

SPORTS

GOLF: Indoor facility is a haven for golf enthusiasts to keep their game on par

Golfers find an indoor Oasis

BY BRUCE STAPLEY
CORRESPONDENT

The snow is flying on a cold January morning, but inside the Oasis Indoor Golf Centre the telephone lines suddenly light up after the airing of a radio commercial pitching the Markham facility's offer of refuge for winter-bound duffers.

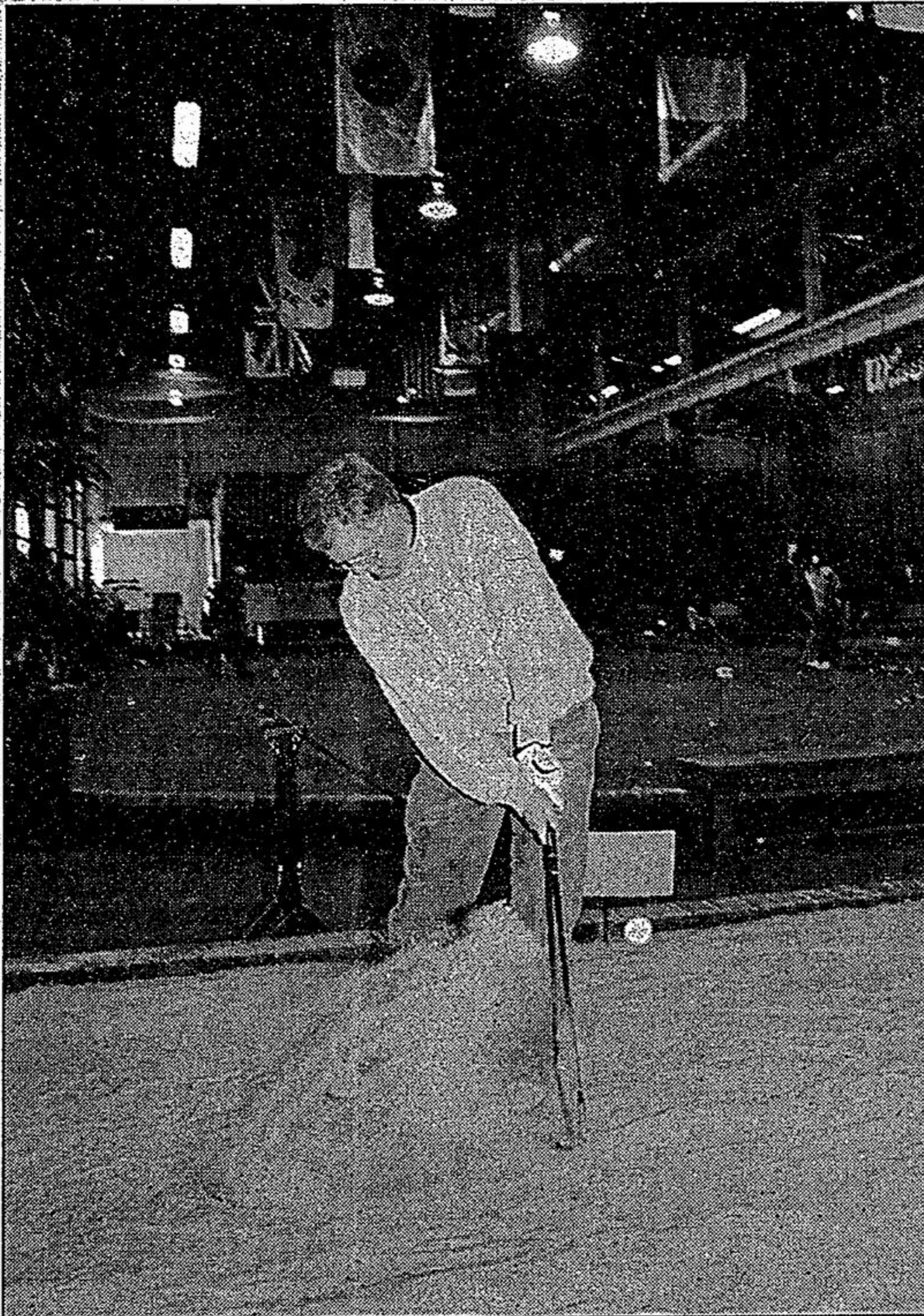
And while the Alden Road centre may not be able to do anything about the drifting snow that has rendered area golf courses unrecognizable, it does offer a reasonable facsimile of the real thing for golfers who can't stand the thought of watching their clubs sit dormant in the basement all winter.

