

COLLABORATE

Proponent Group

The Premier Network of Golf Instructors

PROONENT GROUP NEWSLETTER

MAY 2016

EXCLUSIVE: Multi-Teacher Operations Survey

LARGER OPERATORS TELL US THE STATE OF THEIR BUSINESS

It had been four years since we took a deep dive into multi-teacher instruction operations to find out where their businesses stood, what issues they were facing and how they were managing their businesses. So we knew it was time to put the magnifying glass on this critical part of the industry that provides more than one-third of the jobs held by Proponent Group members.

These are teaching operations that generate an average of slightly more than **\$450,000** each with most of that being paid out to the staff teachers. A few of the top-line numbers from the survey include the most expensive instructor at multi-teacher facilities, charging an average of **\$177** per hour for private lessons, while the most inexpensive teacher at these facilities charged an average of **\$96** per hour. The highest percentage of private lesson revenue retained by a staff instructor at a typical location was **73 percent** of their gross, with the lowest percentage retained by a staff instructor averaging **62 percent**. The average total cash compensation for the highest paid staff instructor (excluding the academy owner) was **\$91,730**.

We asked the owners and managers to tell us the three most significant challenges to raising their revenues at this time from. The three most common responses were:

Generating new students:	77%
Getting their marketing message out to area golfers:	65%
Raising instruction fees:	57%

We also asked what their most significant management challenges are to raising revenues. The top three responses included:

Getting support from the facility's golf staff:	92%
Finding high-quality staff instructors:	69%
Keeping our facilities in high-quality condition	58%

(continued on page 2)



Multi-teacher operations currently employ more than one-third of Proponent Group's members

INSIDE THE ISSUE

2

NEWS: Par Bar is Newest Proponent Partner; Manuel de la Torre Dies at 94

4

Search and Destroy: How to Leverage Search Engine Optimization and Get Found

6

Fill the Missing Links in Player Development to Create Committed Golfers

10

RETAILTRIBE ON MARKETING: Create More Programs for the Higher Handicappers

13

STATE OF INSTRUCTION: Manuel de la Torre on Teaching and Playing

15

"WHAT I'VE LEARNED" Interview with GOLF Magazine Top 100 Teacher Todd Sones

20

MEMBER MILESTONES: New Members and Industry "Talking Points"

MULTI-TEACHER SURVEY PROVIDES CURRENT BUSINESS SNAPSHOT

(continued from page 1)

On the business-operations side most (55%) categorize their instructors as Independent Contractors, 67% have written contracts with their staff teachers, and approximately three-fourths (73%) pay rent or lease their space with an average monthly payment of **\$1,730**.

We also found that few of these large operations (16%) employ sales/marketing personnel dedicated to selling their instruction programs leaving most to handle their marketing through the efforts of the owner and staff instructors.

Currently the five most-used marketing techniques are:

A dedicated website	83%
Email marketing to their database	73%
Writing articles for publications	64%
Paid Facebook posting boosts	33%
Public Relations/Press Releases	33%

The average email marketing database was reported to be **6,795** addresses for the instruction operation, while approximately three-fourths of respondents reported access to sending messages to their facility's email database, with an average of **19,826** names on those lists.

Leading the way on the social media marketing side, more than **90 percent** of respondents have Facebook and Twitter accounts with the top one-third reporting more than **500** Facebook likes and the top one-third reporting more than **1,000** Twitter followers.

Approximately three out of four respondents (**72 percent**) have a presence on YouTube including 41 percent with their own YouTube channel. The average total video viewings per respondent now tops **170,000**.

There is much more to explore in the survey results. You may download the full summary report in the Members Surveys section of the members website at any time and if you completed the survey and would like a customized version that best matches the data to your multi-teacher operation, contact Proponent Group for additional assistance.

World Golf Teachers Hall of Famer Manuel de la Torre Passes Away at 94



He was one of the all-time greats at teaching the game of golf. A "pro's pro" as they say.

Born in Spain to that country's first teaching professional, de la Torre was a standout college golfer at Northwestern before joining his father as an assistant at Lake Shore Country Club near Chicago. He began teaching at Milwaukee Country Club in 1948 and never left. He would go on to mentor thousands of players -- amateur and professional -- along with hundreds of

teachers. He died at age 94 on April 24.

He was an honorary Proponent Group member due to his status as a member of the World Golf Teachers Hall of Fame. For more on Manuel de la Torre, see page 13 of this newsletter.

PAR BAR JOINS PROPONENT FAMILY

OUR NEWEST PARTNER IS DESIGNED TO HELP GOLFERS FOCUS BETTER

During the recent PGA Show in Orlando, Par Bar debuted as the first golf specific nutrition bar. Conceived with the idea that proper nutrition during a round could assist with focus and concentration.



Par Bars provide a combination of high quality protein and carbohydrates to carry golfers through an entire round of golf, while also offering improved focus from a clinically proven ingredient found in green tea called L-Theanine. This amino acid naturally occurs in green tea leaves and has been shown in studies to improve athletic performance through improved alertness and concentration.

The bar's creator, Gerry Mullally, has been in the food industry for four decades and is also a lifelong golfer. "It was clear to me, said Mullally, "that no nutritional product on the market was delivering golfers both healthy energy and sustained mental focus."

The all natural bars contain 240 calories with 15 grams of protein, 37 grams of gluten-free carbohydrates and 7 grams of fat.

Visit parbargolf.com or contact Gerry Mullally at gerry@parbargolf.com to try par bar and set up an account.

