

HALF MOON RISING

DON TALBOT AND THE HALF MOON SPORTS GRILLS

BY ANTHONY FRANKLIN



What happens when you're a pre-med college student with an itch for business? You become the creative mind behind an array of business ventures. That's just what Don Talbot, along with Dennis Alexander and Jeff Hawke, did as the driving force behind the Half Moon Sports Grills. Talbot handles the creative and conceptual ideas, Alexander brings his food and beverage expertise, and Hawke is responsible for real estate expansion and development. The three men combine to form Ceribus, the group that manages Half Moon.

Talbot, a 1987 graduate of Arizona State University, was a microbiology major who began a fleet service management company to help with educational expenses. The company's clients included ASU's motor pool, the Government Services Administration and Airborne Express. He eventually formed a management company that has run the Mill Cue Club, a high-end billiards bar on Mill Avenue, for the past nine years.

Soon after, Talbot changed fields to purchase the Gold Key Racquet Club in North Phoenix, where he had been a member for about 15 years. He developed and implemented an aggressive marketing strategy that increased membership and made the club an award-winning facility. Talbot then purchased Club Mirage in Fountain Hills, which suited him well with his background in pre-med. He bought the club eight years ago because Fountain Hills was an emerging area that has since expanded and grown.

The ability to create is what attracted Talbot to the business field. "My appeal is creating and coming up with the new stuff," says Talbot. "Having a vision for a project and seeing it to fruition and making it a place you can actually physically go to." He certainly succeeded with his newest venture, Half Moon Sports Grill.

The idea behind Half Moon was to make a sports *grill*, not a sports *bar*. Talbot wanted to create something that was different, so he went to places that were successful, took what he liked, left what he didn't and expanded on the good.

The Half Moon Sports Grill now has three locations in the metro Phoenix area that are packed nearly every night of the week. Upon entering, you are met with an open, inviting yet upscale atmosphere that encourages everyone from business people on their lunch break to a group of friends on game night to have a good time. There is an

impressive collection of hi-def plasma televisions featuring all the day's sports. Talbot says, "It's not about the quantity of TVs, it's the quality of TVs. No matter where you sit, you have a comfortable viewing angle." This means there's not a bad seat in the house. There are lounge areas with comfortable leather seating where people can enjoy their meal and not miss a single curveball. There's also a Loge, Skybox and Platinum Club at each location. The Loge and Skybox each seat six to eight people. The Platinum Club seats 30 or 40 and features leather chairs, a custom-built pool table and a plasma screen fireplace/aquarium, which is available only at the Biltmore location.

The Biltmore and Tempe locations feature three (one at the Biltmore, two in Tempe) 88-inch high definition Glasfire™ Projection System screens imported from Germany, which are the only ones in the country. These screens allow for viewing from either side of the projection. The sound system is equally impressive, featuring subwoofers that shake the screws out of the barstools.

Along with the atmosphere, what sets Half Moon apart from other sports bars is its delectable menu. Most sports bars feature a menu heavy on fried items. While you can still get many fried favorites at

Half Moon, the menu also consists of foods for those prejudiced against oil. The menu features salads, wraps, a variety of sandwiches and, most importantly, dessert items such as the Half-Baked Cookie Pie. Some of the dinner entrees available include Half Moon Meatloaf and Garlic Penne Chicken. Your classic sports bar fare, this is not.

Talbot and his partners have created a successful franchise that is sure to keep expanding. Along with Half Moon and the other properties he currently operates, he is working on creating more business opportunities. With Talbot, the sky is the limit.

HALF MOON SPORTS GRILL

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