

Proponent Group

The Premier Network of Golf Instructors

PROONENT GROUP NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2016

Exclusive: Data, Dollars and Decision-Making

2016 COMP SURVEY SHOWS WHAT'S HOT, WHAT'S NOT

It's time once again for Proponent Group's exclusive report on the state of the instruction industry—by the numbers. While many metrics in this year's edition of our "Comp Survey" show similarity to prior-year data, there are notable cases of trends that are growing or accelerating. Interestingly, there are also some trends and practices that are losing steam. In this article we'll highlight all the important marketplace changes, as we look closely at how Proponent members are operating their businesses heading into the meat of the 2016 season.

What this data provides is a financial snapshot you can use to benchmark your career against what your peers are doing. It's important to remember that these are broad averages and include a large number of instructors whose positions may be very different from your own.

Cream of the Crop

Over the past nine years, Proponent Group has been tracking our members' compensation and operations data. The aim all along has been to illuminate the business realities and opportunities for the industry's top tier of dedicated, full-time instructors. And when we say "top tier," you are definitely that. One quarter of this year's survey respondents are listed on

Get Your Personalized Comp Survey Results

If you are a Full or International Member and you completed the survey, you are eligible to have a free customized version of the survey results created just for you. Typically we aim to build your customized results from the 8-12 positions captured in the survey database that are most similar to yours. We provide a report that allows you to review compensation, job descriptions, management responsibilities and benefits for those peers who do work most similar to yours.

We can run comparisons that closely match your experience level, facility type, employment status and other key comparables. To obtain a customized summary of the new survey results, simply contact our office at any time or email Lori Bombka at lbombka@proponent-group.com.

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EXCLUSIVE COMPENSATION SURVEY RESULTS

Golf Digest's Best in State rankings and one in five of all respondents have won a PGA Section Teacher of the Year award.

In preparing this **2016 Proponent Group Compensation and Operations Survey**, we're aware that no single metric or data point is likely to make you change the way you operate your business. Instead, its value rests in the totality of the picture it provides of how the game's dedicated, serious golf instructors earn their livelihoods. We expect these facts and figures will do much to help you to strategize for a better return on your intellectual property.

In this article we'll break down some of the shifts, trends and opportunities that characterize the industry at this time. Much more information is available for you in the 22-page summary report now available for downloading on the members-only website in the Member Surveys menu.

Again this year, we have broken the survey summary into four distinct sets of data: Employees, Independent Contractors and Academy Owners, along with our customary overall averages. For only the second year in a row, our charts of financial averages include an additional breakdown of the financials for our Full Members versus our Associate Members. We felt we

needed to break the membership types out as we've seen a much larger number of Associate Members completing the survey.

A Closer Look at the Averages

Total revenues in the new survey averaged **\$113,335** for all member categories. For Employees, average income was an almost identical **\$113,189**. Independent Contractors averaged **\$98,193** and Academy Owners came in at **\$213,627**. Full Members averaged **\$127,064** in revenues while Associate Members came in at **\$75,559**.

The typical Proponent Group member earned just less than half (**47 percent**) of his or her revenues from private golf lessons. This was the lowest that percentage has sunk in our nine years of surveying. This certainly would indicate a shifting into more program diversification for many of our members. It also suggests a growing ability to find more new ways to be compensated for accumulated knowledge and intellectual property. Many members reported revenues flowing from 10 or more different sources or program types.

Private-club instructors paid back **5.5 percent** of lesson revenues, on average, to their facilities. Instructors based at public course paid back an average of **14.5 percent** to their facilities.

Revenue Breakdown for the "Average" Proponent Group Member

	All	Employees	Independent Contractors	Academy Owners	Full Members	Associate Members
Private lessons:	\$ 53,320	47,566	53,924	96,031	57,896	37,462
Salary:	\$ 19,524	33,350	6,955	0	20,689	14,163
Long-term coaching programs:	\$ 9,554	5,965	9,560	31,453	10,387	7,333
Clinics/Group lessons:	\$ 7,553	6,626	9,105	7,500	7,689	8,110
Equipment/clubfitting sales:	\$ 4,524	4,918	2,827	12,669	5,780	1,169
Golf Schools:	\$ 4,219	4,532	5,290	6,764	6,491	1,327
Payments from staff teachers:	\$ 3,981	2,795	2,226	22,111	5,330	1,403
Corporate outings:	\$ 2,665	1,629	1,941	12,733	3,590	301
Books/DVD's/media payments:	\$ 1,599	395	825	6,272	1,539	75
Bonus:	\$ 1,482	2,717	306	0	1,678	958
Coaching school teams:	\$ 1,350	995	2,086	389	1,354	1,700
Payments from Tour players:	\$ 1,346	232	613	11,944	2,002	50
Tournament winnings:	\$ 1,184	1,288	1,094	1,011	1,128	1,468
Endorsements:	\$ 1,034	181	1,441	4,750	1,511	40
Total Average Revenues:	\$113,335	\$113,189	\$98,193	\$213,627	\$127,064	\$75,559

Source: 2016 Proponent Group Compensation and Operations Survey

EXCLUSIVE COMPENSATION SURVEY RESULTS

If these percentages are applied to the average Full member's teaching revenues, we find that private-facility teachers paid their clubs an average of **\$6,989** while the average Full member at a public facility paid back **\$18,424**.

Average adult-lesson hourly rate (averaged for club-member and non-club-member rates) for Employees was **\$122** per hour, for Independent Contractors **\$145** and for Academy Owners **\$182**. Hourly rates for junior lessons were **\$94** for Employees, **\$105** for Independent Contractors and **\$134** for Academy Owners.

We're Contractually Obligated to Tell You...

We are also pleased to see a nice jump in the percentage of members with formal contracts or letters of agreement. After having held fairly steady at just less than **50 percent** over the past eight years, the portion of members with written agreements finally took a solid leap from 48 to **57 percent**.

Considering how many members call Proponent headquarters to discuss conflicts with employers, it only follows that we will continue hammering this point and trying to push that percentage ever higher. We strongly believe it is critical to have at least a letter of agreement spelling out the main expectations for both the teacher and the facility. Over time both sides forget what was agreed to—that's the nature of the undocumented relationship. Likewise, a management change will cancel out prior oral agreements. This is not a situation you want to go through without a written agreement.