Proponent Members Devise Turn-Key Junior Training

YOUNG GOLFERS TAKE AIM ON 'OLD MAN PAR'

It's a stunningly simple and maybe even profound truth: Any golfer can par any hole if you start them close enough to the cup. Proponent member Matt Reagan and colleague Ryan Dailey took that magic-bullet insight and used it to devise a complete coaching and player-development matrix of services, materials and training. When you play Operation36, your first starting point is on the green, with a par of 4 to hole out. From there it's back to a highway cone at 25 yards, then a cone at 50 yards, and so on until you are playing the hole from a regulation tee.

When a unit of teaching is completed, "matches" are played, with kids competing (against par only) and their parents caddying. Reagan currently has 38 participants in the 16-week program at his facility. The entire Op36 concept and program is on a mobile app, which truly streamlines all engagement of a player with the system, and adds to the competitive nature of the match-style tests as well. "Juniors can see other juniors and what they're doing, on the app," says Reagan. "They log in and practice, or log in and play, getting points for all their Op36 activities."

As an organization, Op36 represents a network of golf coaches dedicated to growing long-term learning environments for junior golfers. The mission is to provide a programming road map that will progress juniors towards shooting par or better, "on and off the golf course." What they offer consists mainly of a



curriculum, programming, and technology that has been proven to develop skilled, life-long golfers.

It's divided into six levels, with colored hats to indicate each one, then 12 badges offered at each level. "We call the badges Objectives, and present

them like subjects in school," says Matt. "There are two 16-week semesters, and participants are continually moving back from that original 40-yard distance to the hole, intent on shooting par yet again."

To learn more about certification, you can go to a website with this URL: op36.golf. Matt and Ryan are encouraging golf instructors, head professionals, assistant pros, general managers and even PGA Golf Management students to apply for it. The certification is not available to everyone—rather it's aimed at those who

are "passionate about improving their knowledge, growing a profitable coaching business and developing skilled life-long golfers," according to Reagan. Within it all is a business model, based on \$1,200 per child per year in fees, which can be scaled up to support a full-time junior coach getting well-compensated at any and all golf facilities. **PG**



The SEO Challenge Demands Consistent Effort

ONLINE SEARCH: DOES IT FIND YOUR TEACHING BUSINESS?

by David Gould, Staff Editor

The slang term for Internet-searching software is “crawlers” or “spiders.” At this very moment they are helping some golfer, in some part of the world, locate a teacher or a place to hit balls.

Meanwhile, the famed Googlebot and its fellow spiders are always studying web pages and links to see what happens when a consumer clicks on a search result: Do they stay on the chosen site? If so, what’s their engagement pattern? Is this a site that gets lots of traffic from other websites, or only from the stack of search results? The evaluating never ends, and the factors that rank a business high on the Google, Yahoo or Bing results pages keep changing, too.

Proponent Group member John Hughes, of Haines City, Fla., serves golfers in the competitive Orlando instruction market, a factor that only adds to his sense of urgency around search engine optimization, or SEO. Hughes, over recent years, has made SEO-related projects and overall website maintenance an ingrained habit.

“Two or three times a week, in the evening, as long I’ve got a fair amount of energy left, I will sit down with my website and take care of the routine tasks,” says Hughes. “There’s no choice—either someone does this for you or you do it yourself, but it’s got to be done.” The first task on his list is to “check all the H1, H2 and H3 headers”—these are the titles of your content, which need the correct code syntax “or else your content looks like one big sentence to Google,” he says, and in a situation like that your ranking will suffer.

Another evening task that doesn’t take brainpower is checking local directory websites, such as whitepages, yelp, ezlocal, foursquare, yahoolocal, tripadvisor and so on. You want your data listed on these sites and you want it—for spider-pleasing reasons, if nothing else—to be correct



and matching, site to site. That means not typing “St. James Street” on some forms and “Saint James Street” on others. “I moved my business, and it’s taken a long time to check all these sites and edit the contact info so it’s accurate,” says Hughes.

He adds that it is possible to pay a service to do this work for you, and survey data tells us that \$500 a month is the minimum retainer you can pay, which may work decently if you truly consider yourself a “hyper-local” business. In the next price bracket, \$1,000 to \$5,000 a month, you start to get the more premium SEO services, such as consistent quality content creation, high-quality link building, and a strong focus on optimizing conversions, usability, and accessibility.

Search online with a keyword for just about anything and it’s likely you’ll receive 10 or 20 pages of results. As Hughes sees it, the search engines might as well delete anything past page 3. “Only your mother will still be looking for you if don’t show up after a couple of pages,” he says. What’s a good goal for a Proponent instructor in “organic” (not paid for) search results, when “golf lesson” and their town or city are typed into the search box? Try to be first, second, maybe third or fourth, is what Hughes would tell you, depending on which terms are entered.

What’s a good goal for a Proponent instructor in “organic” (not paid for) search results, when “golf lesson” and their town or city are typed into the search box?

In fact, based on his advice, you probably want to create a word-processing file where you can store (and periodically add to) the list of keywords and key phrases people would use to search for what you sell. If your teaching facility is in Dayton, Ohio and your name is John Jones, that list would start with “John Jones golf lesson Dayton Ohio.” Obviously if you specialize in elite junior training, one of your phrases would be “John Jones junior golf instruction Dayton Ohio.” Having the phrases in a known spot where you can easily cut-and-paste them into a search box will make your periodic tests go much quicker and smoother—and you’ve got to keep conducting these tests.

