

# SPORTS

## Foul weather fairways

Golfers go indoors to indulge their passion through winter

BY MIKE HAYAKAWA  
Staff Writer

For golf addicts, the unusually mild weather has allowed them to indulge their passion just a little bit longer. But the arrival of Old Man Winter in York Region has finally closed the books on another season on the links.

But don't despair. For those not able to escape to warmer climes, there are places in York Region where you can continue to swing a club during downtime in the local golfing calendar.

Indoor golf has become a viable alternative.

Using inflated air-supported sites and converted warehouses, indoor facilities offer the game's basic ingredients: driving range stalls, putting and chipping areas.

*'Good weather is bad weather for us.'*

According to proprietors and teaching professionals, indoor facilities are growing in popularity.

"Good weather is bad weather for us," said Paul Maniatis, manager of the Markham-based Oasis Indoor Golf Club, a 25,000-square-foot warehouse. "We've been getting new people at our facility every day. It's working. We've already doubled our membership from a year ago and we're more busy this year than we were at the same time a year ago."

"Once winter sets in, we're busy," added Dean Dyer, owner and teaching professional at the Phoenix Hill Golf Centre, a Newmarket-based air bubble dome.

Matthew Stallone, a teaching professional at the Eaglequest Golf Centre Dome in Markham, one of two air bubble domes owned by the same company in York Region (the other is in Vaughan), said it's not uncommon for people to



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Paul Maniatis, manager of the Oasis Indoor Golf Club on Alden Road in Markham, putts on the indoor green. Experts say indoor golf is an excellent way to finetune technique for the outdoor season.

wait 35 minutes or more just to get access to a driving range stall on weekend mornings in January and February. There are patrons who come in once or twice a week or even five days a week at the same time each day.

"They get their money's worth," he said of the clientele at the dome. "But it

also just shows you how busy and popular the sport is."

While indoor facilities do not offer actual holes, their restricted size does allow golfers to finetune their game before the outdoor season.

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Members of the Sportball Canada program try different ball sports each week.

## Getting the ball rolling

BY JOHN CUDMORE  
Staff Writer

Teach them young. Teach them well. You just may end up with youngsters well-versed in a variety of sports.

That's the message from Sportball Canada Inc., an educationally based, non-competitive sports program for children ages two to eight that is preparing to expand in January.

"It's all about inclusion, participation and building confidence and a love of sport," said Mike Perozak, an instructor in his second year with the Thornhill-based program, which offers parent-and-tot or drop-off weekly programs to nearly 2,000 children weekly in 46 locations across the GTA.

"We want to get kids

**'It's all about inclusion, participation and building confidence and a love of sport.'**

Mike Perozak  
Sportball instructor

turned on to sports with positive reinforcement."

Each week, members of the program experience a different ball activity, learning the fundamentals of seven sports and the skills required to throw, catch or kick a ball, swing a tennis racquet or golf club.

The sports include hockey, soccer, golf, volleyball,

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