



Allen Bank, Parmasters director of membership services, stands next to promotional posters in Dartmouth on Wednesday.

(PETER PARSONS / Staff)

Golf franchise getting into the swing of things

Training is par for the course at this business

EDITOR'S NOTE: Our special report on franchising wraps up with the personal stories of four local entrepreneurs who see franchising as their road to a secure economic future.

By **STEVE PROCTOR**
Business Editor

Matt Jeffrey of Beaver Bank was sick of his old job. He had spent 16 years on the road, and it was sucking the life out of him.

He still wanted to be his own boss, but he also wanted a life. He wanted to be able to have a little fun, spend time with his family occasionally and maybe even reduce his single-digit golf handicap by a little.

While looking for career ideas on a franchising website (www.betheboss.ca), Mr. Jeffrey came across a testimonial for **Parmasters**, a chain of indoor-golf training centres. He wondered whether it might be

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possible to combine his love of golf with making a living.

Mr. Jeffrey started researching the company and the people behind it. It looked viable from a financial perspective, and he was impressed that PGA pro Scott Hazeldeine was involved in developing training systems that are "guaranteed" to reduce handicaps by 25 per cent.

After a visit to a corporate open house in Philadelphia, where he chatted with a dozen franchisees, he was sold. He bought the rights to open five of the indoor-golf training centres in Atlantic Canada

and started work on the flagship location in Dartmouth.

Construction of that \$1.6-million centre at the corner of Thornhill Drive and MacDonald Avenue won't get underway until June, but Mr. Jeffrey is already selling charter memberships to golfers anxious to use the golf simulators featuring world-famous courses, undulating and adjustable putting greens and the sand traps.

The 20,000-square-foot training facility will also have two practice bays with automatic teeing systems that deliver pre-teed balls from beneath the floor, a fitness centre, a gourmet cafe and rooms that can be rented for business gatherings or birthday parties.

According to the Parmasters website, the company has 10 franchise investment options starting at \$300,000 and that go as high as \$2.5 million. Franchisees are required to

put up 20 per cent in cash and must go through a rigorous four-part evaluation to ensure they understand the operations.

Mr. Jeffrey said he went to friends and family to help raise the money but also structured the company so investment was available as a Nova Scotia tax credit worth 30 per cent. He is the majority owner but has five partners.

Recognized by **Franchise Business Review** as one of the top 50 franchises in terms of satisfaction for franchisees, the company was founded in 2004 but already has 35 locations, including two in Canada and one in China. The corporate website offers videos from the construction of a Parmasters club in Memphis, Tenn.

Mr. Jeffrey said videos showing the building of the Dartmouth location will be fed to the site and he hopes the club will open by October, just as the outside game is beginning to fade away.

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