Your website’s home page is where the web-surfing golfer will land, so make sure that all your highest-quality and most “sticky” content is featured in some kind of teaser box or drop-down on the home page. Newsletters, for example, can be an ultimate digital marketing tool, but it’s a huge SEO no-no if that newsletter can’t be seen on your home page by the crawlers. And double down on any social-media marketing you do by including your home page URL (using a shortened URL via Bitly or some other link-management software) in what you post on Facebook or Instagram.

Lately the world of search has become more heavily skewed to mobile devices and—to a fair degree because of the device being used—much more local. “Right now my advice to a Proponent member would be to get as local as possible with your SEO effort,” says Hughes.

According to experts like Zach Miller of Imavex, about 50 percent of mobile search is local search. In other words, people are looking for someplace to eat, buy housewares or get a leaf blower repaired. This category of search naturally includes golf and golf instruction. “The figure now, for Americans using mobile devices to find local business information,” Miller says, “is up near



90 million people.” Furthermore, in half of all searches the entry words are generic, not specifying a business name. “For that reason,” Miller advises, “Make sure your Google Plus Local information is updated and current.” The alternative is getting missed by the crawlers when a local golfer wants to find a good teacher.

Miller also has actionable advice about how that website you’re so dependent on shows up on a mobile device. “The current data shows that mobile users are looking for quick answers,” he says. “They want directions, phone numbers, maps, and not much more.” For that reason, it’s necessary to stress easy, big-button navigation in your mobile-enabled website. When you go on Google Analytics, you can check your hits for local-ness, according to Hughes, and that’s a major form of guidance to you about the tactics you’re trying and how well they’re working.

Along with some of the listing-oriented tips mentioned above, here are a couple others:

1) Use your city name in your content, especially in phrases that also describe your service, but still trying to sound natural. So, you would have a sentence in a social media post or in your newsletter that says: “That’s another reason XYZ academy has such a great reputation among Dayton, Ohio golf academies.”

2) Keep posting strong, relevant content—it helps local SEO just as much if not more than it helps global search. **PG**

Another task is checking local directory websites... You want your data on these sites and you want it—for spider-pleasing reasons, if nothing else—to be correct and matching, site to site.

How to Fill the Missing Links in Player Development

NEW GOLFER TO TRUE GOLFER – SUPPORTED THE WHOLE WAY

by David Gould, Staff Editor



A recent ESPN profile of Cristie Kerr described the LPGA Tour star as an instant devotee of the game. “I loved golf from the first time I picked up a club,” Kerr stated. A quote from Hideki Matsuyama, published in 2015 by *PGA TOUR News*, echoed this sentiment. “Golf has been fun for me since the first day I picked up a club,” said the Japanese-bred standout.

And it isn’t just tour players declaring that it was love-at-first-sight—conduct a web search using the various relevant phrases and you’ll find radio hosts, insurance executives and middle-handicap college kids who all admit they were hooked from the get-go. Come to think of it, *a majority of the people reading this article* would probably say the same thing.

Ironically, this creates a problem for golf’s player-development efforts. When the people who are designing and executing a marketing program for any product have zero ambivalence—thus a lack of objectivity—about that product’s allure, it stands to reason that misunderstandings, logical gaps and missing links will hobble their efforts to promote it.

Regular readers of this newsletter are aware that columnist Ian James, CEO of RetailTribe, points out gaps and breakdowns in grow-the-game initiatives to anyone who will listen. No marketing expert

scrutinizes golf’s push to boost participation and revenue the way James does. His belief in the need to get inside the heads and hearts of would-be golfers (or about-to-quit golfers) is deeply held. These target customers, according to Ian, require a strong “Why” factor in any let’s-play-golf message they receive.

And the “why” element will vary across a spectrum. Personal priorities may include: Spending quality time with my son or daughter; impressing my boss; rehabbing after orthopedic surgery, finding a new competitive outlet; improving my dating life after a breakup; having fun in the daytime because I work nights—the list goes on. When golf is part of an overall life strategy—instead of being a lifelong addiction that started on day one—the orientation and training process has to be comprehensive and stretched-out.

Proponent president Lorin Anderson enjoys an up-close look at the player-development activities of Cheryl Anderson, who is director of golf at the Mike Bender Golf Academy in addition to being Lorin’s wife. When Cheryl became an early adopter of Get Golf Ready, it was clear to the two of them that GGR had much to offer. But as time went by, results and outcomes fell short of expectations. “Cheryl made the decision to start a Get Golf Ready League at the course where

Mike’s academy is located,” says Lorin. “That league has been a big success—it’s a comfortable next phase for the GGR graduates, with camaraderie and a sense of belonging,” he adds.

To Lorin it’s an adaptation by the Bender academy that addresses lack of continuity in player-development generally. “The golf facilities, the professionals and industry organizations seem to like putting pieces in place but not putting the whole chain together,” he observes.

“The one extra step instructors need is to see beyond quality execution—they need to see the execution as a means to an end (i.e., increasing participation and revenue) instead of seeing the execution as the end goal.”

— Ian James



Ian James shares this view, especially the part about golf pros buying into the philosophy but falling short when it comes to product development. “Once PGA professionals have the right product, they are very good at execution,” says James. “The one extra step they need is to see beyond quality execution—they need to see the execution as a means to an end (i.e., increasing participation and revenue) instead of seeing the execution as the end goal.”

