Time Sports TV, a San Antonio, TX, company that buys media time for infomercials. "What Tiger Woods is doing is going to bring a whole new level of golf product buyers—including the younger generations who are starting to think golf is cool now. You'll probably see products coming out aimed at Generation Xers and those age 18 to 49."

At least six golf infomercials are now rolling out including Guthy-Renker Golf's King Kong Driver; Nicklaus' Golden Bear Putter, produced by In-Finn-Itty Direct in Los Angeles, and Adams Golf's Tight Lies utility wood, also produced by Script To Screen. Quantum is in production on a hightech training aid

called Dynalaser's Stabilaser and another program for a collection of memorabilia marketed to the Japanese market.

Long form programs appeal to golf club marketers, especially startup companies, because they can create an image-enhancing program for about \$350,000 and spend as little as \$25,000 in media to test it. Traditional TV marketing commands millions by comparison to introduce a product, said Kerry.

Guthy-Renker, which offered a golf product called the Slice Buster in 1994, last summer created a special division dedicated to golf called Guthy-Renker Golf.

The division's first infomercial is for the King Kong Driver.

Bentley Renker, president of Guthy-Renker Golf, said he hopes his division will gross \$10 million to \$15 million on the titanium-faced driver, which is touted in the infomercial featuring NFL Hall of Famer and golf enthusiast Fran Tarkenton, Bob Rosburg, PGA champion, Jason Zuback and Chris Kighlinger. Long Drive Champions and Bill Harmon, rated one of Golf Magazine's top 100 teachers.

Renker said Guthy-Renker's product pitch includes an upsell where respondents are offered a three wood and a five wood at the time of ordering, "Somewhere between 10% and 14% of the people are buying the 3, the 5, or both," Renker said.

Guthy-Renker is pitching its new \$199 driver against the Callaway Great Big Bertha: the Taylor Made Titanium Burner Bubble line and the King Cobra Titanium driver—all clubs that sell for more than \$200. The Burner Bubble line was featured last year in a long-form program "Taylor Made Monster Hole Challenge" produced by Script To Screen.

Nicklaus Golf Equipment, typically direct mail offerings, promotes The Golden Bear as its fledgling direct response TV product but has immediate retail plans for the product.

The angle iron program features a No-Cut Camera Technique that follows the flight of the ball from strike to stop. Mr. Ken Kerry says this will lend more credibility to the product's performance.

Image development opportunities are of great benefit to start-up companies. Several years ago, alien Sport successfully introduced the Ultimate Wedge in an infomercial.

"That catapulted the company into retail based on a half-million wedges. That drew a lot of attention to the golf business," says Tony Kerry, vp of marketing at Script To Screen.

Renker agreed, saying that the Alien Sport Ultimate

Wedge Challenge as the granddaddy of successful golf infomercials. He says he hopes his golf division this year can develop three to five successful golf infomercials generating between 30,000 and 50,000 customers each.

Although Renker said golf is a niche market and 25 million golfers cannot compare with the potential of the rest of the fitness market.

"Nonetheless, we feel we can build a strong business that can generate 10 percent to 25 percent of Guthy-Renker total income," Renker said.

Kent & Spiegel Direct, another heavy hitter in the fitness arena does not have immediate plans to add a golf division nor test a golf infomercial, according to Laura Fox, spokesperson for Kent & Spiegel.

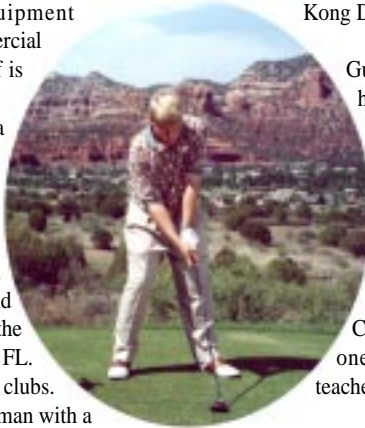
With the approach of summer, golf promotions are nearing a seasonal peak, observers say.

"A lot of it is the time of the year. Golf enthusiasts are getting ready to go. Spring is a particularly hot time and direct response TV is the perfect medium for golf. The people that buy from TV tend to be affluent. They match the demographics of the market," says Terry Finn, president, In-Finn-Itty Direct.

Golden Bear Putter is in full national rollout with a focus on The Golf Channel and programming adjacent to golf shows. Finn said the program has proven itself on cable and broadcast, so it will be all over the place.

Mark Jones, president of Prime Time, notes finding the right placement for golf infomercials is a difficult task.

"[The success of the market] is going to continue as long as people continue to be profitable. What people find is that it's difficult to place shows to make them profitable. You have to be careful with lead-ins. People are under the impression you just follow the golf tournaments but networks have figured out that golf is a hot commodity. They can get more money for that time," Jones said. "Others are willing to pay high dollars for that lead-in time. If you want to be able to roll out a golf show, you have to do more than find golf adjacencies."



Infomercial for the Alien Sport Ultimate Wedge boosted the golf category.