Oasis, a 25,000-square foot practice layout complete with a well-stocked pro shop and a licensed lounge area, claims to be Canada's first fully electronic golf facility. That boast is backed up by 25 state-of-the-art driving stations, along with a pair of simulators that enable golfers to play 18 holes of virtual golf at any one of 17 world class courses.

Oasis general manager Laurence Slavin points with pride to the simulators, calling them "the best on the market. We did our research," Slavin insists.

Standing at the simulators, from one to four golfers can recreate a real life game on England's The Belfry, Hawaii's Mauna Kea, or Canada's Banff Springs courses. A large screen standing 30 feet in front of the tee provides a full view of each hole, along with close ups of the green, aerial shots, and print outs that reveal the length of each shot, yards to the pin, elevation, and score.

Slavin says the technology employed by the simulators is sec-



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Oasis Indoor Golf Centre customer Vince Robbins practices his trap shots at the indoor golf facility.

ond to none, with tracking equipment able to pick up every aspect of a shot.

"Whatever a golfer's natural

tendency is on a golf course, it will be the same here."

The Oasis lineup also includes sand bunkers featuring 100 tonnes

of Ohio Valley sand, a 3,600-square foot turf putting green incorporating breaks and undulations, and an indoor pond. The atmosphere is provided by artificial palm trees and the sound of chirping birds and flowing water.

"We designed it with the golfer in mind so they can work on any shot they would ever do outside," Slavin says. "Because we're indoors we're limited by space. But we've tried to get over that by offering everything a golfer could want in a practice facility."

The advanced technology is also evident in most of the hitting stations, which are equipped with radar distance measuring devices which pick up the ball 12 yards into its flight, enabling an exact analysis of the shot.

"It's a very sophisticated machine," Slavin points out. "It gives an exact distance. You can work on consistency of your swing, plus the power of your shot. And it's good for long or short shots."

Hitting stations have built up, spring loaded tee mats for left and right handed swingers, and some have adjustable multi-lie tees. The putting green and chipping fringe are impacted with real sand to simulate the real thing.

Two CPGA pros are available for personalized lessons and swing analysis. Slavin says the centre attracts everyone from beginners to seasoned swingers.

"We get beginners looking to improve, avid golfers working on their game, and the guy who just wants to see how far he can hit the ball."

He said the centre, which is open seven days a week, draws between 200 to 300 golfers a day, and is able to accommodate 75 to 80 players at once.

"Weekends are the busiest, but it's steady during the week," Slavin cites.

Golfers using the facilities see the centre as a chance to stay on top of their game the year round.

"This is my winter time golf," North York senior Sam Dryer said.

A member at Aurora's Westview Golf Club and at the Oasis Indoor Golf Centre for the last three years, Dryer said playing indoors in winter enables him to start the outdoor season in top form.

"I keep my swing through the whole year and I keep my body supple. So when I start out in the spring I'm not a stranger to the course."

Markham's Paul Lau, who just took up the game after last season and comes to Oasis five times a week, thinks his indoor winter practice sessions and lessons will prepare him for his first outdoor season.

"I just love the game," Lau said.

While the centre remains open in summer months, the off season is prime time.

Slavin says the Oasis pro shop is kept busy providing equipment and custom fittings during the outdoor season.

Golfers can play on a pay-as-you-play basis or sign on as members. An in-house league offers golfers the chance to play the 17 courses offered by the simulator, with three major Opens throughout the winter season. League play is available weekdays and weekends.

A hole in one contest running throughout the winter season will see 80 golfers get a chance to win a trip to Florida or \$10,000 in cash at the finals in April, with proceeds going to the Hospital for Sick Children Foundation.

Edgar named to play in junior A all-star game

BY BRUCE STAPLEY
CORRESPONDENT

Kevin Edgar will be in uniform when the Provincial Junior A Hockey league holds its annual All Star Game tomorrow in Streetsville.

The 20-year-old Spirit of Stouffville winger

is to suit up with the Western Central squad, which consists of teams from the league's Western Conference and the westernmost clubs from the Central Conference. Edgar's name was one of two submitted by the Stouffville club for consideration for the match.

Edgar, who is in his third season with the Spirit, leads the Spirit in scoring with 28 goals, third best in the conference. His 69 total points are tops on the Spirit, placing him fourth in the overall conference race.

The Spirit had both their Jan. 14 home game with the Thornhill Rattlers, and

Friday's scheduled road date with the Collingwood Blues postponed due to snow-storm.

Spirit officials are hoping they can make an arrangement with other ice users to

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Wheels

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