The widely respected CEO of Billy Casper Golf, Peter Hill, has long emphasized the value of any outreach effort that takes the form of an invitation to play. This concept isn't lost on Proponent Group member Ralph Landrum, who won the 2014 PGA of America National Player Development Award. Listen to him describe his Pied Piper approach and you'll hear Landrum constantly use the terms “inviting” or “welcoming.”

Now, you could look at the sprawling grid of events, activities and programs that Landrum's World of Golf facility in Florence, Ky., routinely puts on, and get the



idea that each of them is only marginally successful—otherwise why would there be so many? We're talking about his Ladies Golf Wine and Cheese night, his Ladies Lesson Reunions, the Perfect Practice clinics, Bilingual Golf Lessons, PeeWee After School Golf, Junior Development programs (at six “color” levels, like martial arts), Junior, Lady and Senior Day, Get Golf Ready 1, Get Golf Ready 2, a Couples Outing Series, Parent/Child Tournaments, and much more, including something called the BSS Event.

It works like this: Show up for BSS with \$6 in your hand and you can pay that amount to play mini-golf, or Footgolf, or 9 holes of traditional golf, or all-you-can-beat for a set time period on the range. Landrum long ago decided that there is no “home run” in player development, only a long season of singles up the middle, to keep the game going and to appeal to every different segment of developing—or fully committed—golfer.

The idea for leagues composed of Get Golf Ready graduates isn't limited these days to the Bender academy—in fact it's listed under the FAQ tab on GGR's website as an answer to the question,

“How can I retain my Get Golf Ready graduates?”

Now in its eighth season and long seen as the game's signature tool for player development, GGR underwent an evaluation as to its effectiveness back in 2011. According to that research, a full 80 percent of graduates were staying in the game in the first year, 75 percent remained active in the second year and 65 percent did so in the third year post-grad. The report further stated that frequency of play was averaging 10 to 14 rounds a year—that's enough to make someone a “core” golfer. That study has just been repeated recently and it cites, from 2014 to 2015, “a 9 percent participation increase, introducing golf to 107,485 men and women.” Again, the story on retention could hardly be more positive. “Around 90 percent of GGR students continue to play golf in the first year,” stated the report.

Still, there can be a sense of unease among front-lines golf professionals about the “catch and release” feeling that has surrounded new-beginner onboarding and how “sticky” or not these programs are

proving to be.

In 2013, one of the golf profession's top promoters and teachers, Tony Martinez, was cited by the North Texas PGA for having guided 342 women golfers through his GGR program. Perhaps because data regarding what GGR graduates do afterward has been so upbeat, Martinez wasn't tracking the activities of his own GGR students. But it so happened that he found himself discussing this question with none other than Ian James of RetailTribe, who characterized the lack of follow-up as—indeed—one of those gaps and missing links in player development.



“Developing golfers is all about the ‘willing warriors’ out in the field. Compared to what these grassroots professionals are doing, all the reports and brainstorm sessions by industry leaders don't matter much.”

— Cathy Harbin

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As James related in a memo to Proponent Group, Martinez reflected on their discussion and wasted no time investigating “conversion” of his own GGR students to the so-called core level of participation. His results were stunningly weak: *Out of those 342 students, only 28 had gone on to play at least one round of golf in the 12 months following their GGR graduation.*

Martinez enlisted his wife to contact each of these students by phone and learn more about their no-show status. “Felt intimidated” was an answer often heard, along with “I’m not good enough” and “I didn’t really feel welcome” at the golf course. As the phone calls continued, it became clear that many of the grads were interested or even eager to take GGR again if only to once more enjoy Tony’s self-styled graduation-day experience. To the great pleasure of the newly Golf-Ready students, it is a golf “bunny run” that consists of nine holes, 40 yards long or shorter, with no water and no sand between the starting points and the holes—which makes it possible to play the entire course with a putter, if you so prefer.

This revelation set Martinez in motion. He worked with the PGA of America to help create a GGR II program that would get rolled out nationally – all GGR graduates being prime targets. He also persuaded the city of Dallas to let him to have field space to create 18 of his trademark 40-yard holes and to run a “40-yard chip and putt” evening open to all of previous GGR graduates. He filled this 40-yard event in hours and on the appointed night was struck to hear that a majority would eagerly play in monthly editions of this event—even *without* the support of a GGR II experience.

With the awareness he’s gained, Martinez does try to convert his GGR students up to GGR II and then up to an additional follow-on program, working to get them to the point where they can tackle a golf course and have fun. However, he continues to run his 40-yard

golf event once a month, working to retain those graduates who haven’t yet moved along to take the next stage. The final tally of 40-yard rounds recorded in 2015 was approximately 4,000, with a likely total of zero clubs snapped over players’ knees in frustration.

Cathy Harbin, an industry veteran who has been executive director of Golf 20/20 and after that a high-ranking ClubCorp executive, among other career stops, knows Martinez well and wonders about the weak conversion rate his GGR program racked up. “It’s hard to imagine that national statistics on GGR graduates would be so high, in terms of continued engagement, while Tony’s would be so low,” Harbin muses. She says further that top-down efforts on player development are well and good but they pale in importance compared to grassroots activity.

“Developing golfers is all about the ‘willing warriors’ out there in the field,” says Harbin. “Compared to what these grassroots professionals are doing, all the reports and brainstorm sessions by industry leadership don’t matter much.” She is quick to point out that a graduate event like the one Martinez runs isn’t just a fine example of the tactic. “It’s not just that what Tony came up with is well-designed,” Harbin says, “it’s a matter that his program would be in the roughly 20 percent of all GGR programs that even have these grad events—and they are considered must-have elements of a Get Golf Ready.”