Technically Speaking

We also likely reached a plateau this past year when it comes to teaching with state-of-the-art technologies. Members using launch monitors/

Doppler radar units to teach inched up from 79 to **80 percent** and seems to be hitting a ceiling. TrackMan held steady with **42 percent** of our members saying they use that system. FlightScope increased from 29 to **33 percent**, while Foresight and Earnest Sports remained at 8 and 4 percent, respectively.

After a big jump in teaching-technologies spending a year ago, we saw the averages return to historical norms of about a \$5,000 annual investment. The latest data shows an average of just **\$4,701**, versus **\$7,643** per member in last year's survey, which was an all-time high.

The Camcorder and DVD are Officially Dead

On the software side we saw a continuing migration to filming swings on mobile devices, with **94 percent** of members reporting that they use mobile-device cameras during their lessons—that's up from **88 percent** last year.

V-1 continued to dominate for video analysis and storage but for the first time dropped below a 50 percent usage rate by Proponent members. Most likely this was due to a more crowded field of options in the product category. Ubersense saw the biggest increase, jumping from 13 to **19 percent** usage by our members and following up on a similar jump the year before. No fewer than 14 different companies were named by our teachers in this space.

The percentage of instructors storing student swings on cloud-based storage continued to soar this past year, jumping from 52 percent up to **60 percent** of our members.

Instruction over the Internet Appears to Fade

It looks like Internet-based lessons have simply not caught on. The portion of instructors who offered Internet-based lessons last year that were not live

Selected Instructor Out-of-Pocket Expenses for the "Average" Proponent Group Member

	All	Employees	Independent Contractors	Academy Owners	Full Members	Associate Members
Teaching Technology:	\$ 4,701	4,578	4,219	7,944	5,452	2,033
Rent/Lease Payments:	\$ 3,554	0	3,386	22,896	4,467	1,496
Continuing Education:	\$ 2,007	1,248	2,316	1,297	2,230	1,144
Marketing/Public Relations:	\$ 995	332	1,412	5,667	1,231	268
Training Aids Purchased:	\$ 727	550	797	1,447	817	435

Source: 2016 Proponent Group Compensation and Operations Survey

COMPENSATION SURVEY RESULTS

dropped from 46 to **38 percent** after peaking a year earlier. The percentage that offered live Internet lessons also dropped, from 11 to **7 percent**. While this technology seems to work fairly well, it is becoming clearer that most golfers still strongly prefer to have their golf instruction in person with their teacher.

Marketing Has Become Very Social

Investing big dollars in marketing is not something Proponent members do. In this most recent survey the average marketing spend is only **\$995**. Free or at least very inexpensive social media platforms have become the de facto marketing channel for many of our members. Overall social-media usage for our members' businesses grew again this year with **90 percent** using at least one of the major platforms to drive business. About half of our members (**49 percent**) say they spend 1-5 hours a week on their social media business accounts.

Favorite platforms include Facebook, used by **86 percent** of Proponent members, followed by Twitter at **73 percent**, and YouTube and LinkedIn tied at **55 percent** (see more platform choices in the accompanying chart).

Non-Cash Comp Continues to Shrink

Some trends are harder to spot looking at the year-by-year changes, but when it comes to the extra benefits of a teaching job, the long-term pattern is clear. Non-Cash Compensation, as it's called in the survey, has shown erosion over the past decade, and this 2016 edition of our report shows that continuing. There have been years when the downward move was just a couple of points, but no up years for this statistic. Even as cash revenues remain stable or up for most members, the other perks have steadily evaporated.

For example since 2007: Health insurance paid by employer is down from 61 to **43 percent**; 401k plan, down from 70 to **34 percent**; PGA/LPGA dues paid by employer/facility dropped from 53 to **42 percent**; Disability insurance paid by employer dropped from 42 to **23 percent**; Education allowance dropped from 50 to **35 percent** and percentage of facilities purchasing training aids dropped from 61 to **45 percent**.

The tricky part of this continual erosion is that it happens slowly over many years and many members have not taken it upon themselves to replace their 401k's with other retirement savings vehicles nor have they taken out their own disability policies. These gaps leave many exposed to significant financial risks. Proponent strongly urges members to speak to a financial specialist who can evaluate the best ways to make sure that the industry's shrinking benefits don't cause financial havoc for you later in life.

For the Rest of the Story...

Don't forget to check out the full results by downloading the complete survey summary on the members' website in the Member Surveys menu. Please let us know if you have any questions about the results. **PG**

Social Media Platforms used by our members for their business:

Facebook	86%
Twitter	73%
YouTube	55%
Linked In	55%
Instagram	48%
Google+	27%
Pinterest	6%
Snapchat	6%
Other	4%



APRIL 15TH IS COMING, ARE YOU PREPARED?

IT'S TIME TO REVIEW OUR GOLF INSTRUCTOR'S TAX RETURN GUIDE

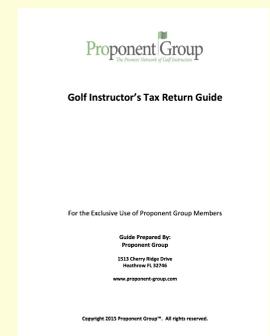
Ah, April is coming! The snow will soon be melting away, golfers will be returning by the millions to the Northern courses, azaleas will be blooming in Augusta and... your tax return is due.

Sorry to put a damper on those spring dreams, but it's time to study up and be sure you're following the rules – and there are plenty of them – as you or your CPA fill out your 2015 tax paperwork.

In case you missed it last year, we have a handy little tool in our Business Guides section of the

member website called the **Golf Instructor's Tax Return Guide** which includes a bevy of reminders from a variety of CPAs and our very own members who have gone through the pain of a tax audit.

The guide includes a list of possible deductions, tax tips for handling tournament winnings, information about potential IRS red flags to avoid and how to handle cash that flows through your business. While nobody enjoys paying their taxes, doing it correctly the first time is better than learning through an audit.



