

# COLLABORATE

[www.proponent-group.com](http://www.proponent-group.com)

## Proponent Group Offers Three Free May Webinars to Help Polish Your Business

Starting tonight and for the next two Tuesdays, Proponent will offer three member webinars covering *Pitch Perfect: How to Say It Right The First Time, Every Time*, Tips for a Successful Job Search (Including How to Polish Your Resume) and The Proven Keys to Developing Expert Teaching Skills.

All of our speakers have presented before to our members and all of the topics are among the most requested subjects. May's webinar triple play will include:

**Tonight at 8pm EST: Bill McGowan**, author of *Pitch Perfect: How to Say It Right The First Time, Every Time* and former Proponent Group summit speaker, will explain the keys for doing a better job of communicating to your students, media and peers. McGowan is a top speaker trainer with clients including Kelly Clarkson, Jack Welch and Eli Manning. He earned his credentials as a long-time news anchor and reported for ABC News 20/20, *A Current Affair* and CBS News.

**Tuesday, May 13 at 8pm EST**, Proponent Group's **Lorin Anderson** and **David Gould** will answer your questions about **Tips for a Successful Job Search (Including How to Polish Your Resume)**. Both have significant experience advising job seeking instructors navigating this tricky path.

**Tuesday, May 20 at 8pm EST**, **Dr. Paul Schempp** of the University of Georgia's Sport Instruction Research Lab returns to our webinar series updating his groundbreaking research on **The Keys to Developing Expert Teaching Skills**.

The participant link will be emailed to all members on the day of each webinar. Up to 25 members may join the webinar live and all webinars are recorded and will be available on the Proponent Group website 24/7, if you miss the live event.



Bill McGowan



David Gould



Lorin Anderson



Dr. Paul Schempp

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

#### PAGE 2

**NEWS: Employment Issues; New Renewal Option and more**

#### PAGE 3

**Retail Tribe on Marketing: A Winning Argument for the Value of Golf Instruction**

#### PAGE 7

**Is this Golf's "Moneyball Moment"**

#### PAGE 10

**Lorin's Column: Are You a Visible or Invisible Instructor?**

#### PAGE 12

**"What I've Learned": Mike Barge of Hazeltine National**

#### PAGE 15

**NEW MEMBER GUIDE: Employee vs. Independent Contractor: What You Need to Know Now**

#### PAGE 17

**Member Milestones: Fedder, Krebs, Ritter and Wilson Find New Homes**

## PROPONENT GROUP NEWS

# Employment Issues; New Member Renewal Option; Dr. Crews New Book and GolfMDs

### New Business Guide Added to Cover Employee vs. Independent Contractor Issues

Beginning on page 15 in this newsletter, you will find an excerpt from our brand new Business Guide prepared for Proponent Group members called the **Guide to an Instructor's Status as an Employee vs. Independent Contractor**. This new 10-page document details the legal and accounting issues you need to be aware of depending on whether you are classified as an employee or an independent contractor. This guide was specifically requested by our members. You can access the complete version by clicking on Business Guides in the member-only website.

### Dr. Debbie Crews Co-Author's "The Science of Golf and Life"

Proponent member Dr. Debbie Crews is one of the top researchers in the world whose work involved golf-related subjects. She has presented on science-related golf topics around the globe including last year's Proponent Group Summit. Her latest work is titled "The Science of Golf and Life," co-authored with Dr. Candace Pert. The book demonstrates life-changing strategies based on how golf functions as an arena through which we play out many of our life experiences and ways of "being". It is available at Amazon.com.



### New Payment Option for Member Renewals: Automatic Monthly Payments

Proponent Group is always working to make membership as easy and cost effective as possible. Effective immediately, we are now able to offer new members and members renewing their annual membership the option of monthly or twice-yearly recurring payments. All you'll need to do to switch to recurring payments is sign a Recurring Payment Authorization Form and we'll switch you to either monthly or semi-annual payments depending upon your preference.

Monthly payments will be debited to your bank account or charged to your credit card on the 15th of the month for those choosing to pay monthly.

Keep a look out for this new option when you receive your annual renewal notice by email later this year.



### GolfMDs Launches Teacher Locator and Becomes a Proponent Group Partner

Proponent Group is very pleased to welcome our newest partner at **GolfMDs.com**.

This innovative company is launching a beautifully designed, robust golf instruction search engine. GolfMDs is a good bet to become the go-to search tool for anyone who is using the Internet to locate a skilled golf instructor. Proponent Group member **Kevin Lozares** has been heavily involved with the company throughout its development



phase and has had significant input in the way the site functions.

The site offers a user-friendly search platform that includes student reviews and in-depth information on participating instructors. It provides instructors with a professional online presence, increased market exposure and a business management suite.

As part of our agreement with GolfMDs, all of our members will have a basic account set up on the site for free. You will receive an email from us in the coming weeks with directions on how to access your free account and input your data so that golfers can more easily find your services when they are searching. We hope all of our members will consider using GolfMDs.com.

# “Rainmaker” Reports:

## A Winning Argument for the Value of Instruction

By Ian James, CEO, RetailTribe

Over recent months I’ve been running workshops with a cross-section of PGA professionals, including instructors. It’s been an educational experience. I went in thinking club management underestimates the value of golf instruction—its value to golfers and to club revenues alike. I came out with the view that *everyone* under-values golf instruction, including instructors themselves.

