

A fire in his belly

By Janice Ferguson

GPA Style Editor

Some people are content just getting to the retirement stage of life. There is more time for golfing, fishing, watching sunsets - anything but working hard after all those years.

For new Martin Golf label founder and president Rick Martin, 71, the entrepreneurial spirit is still winning out over retirement.

Martin's name is trusted and synonymous with success in the golf apparel industry. He made his mark by creating the Fairway & Greene golf brand in 1994 and captivating the marketplace for 10 strong years. In what became a family-run business, his son and two daughters became integral figures in the golf apparel industry while working at F&G.



Martin inevitably asked himself a rhetorical question, "Why leave a spot on the bench feeding pigeons to do this again?" Anyone who knows Martin can answer because he has never been known to sit down long enough to feed even one pigeon.

Martin really had no intention to get back in the golf apparel industry, but too many people coaxed him over the course of six years. They reminded him of the need for bringing back high quality, luxury cotton clothing that doesn't cut corners and, like the tagline of Martin Golf suggests, clothing that is as timeless as the game.

When asked about what he thought of other well-known luxury golf brands, Martin says he only

looks at one label - his own.

"I don't look at other brands," he said. "Instead I want to be the benchmark brand. This is a business, not a competition. The last men's specialty store on earth is the golf pro shop because they are buying for a culture. We might not be the only ones, but we are one of the ones who speaks to that culture."

Another key part of Martin's business model was bringing back his daughter, Teri Martin, as the designer. Between the two of them, some loyal sales reps from the F&G days, a large resource pool and oodles of experience, the reaction to the spring 2012 collection that started shipping this month has been better than expected.

Proof of that came from a sales presentation being held at a pro shop during a senior club championship rain delay. Many of the players who were mulling around eavesdropped and gave unsolicited praise for the Martin Golf items being shown. One commented that he would buy five colors of a shirt and another chimed in for three. Before long, the merchandise buyer was adding a second page to his order.



"We are using a proprietary process on the highest grade yarns to create a product that maintains its vivid color, is easy to care for and has performance characteristics like moisture wicking," Martin said. "It's the best of all worlds, bringing back old values and pairing them with new techniques."

Several great clichés could be used here, but perhaps the most apropos in this case is, "if you want it done right, do it yourself."

For information, visit www.martingolfapparel.com.