American Golf hails return of sport after strong Christmas trading

By Nigel Taylor - 24 January 2022

Golf looks to be climbing back up the leaderboard again as a sport of choice in the UK. Having spent time in the doldrums with number of younger players dwindling, it’s now back in the swing if results from Lancashire-based American Golf are anything to go by.

Fourth quarter sales - including the critical Christmas trading period - drove 55% higher on a year ago, albeit up against periods when players weren’t allowed to play.

For the 12 weeks to 31 December overall sales soared to £40 million with physical store sales accounting for £27.5 million, and digital sales £12.69 million.

The company sells brands including Calvin Klein, Ellesse, Under Armour, Ralph Lauren and Lyle & Scott, among many others.

Operating 95 stores across the UK and Republic of Ireland, growth was driven by demand from new players as well as those keen to improve their game. Sales of entry-level equipment for the 12 weeks increased 35%, compared with the same period in 2019, while the value of premium equipment purchases grew by more than 300%.

Gary Favell, CEO, American Golf, told The BusinessDesk: “We’ve worked hard in the past two years to position golf as a game everyone can play, from our partnerships and the events we support, to revamping our stores and investing in accessible ranges and complexes where all, from beginners to pros, can improve their game.

“This has really resonated with golfers of all abilities. Lockdown and Covid restrictions helped to attract new people to golf and fuel the passion among existing players to rethink and improve their game. We’ve been able to meet this demand at both ends of the market with an unwavering commitment to inclusivity and accessibility.”
this demand at both ends of the market with an unwavering commitment to inclusivity and accessibility.

The past two years has seen American Golf drive to make the sport more accessible and inclusive, demonstrated by its partnerships with world number one disability golfer, Brendan Lawlor, support of the HANDA World Invitational event and sponsorship of the Rose Ladies Series.

In addition to flagship store refurbishments, American Golf said it is demonstrating its commitment to inclusivity by the acquisition of entire golf complexes, including Cheshire’s High Legh Golf Club, Cambridgeshire’s Hemingford Abbots Golf Club and Lancashire’s Rossendale Golf Centre, in a bid to encourage families to play the game together.

Gary Favell added: “Like many retailers, we’re seeing rapid growth in e-commerce. However, through offering a unique experiential retail experience, we’re also bucking wider retail trends and continuing to see exceptional growth coming from bricks and mortar.

“Around two thirds of our sales in the run up to Christmas were in store and at our ranges because we’re creating experiences and offering services that you can’t replicate online.

“Shoppers want to come and chat to pros and try equipment with them – this is why we’re investing in creating a whole golf experience through ranges and courses. It’s so much more than traditional retail and is winning with golfers at all levels of their game.”

American Golf has 95 stores across the UK and Republic of Ireland, while also offering delivery to countries across Europe.

By Nigel Taylor