Now the CEO of her own startup management company, On Course Operations, Harbin looks back at her years with ClubCorp and the extensive site-visit work that was part of her job description. “Whenever I was at a ClubCorp facility where the instruction program was well-supported and popular, I would hear kudos of all kinds about the teachers—except for one,” she says. “I never heard someone say that Teacher XYZ was great at bringing new people into the game and getting them to stay—that isn’t a prestigious coaching achievement, within our industry, at least not yet.”

Golf can capture a person for life as soon as their first shot gets airborne, but the game can also be an acquired taste—no different than broccoli, chess, yoga, woodworking, modern jazz and vintage port wine. Player development, as it evolves, looks more and more like a step-by-step process to help new players acquire their own taste for golf. **PG**



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GREAT FOR THE INDUSTRY, PROFITABLE FOR YOU

by Ian James, RetailTribe CEO

If you read last month's column, you're aware that here at RetailTribe we are passionate about the customer and zealous about giving them genuine value.

The good news is that, within this calculation, there's a route to greater income for golf coaches that would not require working additional hours. The specific activity is getting more golfers converted from the introductory phase to the point that they are comfortable and highly likely to stay in the game—a recipe for increased revenues across the golf facility.

I'd like 2016 to be the year you boost your income per hour by designing and creating small group programs that inspire the 20-handicapper (and above) to take the next step in their skill and performance development.

Let's all agree that program design for golf instruction requires careful thought if it's going to be effective.

Recently I made a list of 20 select golf coaches and studied their coaching outreach to the customer for the month of April. It's the start of the golf season for many, and most golfers are at their most enthusiastic. I wanted to see what "offers" were being made to them. In the process, I looked at websites and even visited several of the facilities. Where I was unable to visit in person I made phone calls.

I imagined myself as a golfer who last year completed a Get Golf Ready program plus a follow-up GGR program. The profile I had in mind was someone who still finds it hard to get the ball off the tee and down the fairway with any consistency or distance. Likewise this golfer struggles most or all of the time to hit approach shots with accuracy or even on a decent trajectory. Short game? That's no better—a disappointing series of chunks and thinned shots that shuttles the player back and forth across the green.

What did I find, in my review of the 20 coaches? First I'll say that the visual quality of golf instructors' websites continues to improve dramatically. The presentation of information is almost always very clear and easy to understand. Similarly, at the courses I visited I found neat calendars of events on the noticeboards. Staying in the mindset of that GGR graduate who truly desires to get into golf, I was pleased at the easy-to-locate programs, the user-friendly schedules and the very visible pricing.

I even found a couple of facilities (one of them a noted award-winner) that had created pre-Get Golf Ready programs to help people who were really



The golfer needs to see their pathway to improvement.

intimidated. This was basically an orientation about the facility, with a chance to meet someone who spoke their language. In a couple of cases there was a helpful schedule of clinics covering the season's first six weeks. So, it was all good stuff.

At the same time, what I didn't find were any programs that would instantly appeal to the inadequate golfer I was playing the role of. Sure, I found lesson packages. In several cases I found "practice sessions." At one of the facilities they informed me that their "Practice makes Perfect" (supervised practice session) had become their most attended program and most profitable session. That's great, and, incidentally, rather proves the point this article wants to make.

It seems that once a golfer is through Get Golf Ready, the next step on the player development pathway is "lessons" or "coaching" with a PGA professional. *That's not good enough for the industry. This golfer needs to see clearly their pathway to improvement.*

I sat with a group of golf coaches and went through the opportunity to design and create programs that would both inspire our target golfer, and highlight for that golfer a route to more enjoyment on the golf course.

In just 60 seconds these were the program titles they brainstormed: Tee shots 101; Hit it higher and longer; Making the short-game simple; No-more 3-putts; Up and Down in 3 from 40 yards; Solid contact more often; Break 95 every time; The fundamentals of the short-game; No More Fat Shots, No More Thin Shots.

Examples of programs for inexperienced, less skilled golfers

Learn how to miss, it's a great skill
And you won't 3-Putt again



Almost all 3-Putts are caused by a 1st Putt that left you with a difficult 2nd Putt. It might be a long putt back or a shorter putt across a slope. So, sign up for \$399 and 30 days of fun on our "Learn How to Miss" coaching program. Make that 2nd Putt easier.

Be consistent 10, 20, 30 and 40 yards out
Join us on our
Short Game Confidence program



Want to be in the Fairway, further down the Fairway?
Further, more often from the tee



If you're sometimes erratic and inconsistent off the tee, and you feel you miss the fairway too often, then this coaching program is for you. You'll add yards to your tee shots and keep the ball in play more often, for just \$399.

We've created an example of coaching programs designed by PGA Professionals for less skilled or experienced golfers at www.retailtribe.com/programs

Whatever you think of their titles (it's worth you and your team coming up with some yourself), these would make our target golfer curious at least. And curiosity is the first step toward inspiration. The next step is to describe the outcomes of whatever is being offered.

Again thinking about our target golfer, the group next selected three programs, one for tee shots, another for chipping, and a third for putting. They described the skill(s) and performance each program would deliver to the customer. Then they described that skill development in a way that allowed the golfer to visualize its impact on their enjoyment out on the golf course.

For our target golfer, if they're reading this explanation of the final outcome on a web page, in a social post, on a noticeboard, or even listening to a coach explain the program, the value they will gain as a result of purchasing the program has been established.

