

Local Knowledge

At least once a year we like to poke around and see who's doing what. And we are amazed at some of the innovation and creativity that occurs in the garages, tool sheds and driving ranges of the region's golfers.

Ideas born of sun, wind, rain, snow and anything else this land has thrown at us, we are still of the West, still on the frontier.

It's good to live in the Northwest.

JOURNEY MAN

Remaining true to his roots, Chris Carnahan's newest venture may be his finest

by Tony Dear

Unless you play at one of the 23 courses where Carnahan golf clubs are currently sold, chances are you've never heard of the boutique wedge and putter manufacturer based in Portland, Ore. That will likely change this year, however, as former University of Oregon and Canadian Tour player Chris Carnahan takes his designs nationwide.

Carnahan, who played for Team PNGA in three Pacific Coast Amateurs, set up the brand, an offshoot of Pinemeadow Golf Products for which he has worked since 2007, in the middle of '08 utilizing the mother company's considerable



Chris Carnahan

buying power to create top quality clubs at very favorable prices.

Although the vision focused primarily on the wedge market, the first products to display the distinctive "CC" emblem were five putters that

made up the Insignia Collection. Named after Portland bridges – Fremont, Broadway, Morrison, Steel and the first model of all, the St. John – the Insignia designs were all inspired by popular putters from the past, but modified to reflect Carnahan's personal preferences.

"I started out just playing around with a few of my favorite putters," says Carnahan. "I added some weight to improve the feel, made the top-line slightly wider to make the sight lines a little more visible, and milled the faces in a way that improves the ball's roll."

But it was the opportunity to build wedges that got Carnahan really excited. "I'm not a big fan of all the unnecessary graphics you see on so many modern clubs," he says. "They're all about appearance and don't actually enhance the performance of a club at all. I wanted to give our wedges a smooth clean look, but obviously make them perform well too."

The forged Vintage wedge was introduced in the summer of 2009 and immediately gained approval from club professionals in the Portland area, John Kawasoe at Astoria (Ore.) G&CC in particular. "John has been a friend a long time," says Carnahan. "By being the first to stock the

clubs and vouch for their quality, John helped us gain credibility among Section pros. He really helped get the brand off the ground."

Kawasoe, meanwhile, is unequivocal in his praise. "Our members love the outstanding quality of the products," he says. "More than that though, it's nice to know Chris is behind them. He has done a great job with the design, and he is an outstanding young man."

The Vintage received a good deal of attention at the recent PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando, Fla., where the "C. Carnahan" brand was introduced to a nationwide, indeed global, audience.

PGA professionals who saw the clubs were taken with the classic design and also the designer's policy of selling only through pro shops at green-grass locations, something Kawasoe certainly appreciates. "That's part of what makes the clubs so easy to sell," he says. "Because they are not available at discount stores, they have a certain professional feel."

Working exclusively with green-grass sites was a business decision, says Carnahan, but also a nod to PGA pros who have had a hard time retaining customers lured away by attractive prices at the mall or on the internet.

"The big-box companies have been taking out the small guy for a long time now," says Carnahan. "I wanted to do something for the club pro."

Price tag on a Vintage wedge is \$89.95 or less. Visit carnahangolf.com for more information.

