

from thousands of caddies, most of whom are women. Sometimes that perception turns destructive.

"I remember stories being told of new [golf car] fleets being delivered, only to have every tire slashed or brakes damaged in the first few days of operation," said Kevin Gates, director of sales and marketing for Club Car in Asia and the Pacific. "We needed a plan to address this without confrontation."

One solution to the caddie issue was to develop a new vehicle primarily for the Asian market. It features a single driver's seat for the caddie and bench seats for either two or four passengers and their clubs.

Another unique product that has been in use for a number of years is a vehicle designed to operate on courses in Japan. It has an electric wire or magnetically guided system that steers the cart automatically, rather than a driver-controlled mechanism.

Hinton said that his company has embraced local customs and practices at its courses in Asia in order to improve customer service.

"We implement what we know works in the areas of the product, then we have

flexibility to adapt our standards in the high customer-touch areas – having the availability of caddies, having tea houses on the golf courses."

He said Troon takes its brand standards for agronomy, course operations, food and beverage and accounting and adapts them for the local cultures.

DeLozier, and former National Golf Course Owners Association president, said that U.S. developers and operators need to remain flexible when working in other nations.

"One is misguided to assume that the U.S. golf business paradigm will be properly aligned in every international market," he said. "Planners and developers have to be cautious to plan new projects in international markets so as to align with social practices and customers ... It is foolish to assume that one business model applies to every locale."

Ironically, the cloudy American economy and the slumping value of the dollar may have a silver lining for some U.S. golf companies.

Golf development outside the U.S. will create demand for American expertise in agronomy, operations, construction,

agronomy and systems, though at a reduced rate due to the value of the dollar.

"I think we expect a 35 to 40 percent cut in price if we import architects and specialists from the U.S., so absolutely that's the rules of the economy," Lodewijk said.

Hinton said he sees international golf course development remaining strong, at least in the immediate future.

"American things are going to be more affordable over there because of our expertise and there is going to be a chance for real estate to be more affordable for foreign funds over here," he said.

—Jim Dunlap

Management firms finalize new deals

Several golf course operation and management firms have recently finalized new contracts. They include:

- Troon Golf has added four management contracts: Dismal River Club, a private Jack Nicklaus Signature course in Mullen, Neb.; The Club at Paradise Ranch-Paradise Ranch Resort, a 36-hole Nicklaus layout in Grants Pass, Ore.; Forest Oaks Country Club, an

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RENAISSANCE GOLF CLUB, a Brian Silva-designed course on Boston's North Shore that opened in 2006 to widespread acclaim, has been purchased by David Southworth and Joseph Delitch for \$9 million. The course, which was the 2006 Golf Inc. Development of the Year private club runner-up and winner of other national awards, had run into financial difficulty under the previous owners, Fairway Renaissance LLC. It currently has about 100 members. The new owners plan to build a high-end clubhouse for the facility.