HOW DOES GOLF INSTRUCTION STACK UP?



By Lorin Anderson, President

You've chosen this career and you're not turning back now. You love the game. You love helping people. You have no desire to sit at a desk all day. Teaching the great game of golf is your passion and quite likely there aren't a lot of other jobs you'd rather be doing.

But, compared to other career paths, how does it stack up by the numbers?

Well, Proponent Group members, who are generally the top 10-20 percent of earners in the golf instruction world, compare pretty well with some of the highest-paying careers.

I gathered some data from salary.com, which provides very detailed numbers from hundreds of industries, and I chose four fairly diverse careers to compare and contrast. Note that the comparisons being made here are with the top-tier positions in these fields. These are the managerial positions within each specialty, not the lower-level worker bees.

For Aerospace Engineers the median pay last year was \$124,900 and the 90th percentile was 149,000.

For Head Nurses the median was \$100,100 and the 90th percentile was \$119,000.

For Directors of Sales and Marketing in mid to large corporations the median pay was \$141,000 and the

90th percentile was \$181,000.

Tax Attorneys saw a median pay of \$124,000 and saw their 90th percentile reach \$144,000.

Corporate benefits were not part of the calculation but typically have a value equal to 10-25 percent of the cash compensation, depending upon the individual company.

So how do the game's top teachers, our members stack up? Not too shabby. Our Full Members, who average around 20 years of full-time teaching experience, generated a median revenue of **\$102,000** with the 90th percentile bringing in **\$210,000** for the year.

Associate Proponent Group members, generally with less than 10 years of teaching experience, saw median revenues of **\$60,000** and the 90th percentile was at **\$126,000**.

Unlike the salaried professionals listed earlier, our members often have business expenses to put against their revenues. For our full members the five biggest expenses include teaching technologies, rent payments, continuing education, marketing and training aids purchased. These five line items cost our typical Full Member **\$14,200** last year. For Associate Members those expenses averaged about **\$5,400**. Even with the typical business expenses factored in, our members compare pretty well with some of the highest paying careers anywhere.

Not bad for doing something you truly love. **PG**

**"Even with the typical business expenses factored in, our members compare pretty well with some of the highest-paying careers anywhere."
— Lorin Anderson**

PROONENT GROUP PARTNERS



How Instructors Guide Kids and Parents

ELITE JUNIORS AND THE ELUSIVE COLLEGE GOLF SCHOLARSHIP

by John Torsiello, Staff Writer

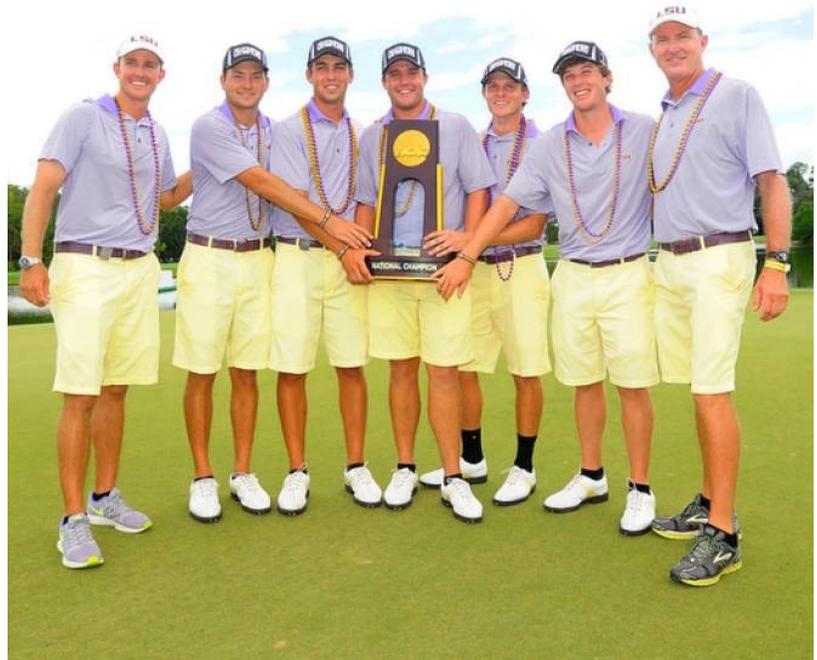
Ben Esposito is in a good place. The youngster from Pittsboro, N.C. plans to attend Gardner-Webb College, which has offered him a four-year academic scholarship to play on the golf team. It's an achievement that took plenty of talent and dedication on the boy's part, but it also required extensive support and guidance from his teaching professionals and coaches. This included helping the young golfer and his parents navigate the complex process of chasing that college scholarship, against steep competition.

"It was extremely important to have guidance along the way," acknowledges Esposito, who worked with Henry Brunton, owner of Ontario-based Henry Brunton Golf, during the process. "The point was made to me early that a very solid academic record would be extremely in opening up more opportunities," adds Ben. "In addition I went through an equipment and skills assessment to determine what areas needed to be improved for me to succeed as a collegiate golfer."

Indeed, elevating a talented junior to the college game goes beyond swing planes and hip rotation. It's about having a firm grasp on the ability and potential of your student, developing a game plan, getting the parents as well as the junior on board, and instilling proper work habits, both on and off the fairway. It also calls for a good understanding of the mindset of the college golf coach, plus a rapport with at least a few NCAA coaches, to help make the dream come true.

The consulting coach, in this situation, must be a guidance counselor who can help juniors set and achieve realistic educational and athletic goals. Brunton said he enjoys the process of helping players and families find the school that offers the best possibilities for them as golfers and people. He emphasizes the reality of how many juniors are out there, for colleges to choose from.

This is becoming a specialty within the teaching profession and the golf academy business—which



LSU is the defending NCAA Champion in Men's Golf led by their head coach, Chuck Winstead, the rare collegiate coach who is also a Golf Magazine Top 100 Teacher.

should tell you something about how challenging it is. Brunton feels that any instructor with talented juniors who doesn't have the time or inclination to learn the ropes should connect with someone who specializes in college golf placement, in order to refer families to a solid source of assistance.

