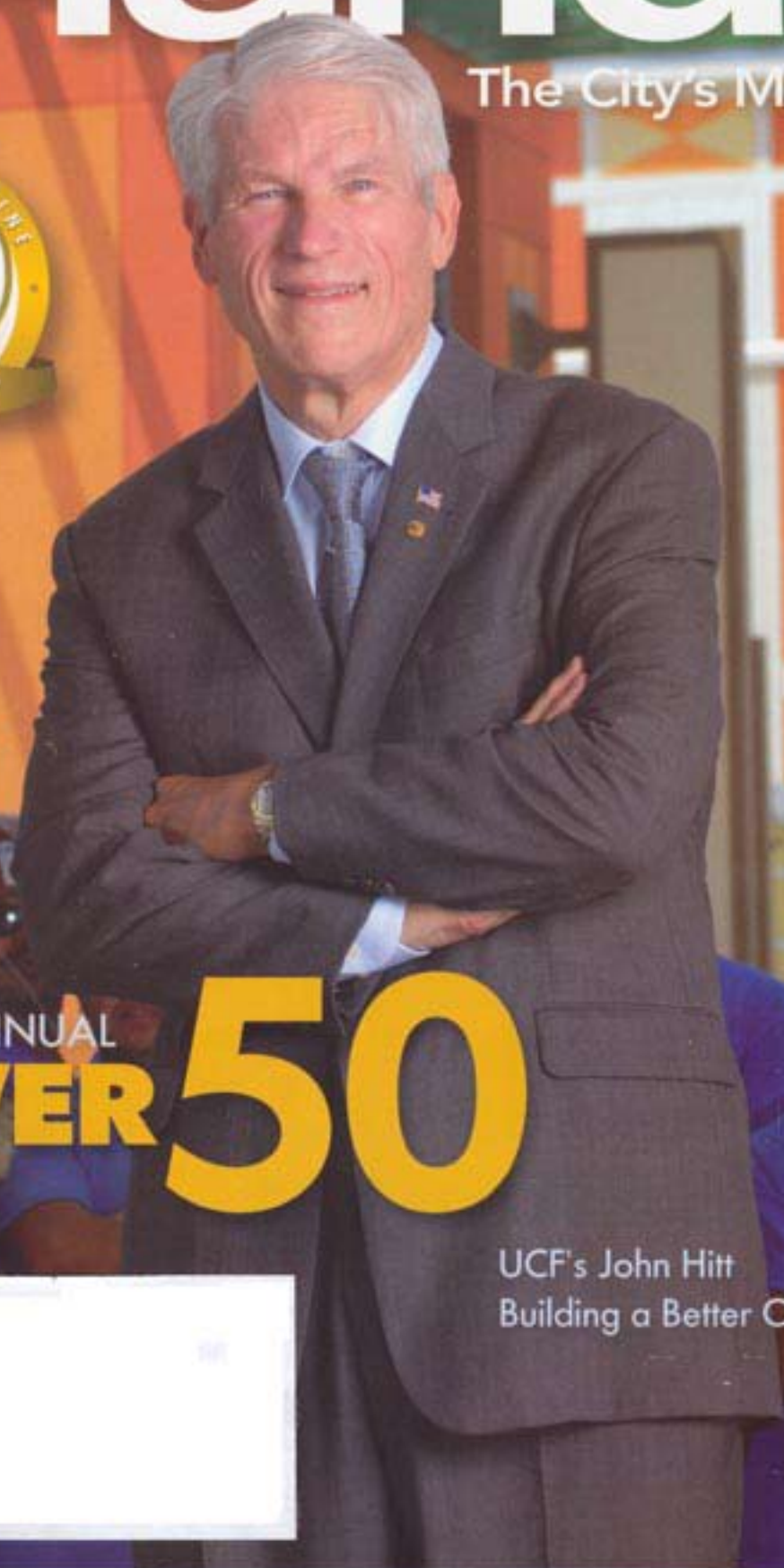


BEAT THE HEAT GETAWAYS • SUMMER FASHIONS • ICE CREAM PARLORS

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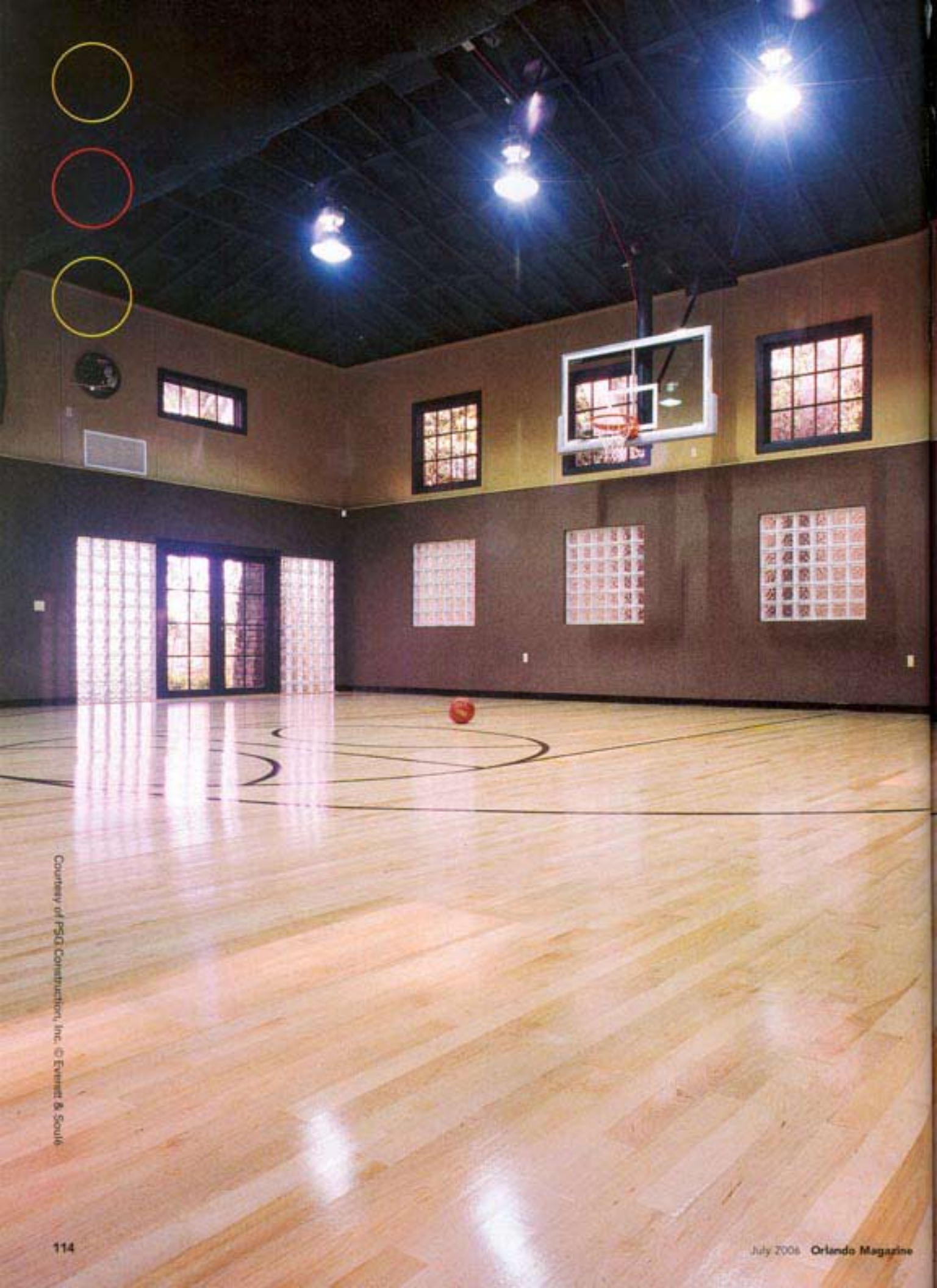


THE THIRD ANNUAL
POWER


50

UCF's John Hitt
Building a Better Orlando





Courtesy of P&D Construction, Inc. © Everett & Soule



FOR THE SPORT OF IT

By Christy Smith

From billiard rooms to basketball courts to bowling alleys, homeowners are devoting space to the art of play.





Whether

you're a fan of a fanatic, sports can add a punch of personality to a home. Many add sports facilities to their homes as recreation—for their children or themselves. Others add a sports flavor to their homes as a way of supporting their favorite teams. Whether simply décor or an area of active participation, sports in the home really scores.

