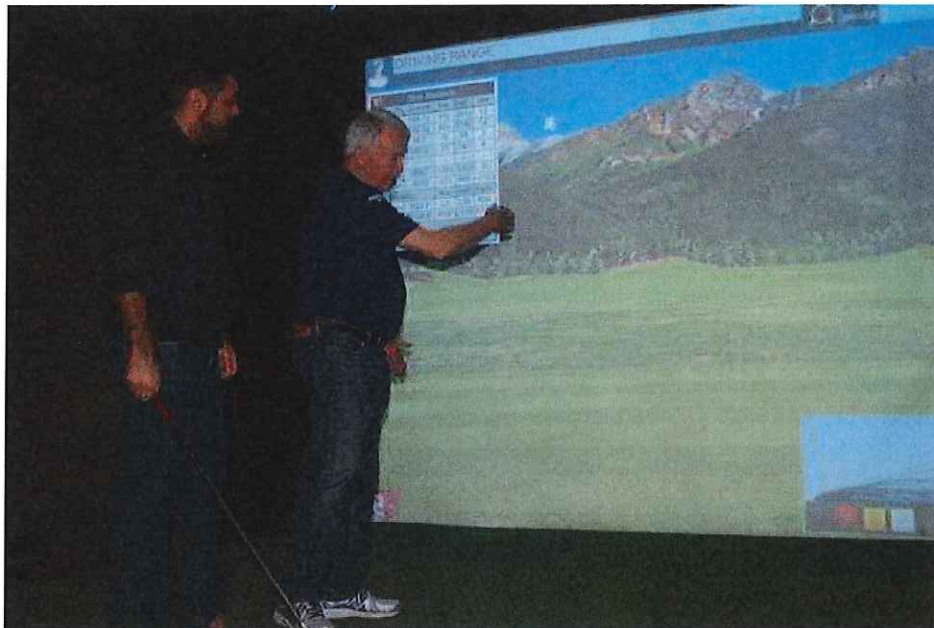


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TIME TO TEE UP AT IRONWORKS

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Austin Montgomery/Beloit Daily News IronWorks Golf Lab instructor Wes Ladwig helps give pointers to Johnathan Webster on his golf swing. The golf lab opened earlier this week and will give residents a chance to golf year round.

BELOIT — What started as an idea at a Professional Golfers Association conference has teed off in Beloit, and The Beloit Club's Ironworks Golf Lab officially opened earlier this week.

The 8,000-square-foot space in the Ironworks complex in downtown Beloit offers area golfers the chance to work on swings, take lessons and practice their short and long games at all times of the year, no matter the weather with three simulators and a 3,000-square-foot putting green space.

"It's a lot of fun," said Milt Kodl, head golfing professional at The Beloit Club and senior instructor at the lab. "We have a nice group of professionals who work here. Everyone is having a blast. Part of the deal is having to learn how to use everything, so we're getting used to all of this great equipment with the people that come through here."

The golf lab currently employs 12 staffers, with three to four at the facility at any given time. The lab is open from 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. on weekdays and from 8 a.m. - 6 p.m. on weekends. Hours may change depending on possible league extensions.

Kodl stressed that the lab was open to the public and geared for recreation, in a laidback atmosphere. The facility also has a bar for those looking to relax after a training session.

"It's not meant to be your traditional stuffy golf space," Kodl said. "It's surprising how many people have already just walked in to this place. It's really a fun and exciting space."

The lab can host up to 21 players simultaneously throughout the simulators, putting green and netted areas. Fees to play on a simulator cost \$40, with members to The Beloit Club seeing a \$10 discount.

Adult and junior private lessons are available; along with playing lessons, group instruction; club fitting and repair and scoring game camps, plus golf preparation classes.

The center relies on the V1 Video Swing Analysis-Digital Coaching System, TrackMan 4 Dual Launch Monitor and SAM PuttLab. One of the lab's simulators offers golfers a selection of 60 different internationally-renowned PGA courses.

"We have a great menu of things to choose from, whether it's simulator rentals, practice passes or club repairs," Kodl said.

Lead instructor Travis Becker heads the center's training efforts and also manages instruction and club fitting for the Beloit Club. In 2015, he was named Wisconsin's PGA Teacher of the Year. He was rated by peers as one of Golf Digest magazine's best teachers in the state. He has taught professionally for 20 years, and before joining the Beloit Club, he was the head golf professional for 17 seasons at Cherokee Country Club in Madison.

"This center is a way for growing the game of golf," Becker said. "This is a golf performance and entertainment center."

The lab was originally planned to open in November, but the opening was pushed back after logistics surrounding equipment implementation slowed. The center is located on the "spine" of the Ironworks campus. The space is the first golf lab in the state that is affiliated with the Golf Channel, Becker noted.

Kodl acknowledged the upcoming warm weather, and wanted to remind residents that the course at the Beloit Club will officially open in full on March 17, while the course remains open for individuals with pins at each hole.

"It's still going to be a bit wet right now, with the frost coming out of the ground," Kodl said.

In the summer, Kodl recommended residents drop by during rainy days, and acknowledged crowds may die down during the warmer months.

"This is a relaxed environment," he added. "We want people to know we are open and that they can golf year round with us."

To schedule a session or to learn more about the golf lab, visit ironworksgolflab.com.