Pik?r Autonomous Robots test-driven at St. Andrew?s Valley Golf Club?s driving range

It's been said that the only constant in the 21st century is change.

In was in the spirit of embracing change that impelled St. Andrew's Valley Golf Club to become a test site for Korechi Golf's bold new enterprise: autonomous golf ball-picking robots for driving ranges.

Business is booming for the Oshawa-based company and Korechi Innovation Inc's CFO Rob Brissenden offered insights into the manufacturing of the Pik'r robots.

?We assemble the robots from parts we buy in Canada and we utilize local manufacturing, including Canadian steel. We're pleased with the high quality of the parts.?

The robots were showcased at the US Open at Pinehurst and the Canadian Open in Hamilton in 2024.

Such international exposure at prestigious PGA Tour events has generated much demand for the Pik'rs and Brissenden noted, ?We expect to ship at least 70 units by the end of the year.?

Brissenden's colleague Jim Clark?Korechi's Chief Marketing Officer and an Aurora Sports Hall of Fame Inductee in 2019 ? concurred that ?Our robots are being used on the driving ranges of some of the most prestigious courses in North America.?

?Over 20 courses are using the Pik'rs and our numbers are growing rapidly. The Pik'rs have the capacity to collect 1,200-6,000 golf balls. 3,600 would be the typical collection for our 11-foot model.?

Clark, who has served as a volunteer at 34 Canadian Opens?11 as Tournament Chair?has a 40-year association with the Royal Canadian Golf Association and explained how the Pik'rs will improve working conditions for golf course workers and operators around the world.

?Most importantly, we are taking driving range operators out of dangerous situations. Getting hit by a golf ball on the driving range can be a jarring experience.?

?Robots aren't affected by 100-degree Fahrenheit heat and don't need water breaks,? he added. ?Our robots work well in Florida and Arizona where human workers need to be taken off the golf courses by 10 a.m. due to health and safety concerns related to heat. They're economical as well in that they cost approximately $1 per day in electricity to operate.?

Crissenden augmented our discussion about maintenance costs by pointing out the environmental benefits of the Pik'r units.

?We estimated that using the autonomous golf-ball pickers saves 14 tons of CO2 from going into the atmosphere after clubs take their gasoline-powered tractors off the driving ranges. One of our units drove 4400 kilometers last year.?

Clark provided the historical context for the Pik'rs.

?The robots were made originally for agricultural applications and the Korechi Roam10 Farming Robots started to replace tractors. The units were adapted for cutting grass and the applications became clear for golf course driving ranges. We tested the Pik'rs at St. Andrew's Valley over the last two years. [Operations Manager] Nate and [Managing Partner] Dave Nisbet were a great help to us at St. Andrew's.?

Korechi Innovations Inc's motto is ?Robotics and Automation made simple? and the Pik'r Golf Robots seem to provide simple solutions to driving range maintenance issues at our local golf courses.

By Jim Stewart