Many affluent homeowners are taking their love of sports to the extreme. No basketball hoop in the driveway or volleyball net in the pool. Instead, how about bowling alleys, rock climbing walls and indoor, regulation basketball courts?

According to a 2005 report by Harvard University's Joint Center for Housing Studies, the

dollars spent by affluent homeowners on renovation are driving the remodel market nationwide. The highest-income homeowners spent three times more on remodeling than the median-income homeowners, the study found.

"People definitely pay more attention to their homes," said Anthony Bolla, vice president of Florida Billiard in Orlando. "Since 9-11, travel has been down and people are taking that money and reinvesting it in their homes. They're using that money to do a game room instead."

"Besides, with plasma TVs hitting levels that are affordable, there's now more floor available for game table or pool table."



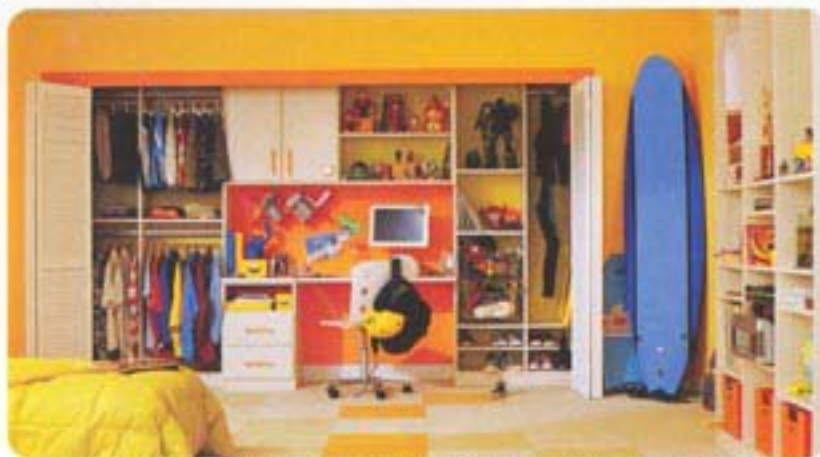
Of course

many of the most adventurous sports additions are created by young, professional athletes. While it's understandable that Orlando Magic players would have pro courts in their homes, these players have the means—and the youthful extravagance—to also add elaborate workout rooms, game rooms and bowling alleys. Most homeowners, however, elect a more conservative approach to their sporting designs.

"Most of your more 'unique' sport products are purchased by the younger people—a lot of athletes and such," explains Kerry Woodson, owner of Rhino Sports of Orlando, a sport court construction company.

FAN-TASTIC

One way that many have added a bit of "play" to their lives is through their favorite team décor. And it's more than a few pennants or posters. Upscale fan rooms aren't merely decked in fashionable decor in team colors; they also show off memorabilia years in the collecting. Signed basketballs, game-winning jerseys and rare autographs add an authenticity to a fan area.