That's important because the incentive to learn how they're going to get to the end result has been created. The golfer is also going to start to value the program not based on the amount of time the instructor is spending, but rather on what they, the customer, is going to get out of it.

Our group of coaches then worked on how they would get to the outcome. The temptation at this stage of any workshop is for the coach to get down into the details of grip, stance, posture, swing plane and swing path. But that is not required. Instead what the golfer wants to know is this:

Timings and Scheduling: How many weeks will all this take, how often will there be a session, how long will it last, how is it scheduled?

Format: Is it one-on-one, group (and if so how many people, their age range, mixed or just men/just women), does it take place on the lesson tee, on the course, with technology?

Enjoyment level: Will we be respected, listened to, cared for, supported, and will we enjoy the experience?

Who: The golf coach and any supporting staff and success with this program.

Checkpoints: Will there be assessments and checks along the way?

Requirements: What gear do I bring, is my fitness and health an issue, will there be follow-ups to this and what sort of commitment do I need to make up-front?

Cost: How much will I have to pay, and when?

What this golfer doesn't need to know at this stage: in promoting this session we don't need to explain—because the customer doesn't care—what the instructor will do to position the upper body, to reorder the biokinetic sequence, create shoulder turn, or what-have-you.

Steve Cottingham, in promoting a similar program, said it was about "making you look like a golfer when you swing the club." The response was so great that he now promotes a program with two videos next to each other. One is the swing of a typical 20-handicap golfer, and the other is a video of what a golfer looks like after his program. His program is "Look like a golfer."

Promotion Basics

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Timings and schedule | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Who? |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Format | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Checkpoints |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Fun level | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | What is required? |

Check any offer you're making to ensure that you have ticked off the basics the golfer needs to know.

Getting down to the dollars, here is one very strong suggestion: Do not price this program by working out your hours and calculating your price per hour. This program has a value to a golfer. Estimate that, with an understanding of the demographics you're marketing to.

Then validate that it's profitable business for you by calculating what you would have earned with that time and follow-up requirement, given your rates. Your objective is to create programs that increase your hourly yield significantly.

Implementation Ideas

To help you along I've included a link to a web page where you can see the three programs our workshop group created. By all means, take any ideas you wish and use them.

Of course you can invent your own or dust off ones you may have used previously. But I'd like to think that for the 2016 season at least some of you would choose to see how this approach could increase your revenue.

The music to my ears, though, would be that you'd have created real customer value in a way that's designed to develop a golfer so they're retained in the game—that you've moved the golfer up the player development pathway, and converted a learner into a golfer spending more time and more money at the facility while playing more rounds. **PG**



Steve Cottingham

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MANUEL DE LA TORRE: SIMPLICITY COUNTS



By Lorin Anderson, President

I had the great pleasure of hosting Manuel de la Torre's induction into the World Golf Teachers Hall of Fame a little over a decade ago and that evening we printed up table cards for the guests that included half-a-dozen of Manuel's favorite quotes about teaching and playing. My wife, upon hearing of Manuel's passing,

dug around in her bookshelves and brought me the entire set of six cards she had kept from that night. And I'm very happy she did, because for my column this month I want to remember one of the all-time teaching greats by sharing these golden nuggets filled with simple ideas and simple concepts that still resonate many decades later. Enjoy:

"Swing the entire club (not just the clubhead) with the arms from the end of the backswing to the finish of the swing."

"If asked you to draw an apple, you'd keep an image of an apple in your head until you finished drawing. In golf, you have to visualize the club going directly toward the target while you're actually doing it. That's far more important than visualizing the ball going to the target. If you visualize what the club must do, the

mind takes care of the mechanics that get the ball there."

"Your only concern in holding the golf club is to do just that: Hold it with a constant attitude and allow the natural reactions to the swing to take place without interference on your part."

"My teaching is based on what I learned from Ernest Jones. It's simply learning to use the tool – the club – correctly. If you allow the swing to happen, it will happen correctly. The hips don't hit the ball. The

shoulders don't hit the ball. The hands don't hit it. The club does. Ernest Jones was teaching this in 1920, and it's just as true now."

"The golf swing is such a simple movement and we humans complicate it to such an extent the it does not work. Our movement in the golf swing is essentially the same as many other everyday motions – the only difference is that in golf we do it with an implement called a golf club."

"Do you shop? Do you make a list of all the things you *don't* want to buy? Of course not. But that's the way people play golf. They stand over a shot thinking about all the things they don't want to do, instead of focusing on what they want to do." PG



Manuel de la Torre being inducted into the World Golf Teachers Hall of Fame in 2005.

