



**Phil
Tataurangi
. . . life**



BUSINESS AND BACK GET HEALTH CHECK FOR TATAURANGI

▶ **IF PHIL TATAURANGI SEEMS TO BE SMILING A LOT THESE DAYS THERE ARE A COUPLE OF GOOD REASONS WHY.**

He is back playing the game he loves after an enforced 17 months absence through injury, and he is excited about a new business venture he has brought to New Zealand from the USA.

Tataurangi has had a wretched time since winning the 2002 Invensys Classic in Las Vegas and seemingly set for a long, successful run on the world's toughest golf tour.

He has endured heart surgery, neck problems and two operations on a herniated disc in his back, and yet through all the dark months when he contemplated life without golf he never gave up hope.

He begins his mission to regain his US Tour card this month and is confident he will have some early success.

Tataurangi has been busy on the business front as well and brought the New Zealand license for the synthetic greens technology company Southwest Greens.

He was so impressed with the replica bent grass putting green he installed at his home in Dallas that he wanted to give New Zealand golfers this unique way to sharpen their short game.

A business plan convinced him it would take off here and he assembled a top team to drive the project, including his manager Geoff Burns, Golf Course Management's Rob Briscoe and Gulf Harbour course superintendent Morgan Henton.

There are over 3000 synthetic golf greens across the USA and six out of the top 10 players on the PGA Tour have one installed.



Photos: Elizabeth Wilton

is good

Tataurangi says the benefits are dramatic.

"The bent grass greens give the purest roll on the ball as there is limited grain to deal with. The Southwest Greens have the same feel plus the added advantage of being able to be used at home in all weathers and they are practically maintenance free," he said.

"The greens run exceptionally true, hold chips like the Tour greens but can handle the kids playing on them as well."

He admits the product is not cheap as it is at the premium high end for practice facilities.

"For the avid golfer who wants to work on their short game the benefits are endless plus for families they provide enjoyment everyone can benefit from."

Tataurangi says it is interesting to note that 18 municipal courses in the USA have total synthetic greens but that is not an area he is looking at just now.

He is aiming Southwest Greens at the private residential market "where we can control the standard of our product as there is less usage" but driving ranges and public courses are possibilities down the track.

So far two greens have been installed, in Howick and Mangawhai, and Tataurangi leaves for the USA confident his venture will take off here.

While Morgan Henton was finishing off the Howick green, Tataurangi sent some large ripples through the golf world when he stormed into contention at the recent Jacobs Creek Tournament with a third round 68.

It moved him into contention for the title and although his lack of match play saw him fade on the final round he proved he could do it again.

"I really embraced the atmosphere of playing again. People appreciated me getting into the folds of a golf tournament again and I like playing good golf," he said.

Tataurangi's win at Las Vegas in 2002 gives him the confidence to go back on the Tour and aim to win again.

"I hope it is not my only win on the PGA Tour. I have several aspirations there but it is nice to have won once because it gives you confidence.

"It's like Michael (Campbell) winning a major – you feel like you can do it again."



During his rehabilitation Tataurangi joined the golf media and found the experience to be of great benefit.

"I really embraced it and it was valuable to see what we do through different sets of eyes.

"It made me realise how fortunate we are as pro golfers to play golf for a living and also how golf tournaments are run. Looking at them from the outside rather than playing in them brought an added perspective."

He has 22 tournaments to make the money target of \$US 616,722 which is equivalent of 125th place on the Tour.

He is not too concerned about the targets.

"I'm looking beyond that mark to be honest. I think I'm better than that but I realise I've been out of the game for a while.

"It will take a while to perform to the PGA's highest levels but I have high expectations on the things I can control. I just need to remain patient and it will happen."

Tataurangi turns 35 in October and does not see himself playing long term. He wants to achieve as much as he can for his family in the next few years.

"I'm not going to be a Bob Charles and play on the Champions Tour. I want to achieve a few things in the next couple of years as we have two kids and we want to bring them up in New Zealand."

It is heartening for Tataurangi to know that while he is testing himself against the world's best in the USA his business venture is producing world class putting surfaces here in New Zealand to help produce the next generation of champions.