George Connor, a two-time Connecticut PGA Teacher of the Year and director of instruction at Farmington Woods Country Club in central Connecticut, talks with juniors and their families about where they would ideally like to play, geographically. He'll also check to see if they have "thought that hard about it" to even have particular schools in mind. A big part of the challenge, according to Connor, is managing expectations.

"Kids picture themselves on the golf teams of the well-known schools, the ones they've seen competing on the national stage, but often that is not the best school for them to pursue," says Connor. He encourages a student to look toward a program that will offer them the opportunity to play right away.

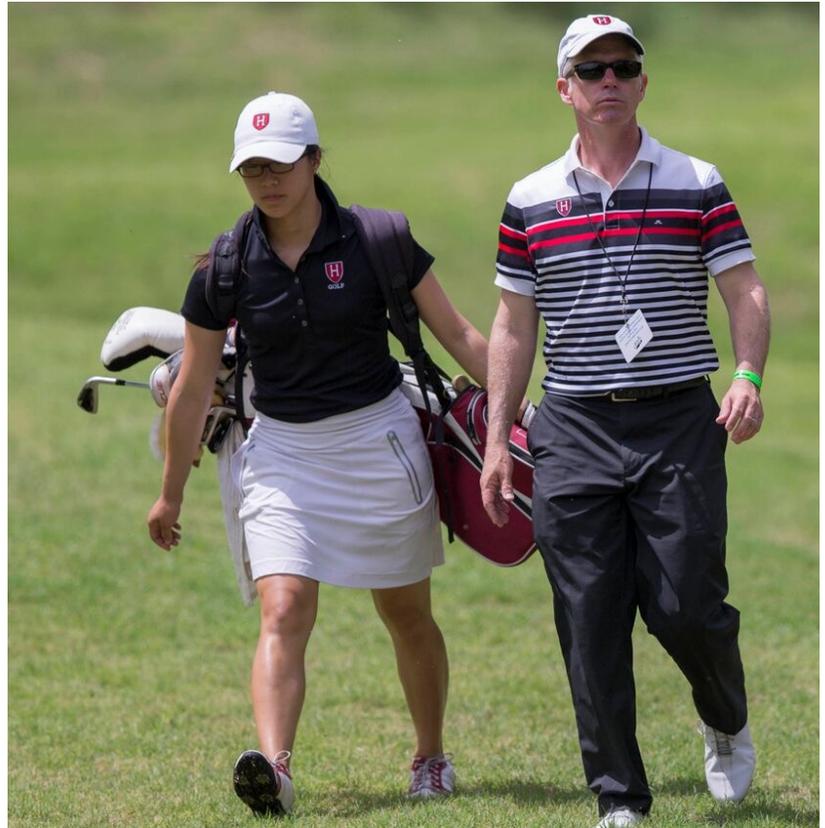
“The life of a student/athlete represents a huge commitment and sacrifice,” he notes. “To do that for four years and not have at the least a reasonable chance to play in tournaments would be an unfortunate circumstance.”

Experience has taught Cheryl Anderson, director of instruction at the Mike Bender Golf Academy, that any coach guiding a talented junior through high school will need to periodically recheck the student’s commitment level. Not long ago Anderson noticed flagging dedication in a student whom she believed had LPGA Tour-level potential. At the very least she was one of Anderson’s top candidates for Division 1 NCAA golf competition—and the scholarship that would come with it. The girl began showing up for lessons not having completed the drills assigned at her previous session, and with very few 18-hole scores posted. In addition, her demeanor seemed less serious.

“I asked her if there was something new going on in her life, that might affect her golf,” recalls Anderson. The girl replied that she had signed up for an extra-curricular school activity that involved another one of her talents, and was taking a leadership role in it with very positive results that gave her a lot of satisfaction. “In general, it was a very nice thing and I was glad for her,” Anderson says. “But I told her this would affect the way I coached her. We would have to adjust her goals—college golf was still in the mix, but the LPGA Tour, not so much. We would also need to adjust her training plan—otherwise I would just be overloading her.”

Excellent students who aren’t great athletes have always been forced to inject some realism into their college-selection process—it’s no different with junior-golf phenoms these days. Dan Kochevar, director of instruction at The Player’s Service, in suburban Chicago, talks a lot about “experience and honesty” as prime benefits that he and his business partner, John Perna, provide to juniors and parents. The ultimate goal is to help the student arrive at a campus that will be a great fit for them and offer a rewarding four years of growth and enjoyment.

“We let the kids know that they have viable options for playing collegiate golf, but rarely would it be at their ‘dream school,’” says Kochevar. “The



Proponent Group member Kevin Rhoads is the head coach at Harvard University. He is always on the lookout for juniors who excel in both the classroom and in competition.

“College players are managing and balancing many things while they are in season—that’s one of the biggest differences between high school and college.”

— Chuck Winstead

players, as they get older, do realize where they stand in the big picture of potential NCAA golfers.” Reality checks aren’t difficult to come by these days. “Evaluating a junior’s chances to play at the college level, and perhaps attain a scholarship, is not difficult,” Brunton says. “The ranking systems will show you where they stand.” A junior may look the part of a potential collegiate player, but the numbers tell the tale. “Tournament scores are what will attract coaches’ attention,” says Brunton. “With the use of Trackman

and Trackman Combines, we can tell a lot about whether someone has a good chance up to play at a college level. So, honesty is always the best policy.”

Perna, whose title is Performance Coach at the Players Service, specializes in elite player development. He points out that a typical Division 1 team selects just two incoming freshman a year. There are only 300 Division 1 teams in the country, so roughly 600 men and women worldwide will be playing D-1 college golf in their respective graduating classes. In addition, each men’s team has only 4.5 scholarships, so the likelihood of a full ride is very slim.

Each women's roster has six scholarships, so there is a better opportunity for aspiring junior girls.

Brendan Ryan, owner of BMR Golf Management and a coach of many top juniors worldwide, is dedicated to helping student-athletes gain the skills necessary to succeed in college, as well as connect with schools that meet their academic, athletic, social and financial needs. He has coached college golf, written a book on the subject (“Developing the Junior Golfer”), and has a deep understanding of the process. Ryan’s telltale signs of high potential? “You want them developing proper ball control, taking an interest in fitness, winning tournaments at each level, learning how to win, and shooting under par,” is how he summarizes it.