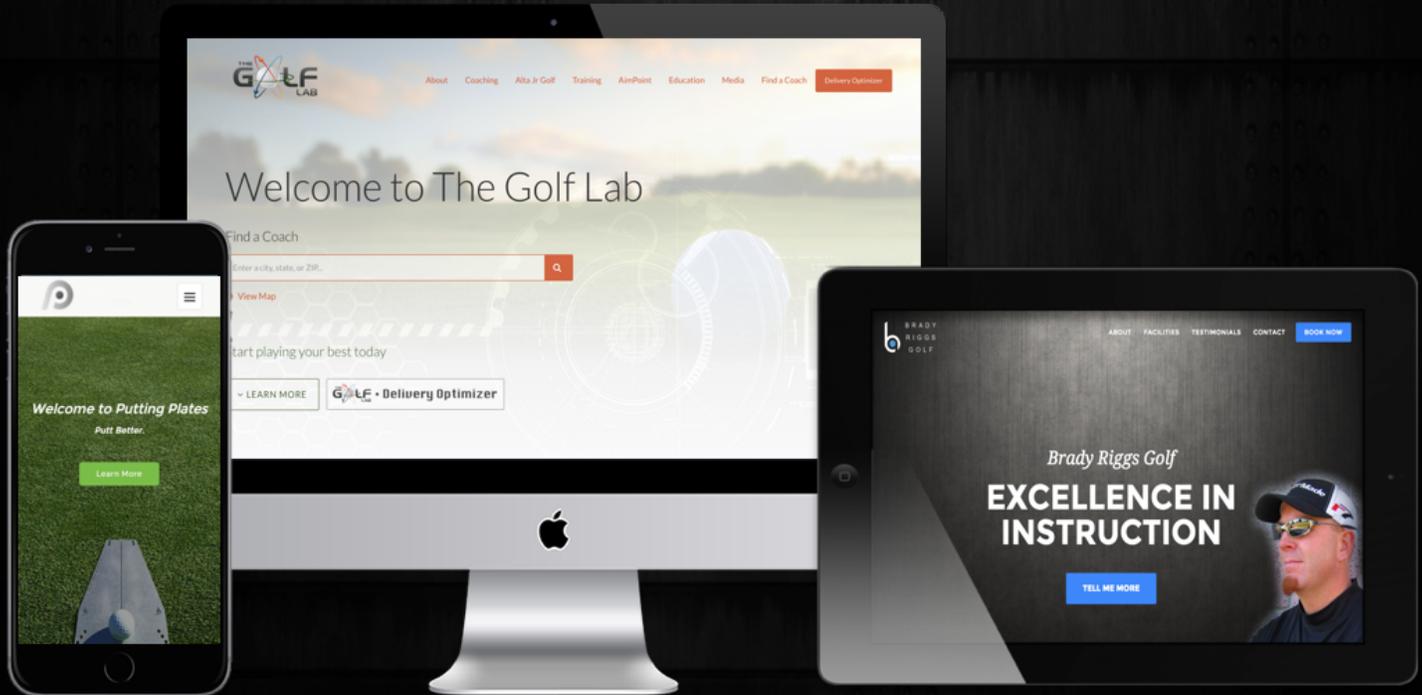
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TODD SONES

TODD SONES IMPACT GOLF, VERNON HILLS, IL

INTERVIEW BY PAUL RAMEE, JR.

It's been 20 years since Todd Sones faced a fork in his career path: Continue on as a successful head professional in the private club world or shift his entire focus to his love for teaching.

At the time, a mentor had advised him that usually rifle shots were more successful than shotgun blasts. "He meant that being highly skilled in a specialized area usually created more value," explained Sones, "than trying to do lots of things well." He heeded that advice and focused all of his energy on his passion for teaching.

At the time Sones had more of a golf-operations background than most fellow Proponent members, logging 15 years on the club-pro side before his big move into full-time teaching. Joe Durant, Scott McCarron, Robert Gamez, Shaun Micheel, Jay Williamson, U.S. Open champ Steve Jones, Paul Goydos, Stephanie Loudon, and Hillary Lunke are among the PGA Tour and LPGA Tour professionals he has worked with. His first year on the GOLF Magazine list of Top 100 Golf Instructors in America was 1996—he's also been named to the Golf Digest list of 50 Greatest Teachers in America, in addition to winning two Teacher of the Year awards and two Horton Smith

awards from the Illinois PGA.

A prolific writer, Sones has published 100-plus articles in the major publications, including Golf Digest and GOLF Magazine. He is a book author as well, with two successful titles to his name, "Lights Out Putting" and "Saving Par." Todd developed and patented the Tri-Fit method of fitting putters, which eventually lead to the development of a company, Coutour Golf.

He spoke with Paul Ramee this spring, reflecting on the path of his career and the evolution of his beliefs about golf performance.

Todd, can you tell us about your early involvement in golf, and how it lead you into the profession?

As a teenager I knew I wanted to be a golf pro, and I was very single-minded in pursuing that path. I started out as a caddie and I sold shag balls on the side. In high school I would get out of school at noon and ride my motorcycle one hour to Stafford Country

Club in Batavia, N.Y., where I worked in the bag room or out on the range. I entered the PGA Apprentice Program when I was 18 years old.

It wasn't long before you would leave the Northeast, correct?

Yes. I spent one season as an apprentice at Stafford and then moved to Houston, where I actually worked for Chevron Oil on their pipeline before getting a job at Goose Creek Country Club, which is in Baytown, Tex. It was a small operation and I got to do a bit of everything, from billing members to buying apparel and paying bills.

Then I worked at Westwood Country Club before heading to Chicago to work at The Onwentsia Club for head professional Hubby Habjan.



Sones has been considered one of the game's top experts on putting for much of his career.

In 1990, I was fortunate to be named the first head professional at Conway Farms in Lake Forest, Ill., a suburb of Chicago. I was there until 1996 when I decided to start my own academy.

So you went from a stable club job to the great unknown of a startup golf academy?

Looking back I guess that's how it was, but I was so excited when I was doing it that I may not have realized there was risk involved. At the time I was coaching tour players, Chip Beck to name one. I was also doing a lot of teaching at Conway Farms, so it seemed natural. Then in 1996 I was included in the original GOLF Magazine Top 100 List and it all really made sense.

