

Used Car News

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New Type of Auction 'Tees' Up

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A former car dealer is putting a new spin on the traditional auto auction with a sale featuring cars, trucks, recreational vehicles – and golf cars.

Tom Emmett, a former franchised and independent dealer, is expecting to open The Greater Palm Springs Auto/Golf Car Auctions in Palm Springs, Calif., later this year.

"We're going to start off with an eight-lane auction," Emmett said.

His ambition is born out of a decades in the automobile business, combined with the belief that a big market exists for this type of used-vehicle sale.

"I have 31 years experience in the car business," Emmett said.

Emmett got his start in the retail automobile industry as a porter.

He first worked as a lot boy at an El Paso, Texas, Chevrolet dealership in 1976.

Later, Emmett ran family-owned Sun Datsun-Rolls Royce store in El Paso in 1980.

In the mid-1980s, Emmett owned and operated Ajax Rent-A-Car and Auto Sales, and Just-A-Ride Auto Sales – both in El Paso.

But in 1988, Emmett changed direction.

He started his company Emmett Golf Cars in Palm Desert, Calif.

It was an eye-opener for him.

"It is a fiercely competitive business," Emmett said.

When hotels, country clubs, etc. come to the end of their golf car leases, the major distributors fight for their trade-ins in order to get their new leases.

Golf car fleets can range in size from 160 to 300 units, Emmett said.

"You can spend up to \$20,000 for a golf car," he said.

Emmett ran the distributorship through



FORE!: A golf car, in the style of a 1957 Chevy, was one of 160 golf cars for sale at the Casino Morongo Resort and Spa, in Palm Springs, Calif. It was the first sale for the Greater Palm Springs Auto/Golf Car Auction, which is planning to open its own site in 2006.

1995, and returned to the car business, owning a dealership in El Paso, and then running a store in the Boston area.

But in 2004, Emmett returned to California to make plans for the auction in Palm Springs.

Emmett believes there is a huge market for an auto auction that also specializes in golf cars.

He said about 60,000 golf cars are in use throughout the surrounding valley, making it the perfect place for his auction.

The eight-lane auction would be arranged so that six lanes would be open for passenger vehicles and RVs, while two lanes would be devoted to golf cars.

All the lanes will be large enough to accommodate full-size automobiles and even recreational vehicles, Emmett said.

He said he hopes to open a 36,000-

square-foot facility on 40 acres this year in Palm Springs.

Former franchise dealer Maury Kemp, a family friend, expects good things from Emmett's new venture.

"There is definitely a need for a golf car auction there," Kemp said.

Kemp said Emmett's knowledge of the business will boost his chances of success.

He said Emmett also has the right attitude.

"He has a lot of enthusiasm," Kemp said. "He's going to be successful."

Last month, Emmett ran his first sales event out of another site, while he awaited approval of his auction plan.

The Casino Morongo Resort and Spa hosted the first sale, which featured about 160 golf cars.