



Sports

Lefty's putting mentor to coach in China

By Chen Xiangfeng (China Daily)

Updated: 2009-12-18 08:01

XIAMEN, Fujian province: World No 2 Phil Mickelson's putting coach, David Stockton, and his two sons, are the latest coaches to join the Oak Valley Golf Academy in a bid to help China's rising stars, Yu Huey M, president of the academy, told China Daily during the Orient China Ladies Open in Xiamen, Fujian province.

"David and his coaching team have joined hands with the academy and will offer putting and physical training help," said Yu, a Chinese-American, who was born in Hainan province. "The team includes his two sons, Dave Jr and Ron.

"David Sr coaches the world's best golfers so the time available for him to instruct our teens is limited. Dave Jr will coach the other men's golfers and Ron the women."

Former PGA Tour and Championship winner Stockton Sr this year assisted Mickelson with his putting and the lefthander went on to win the Tour Championship and the HSBC Champions in Shanghai. Stockton also coaches young US sensation Michelle Wie and was former women's No 1 Annika Sorenstam's mentor.

"Chinese players have lots of room to improve in putting. The young players should be inspired a lot by learning from these elite coaches," Yu said.

When Yu bought Oak Valley Golf Club in 1997, he thought of the 6,958-yard course as purely a financial move and expected to make a profit from selling the property after a few years.



David Stockton

But that scenario changed when Oak Valley began to attract top coaches and lure young golfers from the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Chinese Taipei. The Oak Valley Golf Academy is now a key embarkation point for promising teens who want to play on the American Junior Golf Association or US LPGA tours.

World No 5 Tseng Ya-ni of Chinese Taipei, who was based at the academy this year and coached by Ron, put up some impressive performances on the LPGA tour.

"I hope the academy will play a significant role in bringing Chinese players into America's golf system," Yu said. "The US boasts the world's best training and competition systems for junior, college and amateur players."

Yu said the academy would sponsor two more players from the China Ladies Open, the season-ending CLPGA tour event which features China's best pro and amateur players, for special courses at the academy next year.

The major purpose is to give them physical and putting training which should help them prepare for US Open qualifying.

"The two players will get lessons from Ron. It's also likely David will coach them time permitting," Yu said. "It's very difficult for Chinese players to prepare for US Open qualifying without assistance from our academy.

"Chinese women, like Ye Liying and Wang Chun, made history by qualifying for the US Open thanks to our support. We will continue to make the effort to have more Chinese players take part in different tournaments in the US."

With the 2016 Olympic Games also in mind, Yu said: "We will work with the Chinese Golf Association and give more opportunities to those who have better chances to gain spots at the Olympics."



Seo Hee-kyung tees off at the 17th hole during the first round of the Orient China Ladies Open in Xiamen, Fujian province, yesterday. Seo, the 2009 KLPGA order-of-merit winner, leads with a four-under 68. Ye Liying was the best of the Chinese players with a one-under 71, which saw her in a tie for fifth.

Dong Fang

(China Daily 12/18/2009 page23)