So, remind us what pre-Internet branding was like, for a new enterprise.

It wasn't as hard as I think it would be today, surprising as that may sound. If you think about it, I was already a Top 100 Instructor, my location was in a major metro area and I had published numerous articles for magazines. I will say, without the Top 100 distinction it would have been a lot more difficult to build momentum. And these days there is so much more competition. When I started I had great press and low competition, so that gave me a pretty good head start. I also built a great staff. You can't replicate yourself, but you can hire people who represent you well.

Do you remember what some of your core philosophies were when you started?

First, it was to get organized. Second, and more importantly, it was to identify an area or product that is lacking, that you can provide. That combination will give you a good chance of succeeding.

What did you see that was lacking?

It was putting and short game. Most instructors would teach 50 minutes on the range and, when the student got tired, they might take him or her over to the putting green and work for the last 10 minutes on putting. So, I went the other direction. I started to offer putting lessons, short-game lessons, putter



Sones runs one of the most popular golf school programs in the country with its summer schedule in the Chicago suburbs often selling out.

fittings and what have you. I developed "The Scoring Zone" where we assess a student's game. Look, the short shots are 70 percent of the game and the full swing is over-taught.

So you built this new business and you established a personal brand. How do you balance your time between teaching and managing staff?

If you you want to grow your brand and build your reputation, you are going to need the help of others around you. You are going to have to train them as a team. That team needs to represent your particular ideals. You cannot have the group doing its own thing, the group needs to be working together in a system.

Can you give me an example of one of the systems you've put in place?

Sure, I have worked with V1 to install a system where a student signs up for a series of five lessons and they take the first session with me. I will then prepare a video summary and email it back to the student and I will :cc the instructor who will take over and work with them. As the second, third and fourth sessions take place, the assigned instructor will use V1 and take video and give the lessons, and I will be c/c'd on each lesson. This provides me some oversight and also allows me to make comments on the progress the student is making. My instructor knows I am inspecting their work and the student knows I am genuinely concerned for them, based on my comments about their improvement.

Do you do a lot of lesson packages?

I do not, actually. The five-lesson package I just described is the only one available to new players. My rate is \$200 for 45 minutes and not everyone can afford it. I realize that, and so when someone initially calls the academy we “feel out their economics” during the conversation and we can offer them the five-lesson series.

How intimidated are some of your first-year guys when they have to send that first video to a student and :cc you?

I never really thought about it, but we have done a lot of training before that point and I really work with them. They send me numerous practice videos before they are given a student and we sit down and assess their performance, talk about what they did well and what needs work.

How do you conduct a new-player assessment?

I prefer to watch someone play golf for a few holes as part of the assessment. Obviously, if I am teaching a beginner I will be teaching them grip, posture and alignment. But if I have a tour player or someone with established skills, I will head out to the course and watch them play golf. That allows me to see it all—long game, short game, putting, their attitude, pre-shot routine, and so forth.

Any thoughts on putting misconceptions?

Instructors do not show the same diligence when it comes to learning about the putting motion as they do the full swing. I was guilty of this at one point in my career as well. You cannot give a good putting lesson in 10 minutes. I have SAM Putt Lab, but I don't use it much. I use video a lot, I view setup, behind the hole, down the line and that shows the player their entire motion from various angles. I have a blueprint for putting lessons and have certain things I am looking for. I just don't think the industry is comfortable giving putting lessons.

Excited about anything new in 2016?

Yes, I have recently closed my putter business but I still do not believe in players buying putters off the shelf, so this year, every putter that I have bought and put into inventory has its grip blown off. I also have a loft and lie machine that will allow me to change the lie and loft of the putter and, with the grips off, I can customize for length, then adjust the gram weight and, finally, install whatever grip is appropriate on the putter. This allows me to



Sones' enthusiasm for helping fellow professionals led him to join the faculty of the Golf Academy of America. He visits all of GAA's campuses throughout the year.

customize putters for students whether the original is a Cameron or an Odyssey or something else. The result is they end up with a custom fit putter.

Have you traveled to watch anyone interesting teach lately?

I just got back from seeing Shawn Humphries work for a couple of days, I have seen Mike Adams recently. I have also spent some time with the noted putting instructors Mike Shannon and Stan Utley. I really believe in getting face time with people rather than YouTube videos. When you watch a video, you are watching a pro explain something. When you see them in person giving a lesson, you are watching them solve a problem as they interact with a student. You learn so much more, being there in person.

What is the most memorable “aha” moment you have had while teaching?

The answer probably changes relative to where you are in your development as an instructor. Hopefully the aha moments never end, for example, over the last couple of years I have learned a lot about load and ground forces. I think to myself, how could I have never known that? Young teachers need to get in the habit from the very beginning to attend as many education opportunities as possible and never stop attending or you will lose your edge as a teacher. Back to your original question, possibly the biggest aha moment was in 1997 when I offered a short-game school and it filled up noticeably faster than my full-swing school. That's when I knew the real upside was in putting and short game. **PG**

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Golf Industry "Talking Points" That You Should Know

The following talking points were produced by leading industry organizations including the PGA, USGA and NGF and were distributed during the recent PGA Show. Here are some highlights:

- Walking 18 holes is equal to a **5-mile walk** or a **3.5 mile run**.
- Playing golf and walking 18 holes can burn up to **2,000 calories**.
- Golfers exceed **10,000 steps** in a typical round of golf, meeting the recommended guidelines for daily exercise.



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