

business

RECREATION



Hans Holzmann, left, and William Heckenstaller, are owners of SolarCart Solutions, a Bonita Springs business that sells Sunmobile solar powered golf carts. They founded Gulf City Solar in 2008, which unlike SolarCart Solutions installs solar kits on carts already in existence. PHOTOS BY BRIAN HIRTEN/THE NEWS-PRESS

Cart has a sunny outlook

Local developers of new solar-powered golf ride promise speed and easy charging.

BY LAURA RUANE
lruane@news-press.com

This is not your grandfather's golf cart.

The Bonita Springs developers of the Sunmobile solar-powered electric utility vehicle promise a smooth ride from its four-wheel, independent suspension – and speed unheard of in most golf carts.

And, for a golf course superintendent or a resort manager in a hurry, one push of a switch ramps up the maximum running speed from 15 mph to 23 mph.

"It's like going into overdrive," said Hans Holzmann. He and William Heckenstaller are the principals in Solar Cart Solutions. It's a spinoff of Gulf City Solar, a developer of solar pow-



A finished solar powered golf cart called a Sunmobile sits outside the SolarCart Solutions shop in Bonita Springs. SolarCart Solutions was founded this year as a retail option for solar powered golf carts.

er kits for installation on existing golf carts.

The original company recently installed its thin-film solar panels and power manage-

ment systems on 125 carts at Citrus Hills Golf and Country Club north of Tampa. That made it the

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IF YOU GO

- » **What:** Sunmobile model SUS 2
- » **Company:** Solar Cart Solutions LLC
- » **Seats:** Two passengers

- » **Warranties:** Solar panels and battery, four years. Other components, one year.
- » **Powering the cart:** A solar panel and a power

- management system.
- » **Speeds:** Dual switch offers maximum speeds of 15 and 23 mph.
- » **Suggested retail price:** \$7,800.

- » **LEARN MORE:** solarsolutions.com is under development. The original solar kits are described at gulfcitysolar.com.

Solar

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first golf fleet in the country to run on solar energy, according to Holzmann.

Now, in addition to the kits, the entrepreneurial duo are starting to market complete carts, which they think will have a bright future in the work fleets at golf courses and resorts and at mega retirement com-

munities where electric carts are the preferred means of travel.

The Sunmobile boasts 80 percent U.S.-made parts. Final assembly occurs at the companies' facility in Bonita Springs, where Holzmann and Heckenstaller are joined by three to four part-time workers.

Unlike solar power kits that use heavy glass panels that can weigh up to 60 pounds, the local companies use a thin-film panel, weighing

about nine pounds. Extra performance is provided by the proprietary power-management system Heckenstaller developed.

That combination provides greater reliability and longer battery life, Holzmann said. And, because the sun charges the batteries while the carts are outdoors, stranded golf carts due to battery depletion are rare.

Tim Hiers is manager of "everything that's outside" at Old Collier Golf

Club in Naples.

Soon, he'll put a loaner Sunmobile to the test.

"If it works well, and can save money, I'll recommend we buy it," Hiers said, noting it costs about \$2 per day to charge a conventionally powered electric golf cart.

He'll also be listening while using the cart during his workday.

"In golf," Hiers said, "you don't want to make noise when someone's hitting the ball."