He adds that what instructors and coaches should be doing with a student is selling that youngster’s development plan to colleges. If the student hasn’t been properly engaged in that plan by the time they are a junior in high school there isn’t a lot that can be done. Trying to make it appear otherwise doesn’t do the golf professional any good, in the long run. “If they are going to a college program without the proper skills to make them successful,” warns Ryan, “it’s going to reflect back on you.”

Bob Heinz comes at this process from two perspectives: He is head coach of men's golf at the University of Pennsylvania and a golf instructor at Applecross Country Club in Downingtown, Pa. “I get to see both sides of the issue,” observes Heinz. That said, his role at the university doesn’t involve those juicy four-year money grants. “Penn is an Ivy League school, so we can't offer athletic scholarships,” Heinz says, “only financial aid based on need.” He gets three to five students per year asking about scholarships, and 10 to 12 sets of parents doing the same per year. He well knows that, up in Division I, there is going to be fierce competition

for spots, and even more fierce competition for scholarship money. “On the men's side,” says Heinz, “if you don't show you can shoot under par in competition at least occasionally then D-1 is probably a stretch.” He adds that merely looking at collegiate players' scoring averages can mislead high school golfers because the courses and their setup are typically a lot more difficult at the college level.

Unfortunately, players and parents seldom realize how big the junior golf world is. They tend to scan college rosters and compare themselves to the bottom third of an NCAA team. What they fail to realize is that coaches are not looking for a candidate who can just compete with the bottom third—mostly those are players the coaches feel they were wrong about or took a flyer on.

Says Perna: “Coaches need players who can be plugged into the starting lineup, that's what they look for. I find this to be the most common misconception among players and parents.” He says setting expectations for juniors and their parents is vital,

“both in what's a realistic opportunity and in the effort required in the classroom, gym, and on the practice tee to reach their goals.”

“This game is truly international,” Brendan Ryan points out. “If you are number 600 in America that means you are probably number 1,500 in the world. There are 60,000 junior golfers in Sweden alone, so you need to account for that international flow of talent.” As an instructor, Heinz finds it can be difficult to share with juniors and parents the “harsh truth, simply because you risk losing a client if they can't accept an honest evaluation.”

Brandie Jackson, a college recruiting coach, consultant and mentor, says that a teaching professional can and should “be honest with a player and parent and not be afraid to lose the revenue by telling them the truth.” With that

5 Keys for Guiding Juniors

- Do what you can to keep the goal of college golf something that is “owned” by the junior himself or herself. Once a parent takes over the lead role, trouble will loom.
- Understand the mindset of the college golf coach and cultivate relationships with at least a few. Explain to juniors and their families that recruitment is about finding those top few players on a team—trying to extract hope from high school scores that match with scores shot by lower-tier NCAA players is a mistake.
- Ivy League schools don’t give athletic scholarships, but if a junior performs well academically their golf talents could greatly help them gain admission, with the chance of need-based financial aid along with a spot on the golf team.
- Most elite juniors start out focused on a “dream school” or perhaps a few of them, but extremely few will reach that goal. But if they research their Division 2 options and shop wisely for where to study and play golf, their four-year experience can be excellent.
- A teaching professional can love the basic job of developing golfer talent, but strongly dislike the work of helping top juniors hunt for college scholarships. The coach should realize this and be able to recommend a qualified consulting professional.

understood, the work can begin. “A lot of energy goes into the development process,” says Jackson. “There is so much that a junior golfer needs both on and off the golf course to be able to transition to college golf.”

Chuck Winstead, head coach of men’s golf at Louisiana State University—the 2015 National Champions—believes teaching professionals are valuable when they have interaction with potential college coaches and offer feedback, both to the family and to the coach and university, so as to hopefully find the very best fit. “The level of play in college golf is very high and the majority of juniors play their tournament golf in the summer, when they don’t have academics to distract them,” Winstead points out. “College players are managing and balancing many things while they are in season—that’s one of the biggest differences between high school and college.”

Golf Magazine Top 100 Teacher Cheryl Anderson relies on a number of consultants to help guide competitive juniors at the Mike Bender Golf Academy to the best college fit for their individual needs.



Junior Golf Rankings: The Websites to Watch

Polo/AJGA Rankings

<http://polorankings.ajga.org/>

World Golf Rankings

<http://juniorgolfranking.org/>

Hurricane Junior Golf Tour Rankings

<http://hjgt.org/national-rankings-exemptions/>

Junior Golf Scoreboard

http://www.juniorgolfscoreboard.com/rankings_display.asp

http://www.juniorgolfscoreboard.com/rankings_display.asp?gender=G

GolfWeek Rankings

<http://rankings.golfweek.com/rankings/default.asp?T=boys>

<http://rankings.golfweek.com/rankings/default.asp?T=girls>

As the high-school student continues to play in higher-level events, they experience tougher situations, they face the pressure of who might be watching, whom they are competing against, and the eventuality that coaches will be checking the Internet to see their scores. Being prepared both physically and mentally is integral to the process.

When should the college process begin? Heinz believes that if a player hasn’t begun contacting coaches by the spring or early summer of their junior

year of high school, they’re in jeopardy of being left out of the process. “Coaches are trying to nail down prospects by the early-decision application deadline, around the first of November,” he says, “although some of us will hold spots open for regular-decision applicants, which is early January for Ivy League schools.”

Perna is of the belief that preparation should begin as soon as the junior golfer forms the desire to continue playing after high school. “It’s important that the player drives the bus,” he adds. “Things never turn out well when parents or coaches are in the driver’s seat. College golf has taken a scary turn, with kids now committing in junior high. It’s a little over the top now, but what it tells us is you can’t start too young, assuming the player has the desire.”

