

Champion curler among additions to Royal Oaks Golf Club leadership

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August 22, 2017

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Champion curler Russ Howard is joining the staff of Royal Oaks Golf Club as their director of golf. Howard has lived in Royal Oaks since 1998.

Photo: Sarah Seeley/Times & Transcript

For the past 18 years, Russ Howard has looked out the window of his house to see the lush green fairways of the Royal Oaks Golf Club.

Howard, an Olympic gold medallist, and his family moved to Royal Oaks in 1998. Now, the championship curler is exchanging his curling broom for golf clubs as he joins the club's leadership team.

Howard was named the organization's director of golf and he is one of several people joining the staff.

The golf course is not new territory for Howard. He was the club's director of golf from the time it opened until 2003 and also the organization's director of real estate.

Aside from his job as the golf director, he is a full-time real estate agent for Royal LePage and during curling season, he's a colour commentator for TSN.

"I kind of have three hats," he said.

The success of the golf course has a big impact on the surrounding real estate, Howard said.

"They go hand in hand. If the golf course is struggling, that doesn't help your real estate either."

Howard said the area has a potential for 600 homes to be located around the golf course.

"We want to treat people who come here with a world-class service."

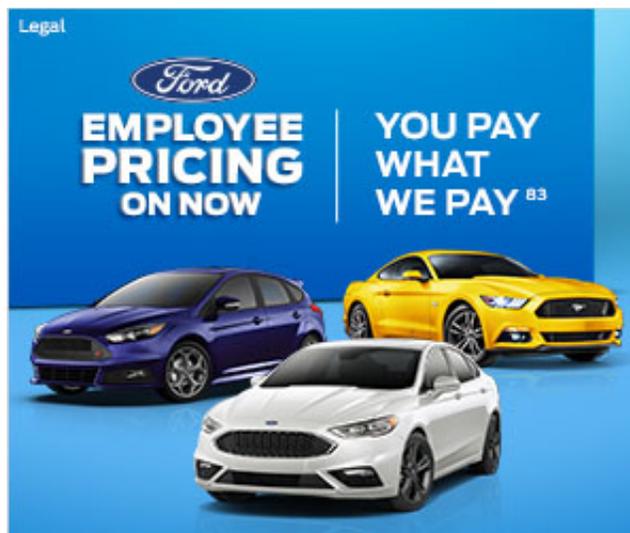
The Royal Oaks course has a potential to be one of the leading courses in Atlantic Canada, he said.

"I believe in this project," he said. "It just needs a bit of a facelift."

The 18-hole course was designed by Rees Jones, a renowned golf course architect. It officially opened in 2000.

On Monday and Tuesday, the golf course's leadership team met together to discuss improvements to the course and brainstorm ideas.

Howard said they talked about every aspect of the golf organization, including the clubhouse, golf course, maintenance, pro shop and restaurant.



The curler is a familiar face around the clubhouse. Patrons greeted him at the door on Tuesday as they headed out for their afternoon round.

This week is Esmond Clouthier's first time at the Royal Oaks course. He was brought on as the director of club operations.

Clouthier has been a golf professional in the Canadian PGA for 30 years. He has travelled the world as a golf pro and instructor. During his career he has worked for private and semi-private golf clubs in Ontario and travelled abroad for jobs in England, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

He was living in northern Ontario when he was presented with the opportunity to work in Moncton.

"Seeing the property and the product, it is world-class," Clouthier said. "I could not say no."

For the first few days, he was introduced to the staff and got a tour of the facility. Clouthier said the course is suitable for golfers of all skill levels.

During the meetings throughout the week, Clouthier said the staff were sharing their vision for the golf course. He said the goal is for the facility to be a nationally recognized course.

"We don't see this as our golf club. We see this as Moncton's golf club."

Pascal Pisegna is joining the team as director of food and beverage services, while Kevin Wentzell is remaining in his role as course superintendent.

The golf club has also partnered with Management 2000, a hospitality management company based in Moncton.

Patrick Miniutti, the owner of the Royal Oaks, said in a release it is a time of advancement for the golf club.

"Russ, Pascal, Esmond and the M2K team will work with Kevin and our other current staff members to make Royal Oaks better than ever."

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