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School on course to create pros in game, business

By Ed Zieralski
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Osei Kirby is a Marine, 28 years old and an ammunitions specialist based at Camp Pendleton. Being a Marine is all he has known since high school. Well, almost everything. He also knows golf and wants to someday teach it and be in the business side of the game after he leaves the military.

That's why Kirby enrolled in the brand-new National University Golf Academy that last month opened its doors, or for online students, cyberschool links for classes via the Internet. Students may earn a sports-focused golf degree and also improve their core competencies and mental approach to the game.

The academy offers a bachelor's in sports psychology, an associate's degree with a concentration in professional golf management and certificates in professional golf management and advanced golf management. It's as though the school has a tee for every level of golf interest.

"Part of the reason I enrolled at the Golf Academy is if I leave and get out of the military early, I'll have something to turn to," said Kirby, who is from Los Angeles. "I have a 6-year-old daughter in Seattle and I'd like to get closer to her. If I make the right connections, I may be able to move up to Seattle and maybe teach golf and run a golf course."

The Carlsbad-based university offers a unique golf- and sports-oriented curriculum and features the latest in computerized, 3-D swing analysis at its Swing Lab, with teaching lessons and on-course instruction at places like Aviara, The Bridges, Fairbanks Ranch, La Costa, Santaluz, Shadowridge and other courses, 30 in all. All instruction and greens fees are covered by the tuition.

"What I like about it is every facet of the business is laid out before you," Kirby said. "The classes are organized well, there's playing time at some great courses after instruction, and the 3-D Swing Lab has really helped me understand my swing. All this will allow me to go in a lot of different directions when I leave the military." The National University Golf Academy was

formed by Dr. Jerry C. Lee, an avid golfer and chancellor of National University, which was founded in 1971 and has 22,000 full-time students and 119,000 alumni.

"Dr. Lee saw a market for this and for people who were into golf and wanted to get into the business of golf and earn a degree at the same time," said Ted Norby, the academy's director of instruction, who has been a teaching pro for 17 years at Kip Puterbaugh's Aviara Golf Academy.

"Dr. Lee has been a client of mine for over four years," added Norby, a former pro who qualified and played in the 1990 U.S. Open. "He always talked about linking the game to academics, and now he has. This is the result of years of planning."

While Norby takes care of the golf instruction, Dr. Charles "Mac" Powell oversees the academic side as the academy's dean. Powell is a professor who has written books on the mental side of golf, a Class A member of the PGA and the former director of golf at El Dorado Park Golf Course in Long Beach.

At present, the academy has nearly 40 students nation- and worldwide.

"In addition to being able to instruct people all over the world with our online classes, we also are drawing a lot of military, like Osei Kirby," Powell said.

Powell said the school's business model is based on the golf industry — and the nation — recovering from the present economic crisis. The school has applied to the USGA for a \$10,000 grant that will pay for scholarships and help bring young, underprivileged golfers into the game.

The Golf Academy also plans to sponsor a swing contest through Facebook. Powell sees the school growing in students and popularity in the future.

"We want to be a resource for area professionals," Powell said. "We want to



Ted Norby, director of instruction at the Carlsbad-based National University Golf Academy, works with student Osei Kirby (right), a Marine based at Camp Pendleton. - Charlie Neuman / Union-Tribune

increase the knowledge base for the PGA pros. We've opened the lab up to any teaching professional and student who wants to use it. We want to train young men and women to be golf professionals and professionals in the game. I wouldn't be surprised if we get very big one day."

Norby said the school will attract a wide range of players with varying levels of golf abilities.

"We have some looking to get into the PGA as teachers, and there are some who want to see how good they can get," Norby said. "So I'll help them get to the level they want, whether it's as a professional, or an amateur player. Others want to be teaching professionals, so they have to pass the Player Ability Test. I'll help them achieve that. I also have some who shoot in the 90s and just want to get better and be in the business side of golf."

"The business of golf has changed," Norby said. "You don't have as many of the old-school guys who played golf first and then started teaching on the side, took over the golf program and learned the business side as they went along. The whole idea of a golf professional has changed. Now the business of golf involves taking care of a membership, maybe taking care of a hotel. It's marketing the golf course, merchandising, managing your pro shop to sell hard goods and soft goods."

Basically, it takes an education.