Assisting juniors and parents with the college recruiting and scholarship process can be immensely rewarding for the teaching professional/coach. Says Heinz: “Guiding young men and women as they set goals and strive to reach them is truly rewarding. It brings me back to those years in my life when all things were possible and every day was exciting. When my Penn team or a golf client of mine wins or performs well, I get goosebumps just the way I do watching my own children succeed.”

*For additional information, go to the Proponent website’s **Business Guides** section and download the unabridged version of this article, which includes additional resource listings. The title of this package is **Golf Instructor’s Guide to College Golf.** PG*

Now You Have **FOUR** Ways to Find Answers to All of Your Business and Career Questions

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ALL OF OUR OPTIONS

Contract Negotiations • Proprietary Compensation Information • Marketing Issues
Business Plans • Job Search Assistance • Public Relations • General Career Advice
Management Action Plans • Resume Review • Website Design • Logo Design
Teaching Building Design and Construction • Social Media Marketing • Instruction Trends

Our Unique Members-only Website

Access to more than 100 presentations from the top industry experts and world-class instructors whenever you need it, only on our members-only website. Plus, more than a dozen business templates and guides ready for downloading at any time.

Our Member Mentors

Tap into the combined knowledge of more than 100 of our members who have offered to assist fellow members by sharing their expertise in dozens of relevant topics. Just find your topic of interest and contact those listed for advice to tap into our membership's shared wisdom.

Our Private Edufii and Facebook Groups

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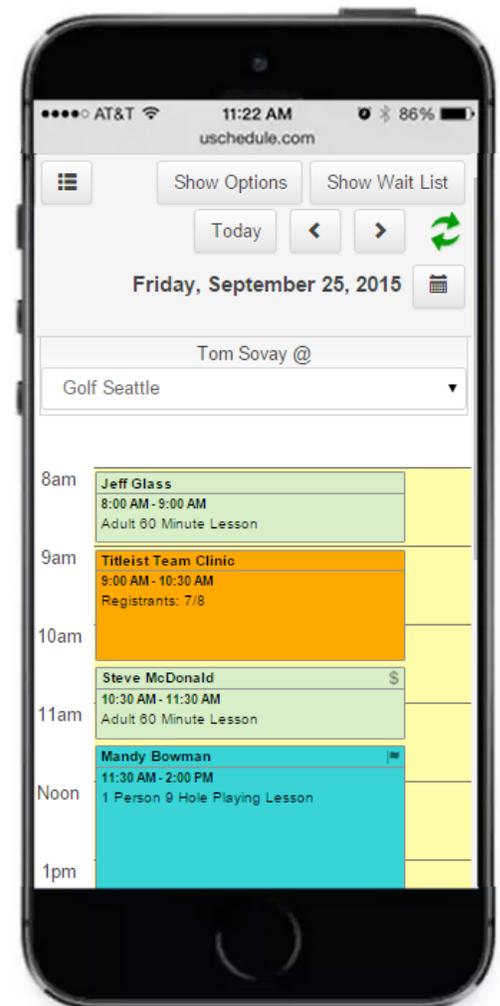
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KEITH LYFORD

THE GOLF ACADEMY AT OLD GREENWOOD, LAKE TAHOE, NV

INTERVIEW BY PAUL RAMEE, JR.

The New England PGA bestowed its Teacher of the Year award on Keith Lyford in 1997, during Lyford's tenure at the Stratton Golf School in Vermont. Three years later, having relocated to the Cranwell Resort on the New York-Massachusetts border, Keith received a section Teacher of the Year award from the Northeastern New York PGA. Opportunity then beckoned in the West, luring Keith to the Sacramento - Lake Tahoe market. Apparently the Northern California PGA wasn't afraid they would lose a prominent member if they gave Lyford their own Teacher of the Year honors—the Section did just that in 2011.

All the while, Keith Lyford's name has been found on the GOLF Magazine Top 100 Teacher list—he is coming up on 20 straight years with that distinction. As a former PGA Tour player Lyford represents the rare combination of highly accomplished player and dedicated, expert teacher. During the winter months, he teaches at Whitney Oaks Golf Course in Rocklin, California, where he spends most of his time on private lessons and

junior-development programs.

Lately—as we'll see in his interview with Paul Ramee, Jr.—

Lyford has been reflecting on the process he's followed to train the nearly 100 golf instructors who have enjoyed and benefitted from his mentorship.

Keith, can you give us the highlights of how you got to where you are in the golf industry?

I played college golf at Cal State Northridge, and after college I turned pro and competed in seven or eight Tour schools before I managed get my card and compete on the PGA Tour for one year. I lost my card and tried to re-qualify but started to develop back problems. I actually had to withdraw from the second stage of Tour School that last year due to back issues. I eventually had to give up that pursuit.

What did you do next?

As it happened, our Cal State Northridge coach, Bill



Keith Lyford has spent the past two decades on GOLF Magazine's Top 100 Teacher list and has had very successful career stops on both the East and West Coasts.



Lyford loves the challenge of teaching in a group setting and having the ability to work with each golfer on every portion of their game.

Collum ran the Arnold Palmer Junior Golf Academy back East in Vermont, which later got rebranded to its current name, the Stratton Golf School.

And so, when we played for Bill we would help out as counselors there in the summer. That is how I got my first taste of teaching. After Bill left the Stratton job one of the players from Cal State Northridge by the name of Bob Lendizon took over and shifted the school from a junior focus to adults. I worked for Bob as an assistant instructor. When Bob left there to assume the head golf professional position at a large Vermont property called the Quechee Club, I took over at Stratton.

That was during the boom years.

Without a doubt. Golf was in a huge growth period and I was able to leverage that to dramatically expand the Stratton Golf School business. We had 800 students the first year—a good base. By my twelfth and final season we instructed 2,700 students. In what was only a 20-week season we produced \$1.3 million in instruction revenue. We had 15 instructors teaching 60 students a day.

And you had seven more months in the year to make hay.

Yes, so in the winters I would go out to Arizona to McCormick Ranch where I ran the Stratton–Scottsdale School, which I later changed to the Lyford–Scottsdale School. I operated that for nine

years. Along the way I switched my summertime base from Stratton to a resort in Lenox, Mass., eventually operating that business in affiliation with Golf Digest. I did that for three years, then did a season in the Boston area working at The Harmon Club, then I headed back home to the West Coast.