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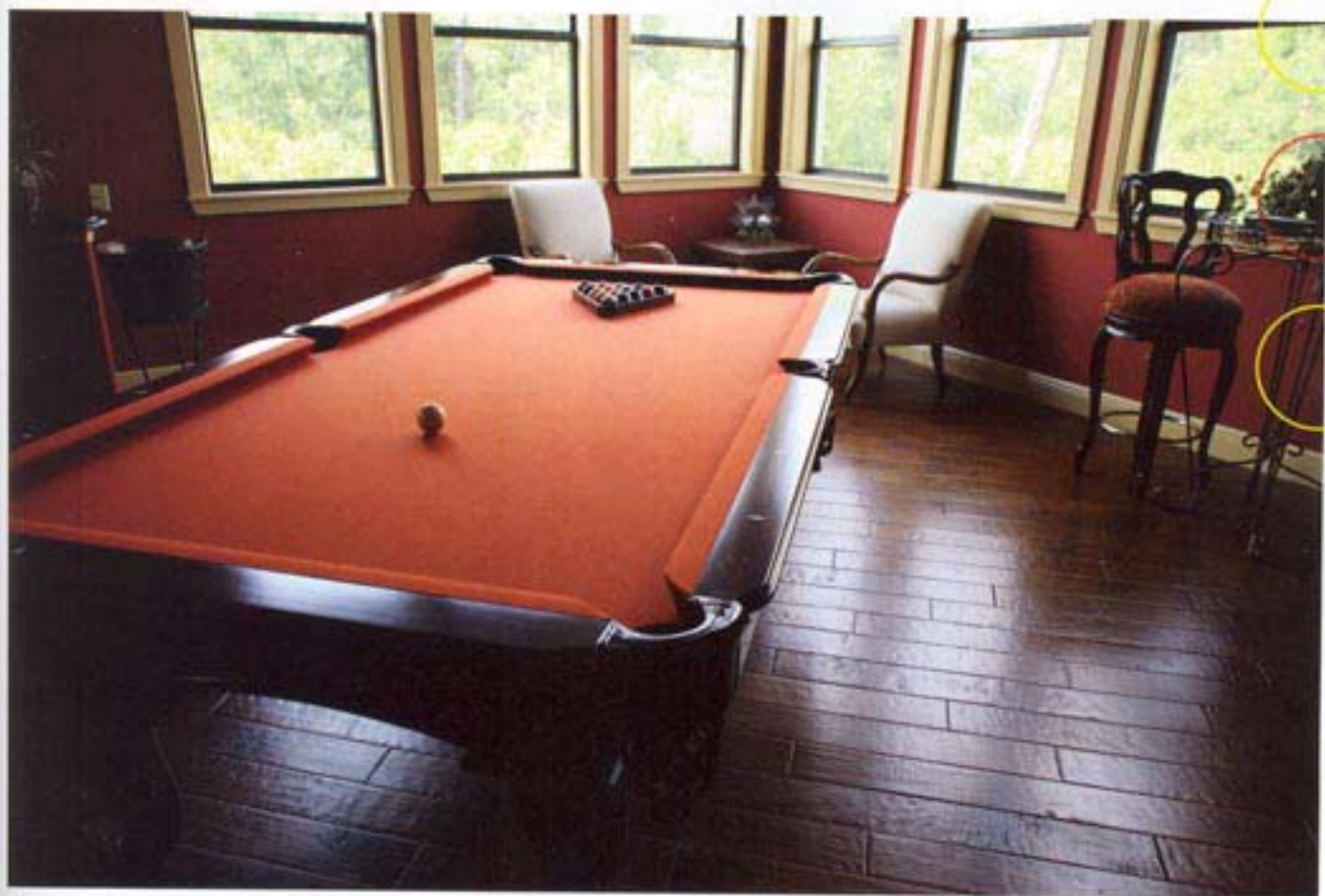
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Even retailers are recognizing the love of fans for their teams. For example, Home Depot recently launched a new sports-themed paint line called "Team Colors." Customers can now purchase paint in the exact colors of their favorite professional and college sports teams.

More than 400 paint colors representing 125 different teams are available, including Major League Baseball, the National Football League, 44 colleges and universities, 14 NASCAR teams, Major League Soccer, U.S. Soccer, the Federation of Mexican Fútbol and the U.S. Olympic Team.

"Most homeowners want to match a sports team," says Linda Pellegrini, president and owner of Pellegrini Homes in Windermere. "They want to show the memorabilia and such they purchased. They're fun rooms and they show how much the family enjoys the team."

