

Bufs break ground on indoor golf facility

Complex will help CU compete at top level

By Gary Baines For the Camera
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ERIE -- George Boedecker Jr. didn't attach any strings to helping make the University of Colorado golf teams' indoor practice facility a reality ... or did he?

At a groundbreaking ceremony for the practice facility that will bear his name at Colorado National Golf Club, the principal founder of Crocs noted, "Now there's a little pressure on the (CU) coaches. When T. Boone Pickens did this (at Oklahoma State), they were in the running for a national championship immediately, and that's all we want."

That elicited a laugh from the crowd at the groundbreaking, but suffice it to say that expectations will go up for the CU men's and women's golf programs now that they have designated home course and an indoor practice facility that's expected to be completed there around Feb. 1.

The 5,700-square-foot facility, located just southeast of the practice range, will include five indoor hitting bays that can accommodate two golfers at a time, and a 2,000-square-foot short-game room where players can putt and chip.

"This is coming at a perfect time with our move to the Pac-12," said CU senior golfer Emily Talley. "We've gotten our name out there nationally, rankings-wise. Now with recruiting, they're going to see we have the facilities and see we're in a great conference. This is going to be a top program to want to play for in no time."

The building, roughly 90 feet by 60 feet, will be built so the heated hitting bays face the practice range, meaning players can practice through the winter no matter how cold the conditions get. Previously the men's and women's golf teams used the CU football practice bubble or a commercial indoor facility in east Boulder County during the winter months. But having their own indoor facility will put the Bufs on par with most Division I programs that face winter weather issues.

"It's almost essential now (to have an indoor facility) because every school that's in a rough environment during the winter has one if they're a competitive Division I program," CU golfer Beau Schoolcraft said. "It will definitely help with recruiting. You can come out here and practice no matter what the weather is like."

CU men's coach Roy Edwards estimates that between himself, women's coach Anne Kelly and Colorado National owner Steve Kerr, they personally toured about 20 indoor golf facilities when planning what CU's would look like, and they saw plans for another 10 or 12.

And while the Boedecker building will include equipment and storage rooms and restrooms, the great majority of the space will be devoted to the hitting bays and the short-game room.

"It's going to make all the difference in the world, in recruiting first of all, to be able to explain to a kid that no, we don't have snow on the ground six months out of the year, and if we do have snow we have an indoor practice facility," Kelly said.

"Having the (Colorado National) golf course made a big difference in our recruiting. Moving to the Pac-12 has made a big difference in recruiting. And this will definitely help as well."

On Monday alone, Edwards received four emails from junior golfers who had heard about the practice facility groundbreaking.

The building "is going to help a ton (with recruiting)," Edwards said. "The university itself is an incredible draw. One of my jobs is to show how you can be a great golfer here. Our history has proven that you can (notably with U.S. Open champions Hale Irwin and Steve Jones being former CU golfers). We're doing things to progress into the future and this is one of the huge parts of that."

And now time will tell how the course and the facilities pay dividends for the CU golf teams.

"I wore western wear today on purpose because you know what? We've got to cowboy up in this league (the Pac-12)," athletic director Mike Bohn said. "And we can't cowboy up to compete in this league without wonderful facilities."

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