

# Golf Inc.™

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## Quarterly

# Most Powerful People in Golf

Tim Finchem moves to the top of our annual ranking of the world's power brokers based on the financial performance of the PGA Tour. Plus, Ken and Tenniel Chu top our inaugural ranking of the most powerful in Asia.



# A new leader for Asia

The fledgling Asian Golf Industry Federation has hired an American in hopes he can bring together a continent to promote golf

BY JAMES PRUSSA

Tim Trinka has his work cut out for him.

For years, the golf market in Asia has had much potential for growth, but also has remained very fragmented. The continent's modernization and growth have not only spurred the game, they have increased the needs for information, improved communications and cooperation within the Asian golf industry. Unfortunately, prior efforts have fallen short.

Now Trinka has been tasked with making it happen.

The American lawyer was appointed president of the Asian Golf Industry Federation in late 2012. AGIF was founded a few years ago as a Singapore-chartered, not-for-profit trade association, and began through the support of the golf's leading international companies — including Toro, Syngenta, Jacobsen, Rain Bird, Acushnet, IMG and Robert Trent Jones II.

Trinka is no newbie to Asia nor to the rough-and-tumble world of Asian business. He's been engaged as the senior foreign lawyer with the second largest law firm in South Korea - Bae, Kim & Lee LLC - for more than 20 years. His international law practice has focused on Asian commercial and financial transactions, handling matters throughout Asia.

Through his firm's offices in Seoul, Beijing and Shanghai, he regularly represents land planners, design firms, construction management firms, suppliers,

management companies and golf course development projects. Representing the main sponsor of the 2015 Presidents Cup, to be held in South Korea, Trinka has even

skills and solid Asian business experience to now guide AGIF as we build out and grow our efforts to get the Asian golf industry pulling in unison."

Trinka also comes prepackaged with association experience. He's been co-chair of the Real Estate Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce in South Korea since 1995; is a former vice president and currently a member of the Executive Council of the USO Korea; was chairman of the International Licensing Committee for Nine Bridges, a club in South Korea; and has served as vice president and on the Board of Governors of the Seoul Club.

A graduate of the business school at the University of Iowa, he holds a law degree from John Marshall Law School in Chicago, and he completed advanced international studies at Salzburg University, Salzburg, Austria.

Trinka has a strong vision for AGIF.

"We are a young organization in an expansionist mode," he said. "Thus, the key objectives that AGIF will pursue in the short term include expanding our membership and contact base throughout Asia and solidifying our financial framework to ensure that we are able to effectively carry out our mission."

After that, Trinka plans to build the industry's largest database of Asian golf information in one centralized location, making AGIF the go-to place in Asia for key golf metrics.



**TIM TRINKA** has an ambitious vision for golf in Asia, and he's been busy implementing it as president of the Asian Golf Industry Federation.

gained experience in championship golf management.

"Our AGIF board was fortunate to attract Tim Trinka as our president at this time when we are emerging from our initial founding stage to our active-growth stage," said John Holmes, president of Atlas Turf International and an AGIF board member. "Tim brings us needed international legal



**TIM TRINKA** with golf-course architect Robert Trent Jones II and Mike Kim, managing director of MK Associates, which has been retained by the PGA Tour to be the point man on the ground in preparation for the 2015 Presidents Cup in Korea.

There's been somewhat of a slowdown in China, the most active Asian market, but I think it's temporary."

Trinka said the Asian countries are growing rapidly and so is their interest in golf. Golf in South Korea and Japan, the mature markets, remains strong.

"The impact of golf as an Olympic sport cannot be overstated in Asia," he said. "There is a national obsession with the Olympics in most Asian countries, especially in China. Olympic golf will mean that government funding will start flowing across Asia into the game. We're already seeing signs that the current moratorium on golf course development in China is relaxing a bit, and I anticipate that this trend will only get stronger in the time."

Trinka is a man on a mission and his vision for the development of Asian golf becomes instantly clear.

"It is imperative that we are not seen merely as a group of Western golf companies operating in Asia," he said. "The key to our success, to our effectiveness as a pan-Asian organization, is to grow the AGIF at the ground level in each country that we represent. Who best knows cultural context, history and traditions — key things that impact good communication — other than the people who are indigenous to each of these great countries? We need to encourage all Asians engaged in the golf industry to join the AGIF."

But that's not all. He hopes to establish the organization as an educational leader and to increase golf course development, playing frequency of existing golfers and the number of new golfers.

Japan's Hiromi Yanagisawa, managing director of Inaji Landscape & Construction Co., who also sits on the AGIF board, said Trinka's primary challenge will be uniting different cultures.

"The Asian golf industry still has much potential for growth, but it has always been a challenge to get everyone pulling in the same direction," he said. "Developing a good, effective and respectful understanding of the many complex nuances of cultures in Asia is not easy for Asians, and few westerners master the required skills."

But if anyone can do it, the AGIF board is confident Trinka is the man. He understands the West, which makes up most of the organization's board. And he understands the East. He has 20 years

in Asia and is married to a South Korean who is a former broadcast journalist with the Korean Broadcasting System and who served as the chief of staff for the mayor of Seoul.

With more than 4,000 courses in Asia and 16 million golfers playing approximately 175 million rounds per year, Trinka is bullish on the future.

"I think we're only just getting started and that these numbers will significantly increase in the next 10 to 20 years," he said. "Asian golf growth is absolutely not over."

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