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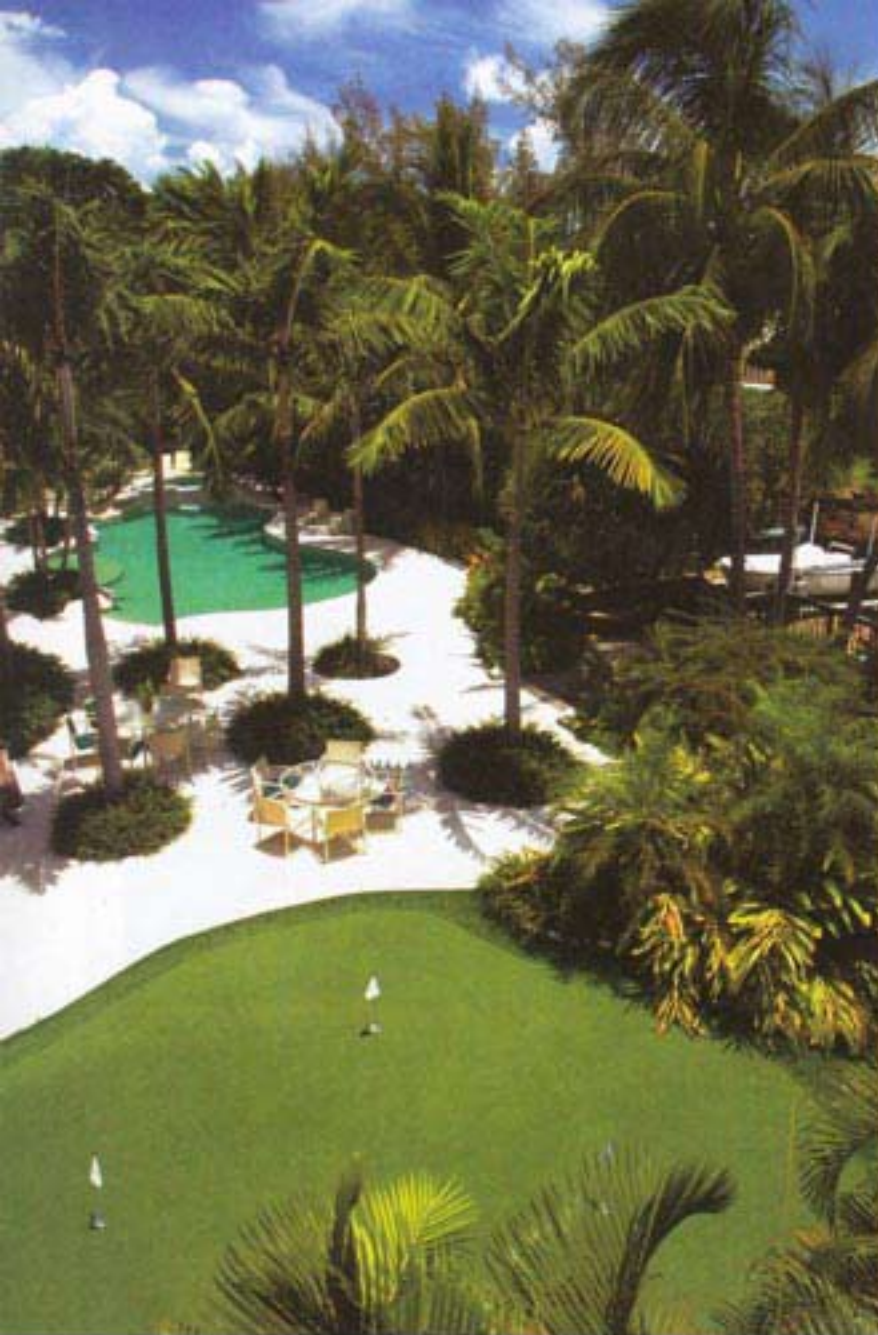


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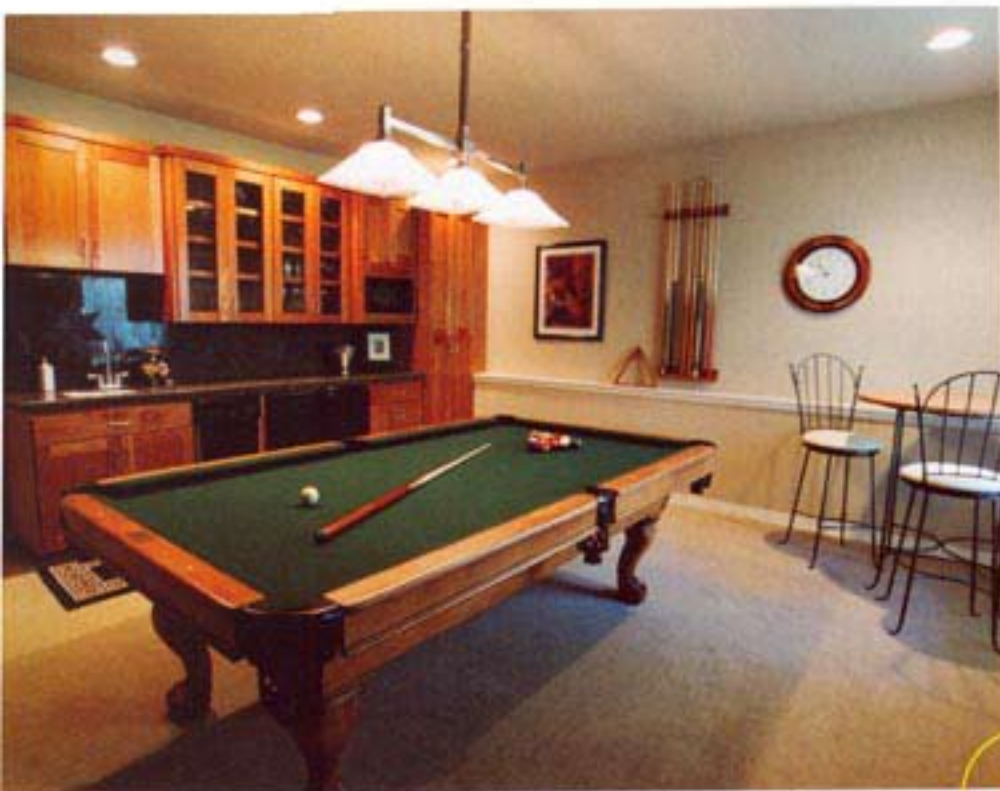
Courtesy of Rhino Sports