Which has become a pretty permanent base for you, correct?

Well, I've just finished my eighth season at Old Greenwood in Lake Tahoe. My winters I spend in Sacramento at Whitney Oaks.

What are some of the challenges in overseeing as many instructors as you do?

When you hire, train and oversee 15 teaching pros the biggest priority is that we are all on the same page. If I am teaching a husband chipping and one of my pros is teaching his wife chipping we can't contradict each other. My goal is to get everyone on the same page and train them quickly.

What happens if someone has a different philosophy?

That's fine, different philosophies are always welcomed—and hey, maybe the other teacher's way is better than my way. What I'm really talking about are the nuts and bolts, the actual fundamentals of the game. Most important, when I am looking for new staff, is that I am looking for great personalities. I can train them to teach the golf swing, but I can't teach personality.

Lyford's golf school operation at its peak helped 2,700 golfers a year and included 15 instructors teaching up to 60 students per day.



You didn't mention any mentors when we discussed your background.

I really didn't have any mentors in golf instruction. At this point, in kind of a reversal, I now consider the 15 instructors I oversee to be my mentors. That's based on the fact that we spend so much time together doing roundtable discussions about the swing and different philosophies.

So, in your view, the boss doesn't need to be all-knowing?

No, not at all. I always learn from the group. We have "pizza nights" and "teach-ins" and we all learn from each other. We've put together a great forum for sharing ideas.

What are some lessons your staff members have taught you?

I've learned some great drills and teaching techniques. One of my guys was very into using spray paint, and now I use paint all the time, drawing lines for direction, path, and so forth. We used to play a game that was like the old show "Name That Tune." We would play "Fix That Swing" and we would see who could fix a swing in the fewest number of shots—similar to naming the song in the fewest notes. Most pros can identify the flaw, but how quickly can they fix it? Personally, I have developed at least three or four drills for each flaw and have them ready to go whenever I diagnose a problem.

When you bring a new staff member on board how do you get their training started?

We work on getting them to understand the systematic approach to teaching, which starts with the interview process. This is where you learn about the student's thoughts, goals, strengths, weaknesses. Then it's on to the analysis stage, using ball-flight cause-and-effect tools such as video analysis or our FlightScope launch monitor. Then they learn to create a lesson plan prioritizing the swing faults and finding the root causes of the issues. Then it's time to decide how to make the fix, so, which drill do I use? How do I communicate it to the student? Next is the correction stage which is fixing the ball flight as quickly as possible. Now we move from teaching to coaching and then we do a wrap-up. Each part of the lesson should take five to 10 minutes. We use this approach for every lesson.

Running two academies, you better be pretty organized, correct?

Luckily they are close to each other geographically. The season in Tahoe is May to October and in Sacramento it's November to March. That leaves April—typically I'll spend that month in Arizona doing some golf schools.

What's the toughest aspect of it?

The hard part is the marketing. I create all our brochures and pricing, but really the two facilities handle the marketing, which involves harder decision-

making than in the old days. When I was at Stratton, we would spend \$50,000 a year advertising in two places—Golf Digest and GOLF Magazine. Now there are so many places to advertise that it becomes very difficult.

As teachers, how well would you say we do on the marketing side?

As with any group, I would say that some are skilled at it and some aren't. Personally I am not into Facebook or social media generally. I let the people at the club handle it, I really don't have the time.

Are we in peril now of becoming better promoters than teachers?

I don't think any more so than in the past. Look at Mike Adams. Mike doesn't use any social media and his lesson book is packed, all through word of mouth. So, any instructor should ask himself or herself: "Can I fill my book using just word of mouth?"

In the past you managed numerous instructors, how many are you managing in Tahoe?

It is a smaller operation, just a couple of guys. When we have a corporate group I bring in a few other instructors. We have two courses and there are probably 10 instructors on property, so there are always guys around to help out. I have gotten to a point where it is mainly golf schools that I specialize in—very few one-on-one lessons. So, we have it well organized.

Mainly group instruction—that's interesting. What is that like?

First, I love group instruction. The challenge of working with four or five people at the same time gets me going. We get to teach them every shot in the book, where with individual lessons, instructors tend to stay on the range and work on full swing. For example, we have each student fill out a questionnaire. In that questionnaire a student may well say that putting is the worst part of their game. For some reason, they go and schedule a full swing one-on-one lesson. If they

“Two action areas for 2016: The first is a trend towards families, using increased junior clinics—six of them a week. Also we will do three-day junior camps—three of them over the course of the season. The second new wrinkle is a putting assessment / test. I am using data from Strokes Gained Putting and ShotLink to create the assessment.”

— Keith Lyford

attend our golf schools, putting and all aspects will be addressed.

What kind of information do they leave with?

We send them a video lesson from our V1 4-Camera System. I actually let a week go by before I send them the lesson. By waiting a week, it makes it seem to them that they are getting a second lesson a week later. In other words, they received the first lesson when they were on property and the second lesson on this video follow-up.

Based on this conversation it sounds like you spend a lot of time on the golf course teaching. Is that the case?

We do. And things can change dramatically when we take them from the lesson tee to the course. Jim Flick used to take players right to the golf course.

What do you work on in particular, out there when you're out on the golf course?

We work on the pre-shot, around the greens, less technique and more about scoring. As instructors we don't do it enough. In our golf school surveys on-course instruction is the customers' most common request. I believe the targets mean more to people, on the course.

What are you doing new for 2016?

Two action areas for 2016: The first is a trend towards families. We have full-family lessons, parents and kids together. The second new wrinkle is a putting assessment / test. I am using data from Strokes Gained Putting and ShotLink to create the assessment.

What are some things we need to get better at as instructors?

My primary goal is improving the student's ball flight as quickly as possible, I think too many instructors focus on the body motion instead of ball flight. It is important for me and the instructors who work for me to keep that priority in mind. **PG**

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TECHNOLOGY WILL CHANGE YOUR STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

By Ian James, RetailTribe CEO

Leaders from many industries and walks of life meet annually in Davos, Switzerland to talk about innovation and its potential to benefit—or perhaps threaten—human society. Their event is called the World Economic Forum and this year it focused on such topics as Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Automation. The golf world recently engaged in some futuristic robotics of its own, as a robot golfer scored a hole-in-one during a demonstration at the Waste Management Phoenix Open in Scottsdale, Ariz.

