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James (left) and Neil Dickson (right), along with Royal Westmoreland employee Andy Payne (seated) pose with the solar-cell panelled roof last weekend.

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Green energy on the green

10/17/2010

By Petra Harvey

Neil and James Dickson are hoping to transform the way golfers roll around the golf course. The two are planning to change the way golf carts are powered in Barbados and throughout the Caribbean, by using solar-cell panelled roofs.

It was in October 2009, while they were reading the Barbados Advocate, that they came across an article relating to a new company in Denmark called SolarDrive, the leading manufacturer of solar canopies for electric golf carts and utility vehicles.

With Barbados having one of the highest solar insulation levels in the world, Neil and James decided that this product would be perfect to market in Barbados. Together with Sir Charles Williams they formed Solar Creativity Caribbean Ltd. and in June this year, signed an agreement with SolarDrive to become the distributors for the Caribbean.

"We thought that Barbados and the Caribbean with its high solar insulation level, would be the ideal location for the product," said Neil.

Last weekend, they held a demonstration at the United Insurance Barbados Open at Royal Westmoreland where the SolarDrive cart was driven by celebrity duo Brian Lara and Dwight Yorke. This was the second time they demonstrated their product, the first time being at the Caribbean Amateur Golf Championships also at Royal Westmoreland in June.

"We have had some very interesting feedback since we began our marketing campaign. Sandy Lane has one unit in operation and we've also had some interest from private residences and other hotels and resorts," said Neil Dickson.

SolarDrive designs and manufactures solar-cell panelled roofs for electric golf carts and utility vehicles. The vehicles capture and convert the sun's rays into sufficient energy to power golf carts every day of the year, even on cloudy days. The solar canopies can be retro-fitted to almost all brands and models of golf carts and utility vehicles, and is the only solar technology approved by Club Car. SolarDrive is a member of the Club Car Solutions Network.

The golf carts charge while in use, which greatly improves the range and efficiency of the vehicles and results in significant savings of up to 75 per cent in reduced electricity costs and increased longevity of the batteries. Each cart also reduces CO2 emissions by 180 to 310 kgs or 398 to 683 lbs of CO2 per year.

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"There is a two year warranty on the product and when your golf cart is obsolete, the solar canopy can be easily transferred to another golf cart. Also due to the significant savings on both electricity and batteries and the increased cart rental revenue the cost of the product will be recouped in five years or less, based on the cost of electricity and fuel surcharge rate. Due to the product having a longevity of 15 years, this results in 10 or more years of return on investment," said Neil.

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