For example

says Pellegrini, "I have a client in Cypress Point (in southwest Orlando) who created a phenomenal Orlando Magic room. It had memorabilia they had collected over the years. Then they added a pool table, snooker table and other items."

INDOOR SPORTS

Billiard tables are usually one of the most common sport areas in homes. Of course, today's billiard rooms are far from the basement pool tables many remember.



"The big

trend is for the total package," Bolla says. "Rooms with the pool table as a centerpiece but also with a pub table, card table and a walk-up bar. They try to get as much function as possible." In addition, he says, customers "want everything to match and flow together. They still want it to have style."

According to Bolla, there are three types of billiard levels. Recreation level is where homeowners get products that can be beat up and don't have to match. It's probably most appropriate for larger families with younger children.

Mid-range game rooms usually feature matching décor. The furnishing usually match the wood finishes throughout house.

Showpieces feature heirloom tables that the homeowner wants to pass down. Either ornate or ultra-contemporary, the billiard table is the highlight of room. And in this room, the room is matched to the table, not the table to the room.

"Most billiard rooms contain a billiard table, either home theater system or plasma TV, some type of seating with bar, and a poker table," Bolla says. "Card table sales have really taken off due to the popularity of TV poker. They may also have arcade games or dartboards."

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*The latest in low-maintenance putting greens
are sprouting up all over Central Florida.*



Courtesy of Rhino Sports

And some other unusual amenities are making it into the billiard room mix, says Bolla: "Upscale popcorn poppers—they've really taken off. So have jukeboxes that are completely digital. You can take a whole CD collection and download it into the jukebox."

Want something a little more over the top? Have a spare 90 feet and a desire to wear shoes of questionable taste? Then consider installing a bowling alley. Residential alley installations have picked up about 200 percent over the last four years. For about \$90,000, you get two regulation lanes, installed, with pins, pin-setting equipment, wood lanes, computer scoring and, of course, shoes.

If you don't have 90 feet for a bowling alley, then what about 25- to 30-foot ceilings? If you have them, you may be able to accommodate another high-end trend—rock-

climbing walls. Most are usually designed for homes with children, but climbing enthusiasts have also been known to request them.

Local builder PSG Construction received a request from a homeowner a few years ago to build a regulation half-court basketball court—completely indoors. According to PSG co-owner Paul Gidus, the floor of the court was constructed in the same manner and with the same materials as a professional basketball floor. Before the plywood subfloor is laid, cushioning rubber pads are placed and then topped with the plywood and maple flooring. The lower wall sections were covered with padding and carpet to protect the players. The hoop was motorized so that it could tuck into the ceiling when not in use. Gym lights were added to give it the final authentic touch.

"There

was a lot of research involved," Gidus says. "Fortunately, our installer had experience in basketball courts."

Getting the heart pumping is at the core of most sports participation. And what better way to get moving than in a home exercise room.