That machine-made ace was great fun for the gallery at TPC Scottsdale and, to my view, it's a clear representation of the change that is upon us. In fact, if you thought the last five years had seen dramatic increases in the use of technology, you should strap yourself in for what it is likely to unfold over the next 24 months.

Shown on the right is a tech-driven marketing scenario. It isn't science fiction. Any of the larger brands could put together a program like this today.



I've left out all the automated steps concerning Vokey online ads and suggested posts in the customer's social feeds. Those aspects are obvious. What might be less obvious is that these campaigns can be set up and run with minimal involvement by people. Such a system can intelligently interpret the patterns of customer behavior—the web pages visited, their survey responses, their collected performance data, the clubs in their bags, how much golf they play and where—then match that golfer profile to the optimal campaign.

By the way, there's also retail A.I. that would allow Acushnet's systems to personalize the skills assessment, training programs and coaching fees to each individual golfer to get the greatest conversion rate.

How do I know this scenario is here and now? Because we can do it for our customers at RetailTribe now (the pricing excepted), and it will be included within our revolutionary new marketing platform in the second quarter of the year.

If we can do it, then every large golf corporation can also do it. Indeed, mass-market businesses are finding ways to develop relationships by collecting far more

information on the customer, their preferences and their priorities than we usually collect in the real world. It also means they can target the development of real-world physical relationships where their "intelligence" has told them they have the most chance of success.

These campaigns will use a mix of communication methods from video links to email to messenger texts to video-conference, all the way to coach-to-student physical interaction. This won't take away the need for golf coaches, but it sure might change who wants to employ and market them.

Now, this is an approach that may not win much favor with customers over 50, but certainly your under-35 golfers will appreciate this engagement.

You need to be prepared for this onslaught, not simply because some coaches will be setting new standards of customer interaction, but because your customers in the under-35 age group are going to expect it. They expect technology to be a part of any solution and they expect technology to keep them supplied with data and information. They expect, and want, to be "connected." **PG**

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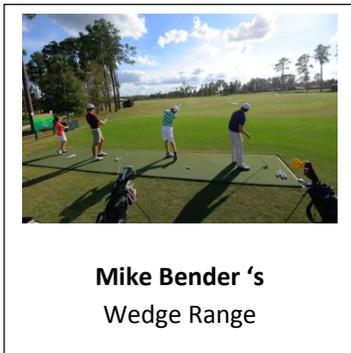
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Navigating the Public Relations Challenge

TEACHERS WHO ARE 'ALMOST FAMOUS' CAN TAKE THAT NEXT STEP

by David Gould, Staff Editor

Whether or not it's true, the tale of actress Lana Turner being discovered by a movie director in Schwab's drugstore will always be told. Why's that? Because achieving fame and prominence without doing much to earn is a possibility that fascinates people.

Proponent Group members tend to reverse this scenario—doing the work required to become skilled at their craft without taking steps to gain recognition for it. Those steps, of course, are what we call public relations and media relations. Expressed less formally, it is a matter of tooting your own horn. Karen Moraghan, co-director of a leading PR firm in the golf space, is the go-to expert for Proponent Group on this topic. When you click open the Proponent Preferred listings of recommended specialists, you'll find Moraghan's bio and her contact information at Hunter PR under the "Public Relations" category.

Years ago, when Moraghan was PR director for the Pebble Beach Companies, she took careful note of the effort made by Laird Small, director of instruction at Pebble and a longtime Proponent member, to host "a little golf show on a local TV station," even when it would seem that the magic words "Pebble Beach" were all that Laird needed to be successful. "It's an investment you make in yourself and your personal brand, to use the trendy term," says Moraghan of such outreach efforts.

Sometimes that will involve a donation of time, money or energy. Recently, the personal trainer Moraghan works with on her fitness training hosted a pizza party for the basketball team his 8-year-old daughter plays on. "So, he gave something away," observes Moraghan, "about \$60 worth of party refreshments—and all the parents who brought their kids to the party took a look at his fitness facility and many of them went ahead and booked time with him."

With all the specialization that's emerging in golf instruction, Moraghan sees

real potential in golf instructors selecting one part of the golf skill set—short game, green-reading, golf fitness, etc.—and offering to help the local high school team with just that aspect of their training. "By limiting the scope of the training you'll provide, you can cap your time commitment and at the same time identify yourself as an expert in this particular part of the game," says Moraghan.

Public-relations blocking and tackling begins with knowing who around you has a megaphone—the reporters, editors and TV producers in your local market. Follow them on Twitter, and retweet some of their messages—eventually they will be motivated to retweet something of yours. As you learn about these media people, select a few that you may wish to become friends with. Suggest story ideas to them, inspired by information you come across as a golf insider that they likely wouldn't know. "What have you done, and what are you doing currently, to cultivate relationships in your own back yard?" is the question Moraghan continually asks the golf instructors she knows.

One of the better rock 'n roll movies ever made is about a high school kid hired by Rolling Stone magazine to follow an up-and-coming band on a concert tour. The rock group, Stillwater, is talented but unsure of itself, and the film's title, "Almost Famous," describes the condition they end up stuck in. In reality, the distance from almost to famous—at least on a golf instructor's local level—isn't all that far. **PG**



Tap Your Member PR Resources

Remember the Publicity Tools Available Online: When that inner lightbulb switches on—to remind you that your activities and achievements indeed deserve public attention—Proponent Group's member-supporting assets are ready and waiting. Under the Member Benefits tab on the Proponent website, click on Business Guides then select "**Instructor Public Relations Guide**," which is written in numbered text blocks that hit on specific steps and strategies. It also contains "Press Release-Writing Tips, From Inc Magazine" and a sample press release to refer to. Also check Business Templates on the website for pre-written press releases that you can customize by filling in your specific information.

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