

STREET SCENE

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Meet Rick Young: Golf is the game, Ricque the name



Sparks fly as Rick Young cuts the shaft of the golf club to its proper length.

By Sue Maxon
staff writer

You could say Rick Young is the Rodney Dangerfield of the metro area. He doesn't, as Dangerfield would say, "get any respect around here."

After six years of hawking his own line of golf equipment, the 35-year-old Livonia resident is still shipping a majority of it out of state. Golf's the game and Ricque's the name of Young's company. Housed in an industrial park in Novi, Ricque (pronounced RI-KAY) provides custom-made golf equipment for people who are "serious about their game."

You won't find his line of men's and women's clubs in your neighborhood sporting goods store next to the offerings of Wilson, Spaulding, Ram or Ping, even though its such manufacturers he hopes to snag business from.

Young has slowly built up his business through pro shops and at his showroom adjacent to the manufacturing facility.

"The market is definitely there to support another equipment line, especially one my size," he said. "I cater to a smaller segment of the golfing population."

Maintaining a handicap of eight on the links, Young decided to turn a hobby into a business for two reasons — discontentment with his job and his love of the sport. If he had his druthers, he'd play golf seven days a week.

YOUNG HAD been repairing golf clubs as a hobby for about six years when he chucked his job at Deluxe Check Printers and started Ricque. At first he maintained his office in the basement of his home and sublet a small facility in Reelfoot to do the manufacturing.

The setup was "very convenient," but he outgrew the arrangement as word of his clubs got out. Last year he moved Ricque into a small suite on Catherine Industrial Road in Novi.

"One thing lead to another," Young said. "I did design work, got to know the manufacturing end of the business, and went on from there."

Young contracts out the casting work to foundries; the assembly work is done at the Novi building. Likewise, his line of golf bags are purchased from two companies, including one in Tennessee which manufactures 70-80 percent of the bags for Titleist, Wilson and Spaulding.

Young said he has the "best of both worlds" by manufacturing and marketing his own product, but he laments the lack of recognition in the Detroit metropolitan area. Most of his equipment sells as wholesale to golf shops, 60 percent of which goes out of state.

"People associate California as the primary producer of golf equipment, but I don't run into the opposition out of state that I do in my own backyard," Young said. "One of the reasons I opened a showroom here is because the product hasn't been received with open arms around here."

THAT'S NOT to say Ricque is drowning in a sea of obscurity. Sales have topped \$500,000 and Young is at a point where he has to decide if he wants to remain a small company with \$1 million in sales or achieve more growth.

"I've had thoughts of becoming a company with a national product distribution," he said.

And as Young decides which way to go with Ricque, he also is expanding his line of golf products for women. There are 28 million golfers in the country, but the biggest influx of new golfers in the last three years has been women.

The Ricque line includes a barrel-shaped putter called the SoftStroke, designed to increase accuracy, enhance the "feel" and help develop a better putting stroke.

"It's totally cylindrical, so regardless of the hand position you don't change the face of the putter," Young said. "There's less chance of scuffing the putter on the back stroke."

There's also the "Big Dawg," a 4 1/4-inch jumbo driver with an oversized head and longer (one to two inches) shaft that translates into a wider arc and more distance on tee shots.

"YOU CAN experience a 20- to 25-yard distance gain on this club," Young said. "It's a very forgiving club, especially for the golfer who can't hit in the center of the club every time."

There's also a gray smoke shaft of graphite and boron, made specifically for Ricque that with its increased playing ability and light weight, golfers can hit the ball faster and farther.

Prices are in line with other manufacturers: The bottom line for a set of eight irons with steel shafts runs \$260, while those with a gray smoke shaft cost \$530. What sets Ricque apart from other manufacturers is how quickly a golfer can be outfitted.

"There's nothing different in the design," Young said. "The thing we're able to do is offer variety to the customer... shafts and grips to fit the clubs and our turn-around time is three to five days. Larger companies may offer the same in three to five weeks."

YOU WOULD think that, with such an interest in golf, Young grew up with a club in his hand. No such luck. He took up the sport as a senior in high school. He was, he said, "more concerned about working and saving money to buy a car." Now, he has a handicap of eight.

And as he cruises around the links whether in a Michigan Public Golf Association tournament or for fun, he's seeing more and more Ricque clubs. "Now it's not that uncommon to go out and play a round of golf and look three, four fairways over and see our product," he said. "There's a certain amount of personal gratification when you see your product out there."

Ricque is at 24371 Catherine Industrial Road, north of 10 Mile Road, Suite 227, Novi. For more information, call 344-1280.



photos by BILL BRESLER/staff photographer

Once the shaft is cut to its proper length, Young attaches it to the head, in this case a wood.

Mark Moscone finds a market for his 'Kat'

By Debbie Sklar
special writer

Even when he isn't actually playing golf, Mark Moscone is still putting or putting around.

The 22-year-old Farmington Hills businessman spends his time pushing a putter that's used by President George Bush. Moscone made headlines, of sorts, this year when he bought the rights to produce the putter.

Moscone won't talk about how much he paid financially troubled Kiti & Taylor Enterprises, just about why he did it.

"I was looking for a business to get involved in," he said. "I wanted a company where I could manufacture something. I was always interested in business ventures."

THE PUTTER is the Pole Kat, the main product of Florida-based Kiti & Taylor.

When the president started using the putter, sales went up to about 4,000 a year, but the company had a lot of back orders. The company couldn't finance the inventory, Moscone said.

"That's where my company came in. I knew about business because I started up my own company in Toronto during my last year of high school. It was a company that picked up litter from around shopping malls, fast food restaurants, etc.

"It was very successful and it really started growing fast. I ran it out of my basement and it really took off."

WITH A degree in marketing, Moscone formed M2 Capital Corp., which has been operating out of Farmington Hills since March.

The Pole Kat putter is the first venture for M2, an investment firm formed by Moscone and his father, who heads an auto supply company in Toronto and is currently developing a golf course in South Lyon.

Moscone, who was born in Grosse Pointe, expects M2 to have about \$240,000 in Pole Kat sales this year and about \$1.4 million in 1992. Sales representatives are making the rounds of pro shops and specialty stores in an effort to market the putter.

The Pole Kat is available in lengths 40-52 inches and sells for \$99-\$120.

"It's a high end putter that is really very unique. If someone isn't happy with this putter, they definitely can return for a full refund — that's a guarantee."

WHAT DOES Moscone see as his next project?

"In 1992, I'm hoping for a full line of putters. And in 1993, I'm hoping for a full line of Pole Kat clubs. I want to be another PING. I want the same recognition in this industry."

But he would like to accomplish more. Like his father, he would someday like to build a golf course and housing community.

AND HOW good is the president of M2 Capital when it comes to the game of golf?

"I'm really not that good," he jokes. "I only play once a week because I'm too busy putting in 60-70 ours a week at the office."

Moscone has other interests besides golf. He likes boating, fishing and playing tennis.

"If I could spend the same amount of time out on the golf course as I do in the office, my game would be awesome."

Mark Moscone of Farmington Hills knows he'll see green on the links and in the bank with his Pole Kat putter, the same putter used by the Prez — George Bush himself.



SHARON LAMIEUX/staff photographer