"We're doing a lot of exercise rooms," Pellegrini says. "The size of the room can be dictated by the equipment—or vice versa. People who are into exercise are very particular about their equipment. And, of course, a TV on the wall is really important."

Outdoor sports

Central Florida's year-round sun makes the great outdoors really great. It also makes outdoor sports areas a natural. Swimming pools are obvious choices for most homes, but area residents have embraced a full range of sports activities.

"Most customers do a big multipurpose game court or synthetic turf putting green," says Kerry Woodson of Rhino Sports. "Sport courts are backyard courts for basketball, tennis, volleyball, badminton—



even roller hockey. There are 11 different game setups available."

These multi-sport courts have become quite popular, probably due in part to the shrinking size of residential lots.

"Tennis courts take so much room," Woodson says. "Now we've shortened the court, upgraded it, and added basketball."

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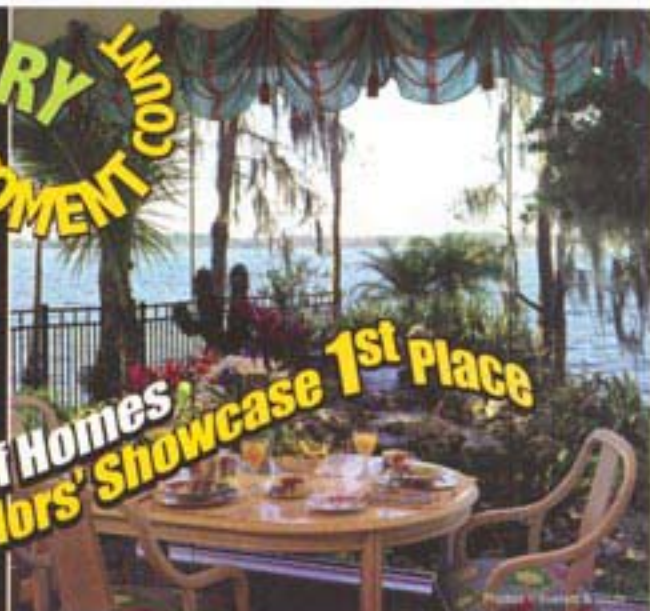
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While sport courts appeal mostly to families, adults want their play areas too.

With

costs ranging from \$12,000 to \$15,000, Rhino's courts can also be customized to match the homeowners' design wishes.

"Usually parents and kids get involved," Woodson says. They normally use either alumni colors or kids' favorite sports teams. Moms tend to pick colors that blend. It offers a chance to join together and make a good family decision."

While sport courts appeal mostly to

families, adults want their play areas too. The latest in low-maintenance putting greens are sprouting up all over Central Florida. Unlike golf course putting greens, most residential putting greens use a synthetic grass. Built to a homeowner's custom specifications, the greens can be designed with varying undulation, sand traps, rough, or tee box. According to Woodson, putting greens cost about \$8,000 installed.

The advancements made to synthetic turf have created a surge in popularity—a trend that appears to be on the rise. "You're going to see a lot more synthetic courses," Woodson says. "They're really popular in California and Arizona."

What are the benefits of artificial turf? "You can't tell it's artificial," says Woodson. "And there's virtually no upkeep. With regular turf, you have to mow it, aerate it, water it, over-seed it, replace diseased sod and use pesticides. With synthetic, maintenance means simply hitting it with a leaf blower."

"Most putting greens use synthetic grass," Pellegrini concurs. "Real turf is nearly impossible to maintain. Golf courses spend millions of dollars to maintain their greens. Now the synthetics are so good, it's hard to tell the difference."

With the obesity epidemic gripping our nation, sports areas are home improvements that are more than just entertaining—they're potentially lifesaving.

"Kids aren't exercising, so this encourages parents to install sports courts—it gets them exercising," Woodson says. "Families are also trying to keep an eye on their kids. They want to keep them at home and away from playgrounds and such."

No matter how you want to add a sporty flair to your home, there are limitless options ranging from simple décor to full regulation sport venues. The one constant is that homeowners know exactly what works for them and their lifestyles.

People think more today about what they want," Pellegrini says. "Homeowners are giving a lot more thought into how they're using their homes. My clients are much more knowledgeable."

Bolla agrees: "Consumers are more educated, which is driving sales on more upscale products. Since they're more educated, you don't have to inform them because they already know what they want." @



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