

# GB

GOLF BUSINESS



## Leading with Family Values

Steve Graybill takes reins at NGCOA

### In Their Best Interest

Options for competitive worker benefits

### Look Back: 1998

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BY STEVE EUBANKS

# Kemper Sports To Manage Race Park



Those who have spent their lives in the business are quick to tell anyone how nimble, diverse and transferable golf skills are when it comes to other industries. Restaurant management, retail sales, landscape architecture, agronomy, facility maintenance, accounting, marketing, communications – the list goes on.

Find someone who has successfully managed a golf course and you will see a renaissance person, a jack-of-all-trades who is pretty good at it all.

Extrapolate that theory to golf management companies and the theory can apply to almost anything – hotels, malls, theaters, you name it.

Kemper Sports appears to be testing that premise. The Chicago-based golf company has signed on to be a management and sales partner with Circuit of the Northwest, a Formula One racetrack near Seattle. While golf is slow and quiet – the opposite in almost every respect from auto racing – the

units that drive cash flow are relatively similar. There will be hospitality and membership sales, since the 2.6-mile track has a “private club experience.” There also are stringent maintenance requirements for the facility’s 232 acres.

“We’re excited to partner with Kemper Sports, which helps support our vision to create an exceptional experience that connects the thrill of racing and motorsports with our members and their guests,” said Brian Nilsen, owner and founding member of the Circuit of the Northwest. “Kemper Sports’s expertise in the management and hospitality industry will prove beneficial as we secure members and create a world-class experience.”

Ground broke in October and membership sales are underway. Like most racetracks, Circuit of the Northwest will feature multiple hospitality outlets as well as an RV park. It will host concerts and go-kart races, amateur “experiences,” where for several hundred dollars you can don a fire-retardant jumpsuit and drive a not-quite-up-to-top-speed racecar, and some other events where its location (with views of Mount Olympia) make it attractive.

Granted, a fleet of golf carts and standard liability insurance for the occasional stray golf ball are a lot different than managing a high-octane Formula One track where a fiery crash is always one flinch away. But the general principles of facility management and membership sales are the same.

This is a lesson for operators of all stripes. Limiting yourself to golf often limits

your growth potential. If you successfully manage a golf course, you actually manage multiple businesses and have invaluable expertise in numerous areas.

Think of yourself as a manager and marketer of entertainment venues with restaurant and retail operations. It will broaden your thinking, your experience and most importantly, your earning potential.

“The Circuit of the Northwest will be a game changer for racing enthusiasts across the Pacific Northwest, giving them a destination like no other in the country,” said Kemper Sports CEO Steve Skinner, even though this is Kemper’s first racetrack. “Our team is working with the ownership team to develop an unmatched racing experience and building the club membership while our sister-agency, KemperLesnik, is guiding the Circuit of the Northwest brand through public relations, sponsorship sales, branding and digital marketing strategies. We are very excited to work with world-class partners, Brian Nilsen and the Joel Cohen Group, to introduce the Circuit of the Northwest to the Pacific Northwest and the motorsports community.”

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