UNLV golf management program on the rise

By JARED HARMON

Chris Cain is living a dream.

Cain, the Director of UNLV’s professional golf management program, said combining his love for golf with his passion for teaching has been a tremendous opportunity. Being able to do so while at the helm of what he sees becoming one of the nation’s top programs is icing on the cake.

“The program has been growing consistently each year and I think that’s a testament to our strong relationship with the students,” Cain said. “It’s no secret that I love being around students and working closely with them and that’s created a family atmosphere in the department. We all have the same goal of trying to make this program the elite program in the country.”

That realization could be sooner than several expect, he said.

“We have a great shot at becoming a premier professional golf management program and a lot of that is due to the growth of Las Vegas,” Cain said. “This city is becoming a golf destination for a lot of golfers and that is creating an opportunity that is potentially unmatched nationally. The success of our golf program also increases our exposure and creates interest.”

With about 70 students enrolled in the program, the department has steadily seen an increase in students and prestige.

The program’s lab, which is still under construction and in need of donations, already has a 60-course management simulation. It will be accompanied by a series of cameras that allow students to analyze their stroke and compare it to that of PGA players. There are only four such simulators on college campuses in the nation, Cain said.

“We are currently one of only 15 programs like this in the country,” he said. “We have the technology to and the resources to really immerse students in the golf world. Our lab, which we’re still looking for donations to finish, has the simulator as well as fitting systems for our students to practice club-fitting on and how that affects their stroke.

The key is to stay up to date with the industry’s needs or better yet — stay ahead of the curve.”

The program has also become competitive under Cain’s direction.

In addition to meeting UNLV’s rising admission standards, students must also pass the hotel management department’s requirements, have a 2.5 or lower handicap and pass a player ability test. It’s well worth the effort, said Internship Coordinator Chris Brown.

“I’ve been with the program since it was started and there have been a tremendous amount of changes to that time,” Brown said. “Our number of students that we’ve been able to get has grown stronger and more concise. Cain has great leadership qualities, lots of experience and compassion for the students. He understands them and what they need from the department.”

Cain agreed, adding the success of the program has been because of the interaction with students and their comfort level with instructors.

With 30,000 kids on campus, when our students come to their classes it’s kind of like their own fraternity or sorority,” Cain said. “It makes the campus seem a little smaller and that connection is important for all of us.”

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