

Intermodal Service Is Reliable, Cost-Effective for Callaway Golf



Voice of the Shipper Series

Ron Brothers, senior director, global transportation and logistics for the Callaway Golf Company since 2012, has a secret weapon when he needs an especially long drive, like the 2,268 miles between Chicopee, Massachusetts and Monterrey, Mexico.

It's intermodal.

"We have typically used intermodal because it is reliable and cost-effective," Brothers said, on routings between the company's plants in those two cities and elsewhere, whenever transit times allow. He particularly praised this cross-border intermodal offering between Chicopee and Monterrey that has reduced transit time and border clearance complexity, compared with over-the-road options.

The top supply chain executive for this prominent manufacturer of golf balls and clubs used this example to explain how intermodal fits into the company's North American logistics strategy.

Colorado-based Callaway Golf's intermodal plan is tied to moves that link North American facilities and overseas locations. The company, which also uses intermodal to reach locations in Texas and Indiana from overseas, relies on the service to move its products, such as 23,000 dozen golf balls. Brothers emphasized the range of opportunities for intermodal. He said Callaway Golf would welcome the

ability to use intermodal in situations, such as moves to sporting goods store chains, where there is a higher volume of business than moves to a smaller customer such as an individual golf course.

"When we are launching something or stores are preparing for ball season, that is a full trailer load, which we would love to put on rail," he said.

Additional Opportunities

While Callaway Golf sees additional intermodal opportunities, Brothers pinpointed an issue that demands further attention – congestion at marine port facilities. Delays of several days can result when post-Panamax vessels drop off ever-larger quantities of cargo. The ability to save several days during those cargo transfers is important for the company, whose products are closely tied to seasonal demand. "This [seasonal demand] leads us to occasionally move the loads over the road when our preference would be to leave it on the train," he said.

"We'd like to increase intermodal usage to alleviate the risks that may present themselves due to driver shortages," he said, if cargo transfers at ports can be accelerated and there is adequate time to move product via intermodal.