



MARK GORMUS/TIMES DISPATCH

Andrew Hodson checks the flexibility of a club in the repair lab/van that allows him to take his services to the golfers.

Andrew Hodson discovered a deep-rooted characteristic of golfers at the tender age of 11.

"Golfers are natural tinkers."

An avid golfer will spend the money to do anything to improve their game," 35-year-old Hodson said while working on reshafting a club at Hunting Hawk Golf Club.

Hodson began regripping clubs for members at Willow Oaks Country Club, where his father Peter was head professional, when he was 11. He learned the fine art of refinishing persimmon-headed clubs and reshafting when he was 14.

"It's a shame I have all the equipment for refinishing, and it's sitting at home gathering dust," Hodson said.

Not gathering dust are the modern tools of clubmaking and club repair in Hodson's "Mobile Equipment Lab." Hodson is a certified Class A clubmaker. Six years ago he transformed his full-time hobby into a business with a twist.

"I've always wanted to do this," Hodson said. "A lot of people, when they go to a tournament, they go on the weekend. My dad would take me Tuesday and Wednesday, and I'd hang out on the practice tee."

Go to any PGA Tour, Buy.Com Tour, PGA Senior Tour or LPGA Tour tournament site and you will see mobile repair shops set up next to the practice range on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

The operators of the vans provide picky pros with immediate services such as regripping and reshafting. They can change the lie or the loft of clubs.

Clubbin'

The Richmond area has a number of Class A clubmakers. You will find them at:

- Clubs Fore You, Glen Allen, 266-7119
- Creasy's Golf, Chester, 751-3274
- Flagstick Custom Golf, Midlothian, 327-1600
- Grips and Sticks Custom Golf, Manakin-Sabot, 784-0322
- Hanover Golf, Mechanicsville, 730-3789



Hodson offers the same mobile services to golfers of all skill levels at many of the area's private and public courses. Reshafting and regripping processes take less than 30 minutes from start to when you can use the club.

"I've had several opportunities to open up retail, but I thought it would be better to take my services to the golfer," Hodson said. "I'm a hands-on person."

Sunday at Hunting Hawk, a player having trouble hitting his irons asked Hodson to check the lie. After testing, Hodson changed the lie a whopping five degrees on each club.

"The low to plus handicappers know and appreciate their equipment. Working with them is never easy, but the rewards

are satisfying. They want it done right and want it done quickly," Hodson said. "The Crown Royal [Golf Championship] was the full test. Those guys were so demanding with the specs they wanted. They stood shoulder to shoulder with me while I did it."

Dick Ayers, who finished fifth in the tournament, was so pleased with Hodson's reshafting work on a driver he pulled out several more big sticks and asked him to do them the same way.

Hodson's day job is working for Henrico County in real estate assessment. A flexible schedule gives him time for the clubmaking business. His wife often will serve as a courier, picking up and delivering clubs.

The van's name is trademarked. He has decorated it with an American flag and pin flags from various events. A newspaper clipping on one wall is about his grandfather, Bert Hodson, the first Welshman to play on a Ryder Cup team and the winner of the 1929 Welsh Open. The mobile lab's logo features the trophy from that tournament.

He has corporate sponsors and vendor sponsors (Penley, Rifle and Golf Pride), and he has various arrangements with the head professionals when he sets up shop at a private or public club. It could be a flat commission, or helping with the junior program (an area of major focus for Hodson) or helping out with fittings.

The mobile lab's schedule is on his Web site, www.hodsongolf.com, or contact him at 1-887-CLUBMKR or 272-6135.

• Contact Arthur Utley at (804) 649-6559 or autley@timesdispatch.com