My meetings with GMs have made it clear that these folks have a limited view of teaching and coaching. At best they:

- consider it a service that needs to be available for people who request it
- see it as a means of ushering new golfers into the game
- appreciate events like clinics because they boost food-and-beverage sales

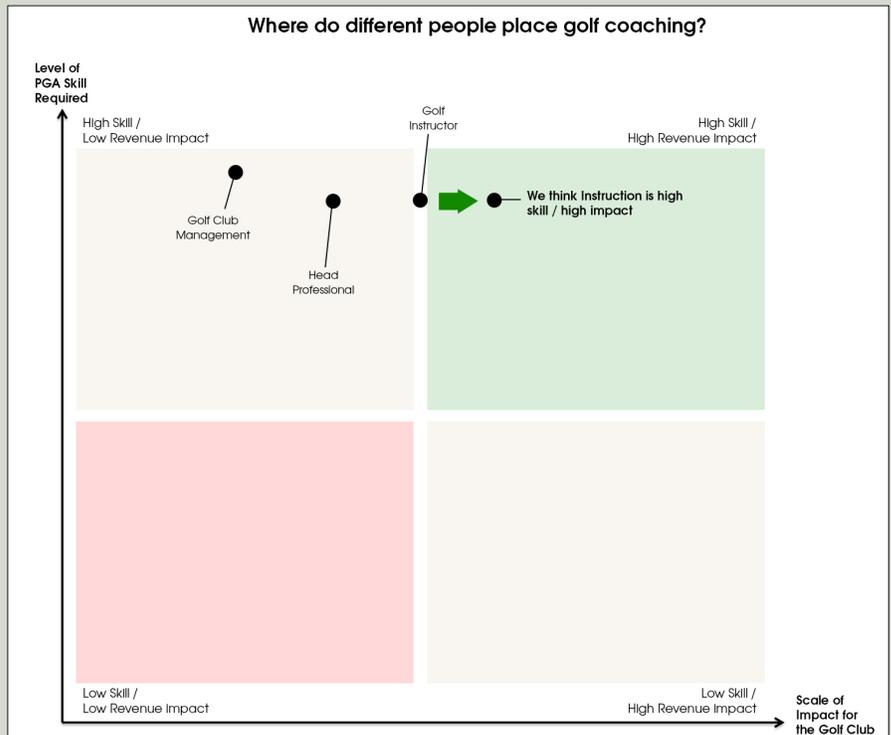
Too often though I’ve heard concerns about the amount of time professionals devote to teaching as they set about “lining their own pockets.” These inaccurate views of instruction don’t sit well with serious teachers of the game. That’s understandable, but we have to move beyond irritation and deal with the real issue.

Golf managers and boards are bumping along without a true revenue model addressing current club needs. They lack any clear set of plans to:

- provide additional value to core golfers and members so they will spend even more time at the club
- retain golfers in the game and members at the club
- increase the amount of play by occasional golfers
- bring back the lapsed players who have left the game

If they did have a marketing plan that embraced those needs, managers would see more clearly where priorities should lie. Let’s go through a little exercise, using a tool we call a Skills/Revenue Map. We’ll study how and where to position golf instruction on this map.

Instructors were given first crack at the exercise. I asked them to position their weekly activities on a chart with two vectors, each of which accords with one of two questions—how much professional skill is required to perform the activity and how great an impact does the activity have on a club’s revenue (see chart above).



I was astonished to see golf instructors placing coaching / instruction about halfway along the axis of revenue contribution. I then gave the head professional/director of golf the opportunity to weigh in. The head pros placed instruction in an even weaker position on the revenue-contribution axis than instructors had.

A persuasion or conversion challenge is staring us in the face. How are we going to influence golf course owners and golf club management to grasp the value of instruction, so that in subsequent charts of this type it ends up farther upward and farther right?

We’ll start by making certain that we, ourselves, appreciate how effectively an instructor generates revenue for the club, the shop and the grille. Take a look at these six questions:

1. In your estimation, how many golfers (other than raw beginners) who took part in instruction programs in 2013 have dropped out of the game already?
2. In general, are golfers who experience coaching more likely to stay in the game than those who don’t?
3. Is a golfer who participates in instruction likely to spend more on equipment than a golfer who doesn’t?

4. Is a golfer, down at the club for a lesson, likely to at least buy a drink at the club or even have a meal?
5. Is a golfer participating in instruction likely to increase their practice sessions at the club?
6. Is that same golfer likely to play more golf over the next few months than they did before entering an instruction program?

As I consider these questions objectively (and add my personal experience) I can say with some certainty that the answers to all of them fall squarely on the side of more revenue. Feedback from four clubs that were willing to share actual revenue information backs up that view. The composite data from the sample of four says the following:

- A golfer who starts instruction will play, on average, just over 20 percent more golf in the ensuing 12 months than they did in the prior 12 months.
- The annual expenditure on shop merchandise and bar/food of a golfer who is in a coaching program will almost triple the spending of a golfer who isn't. At the four clubs providing data, there were no membership resignations for 2014 by a golfer who was in a coaching program during 2013.

As you likely know, Proponent Group has begun to gather a much larger body of statistical evidence of this type from a far wider sampling of golf facilities. When this information is gathered and tabulated, I will be amazed if it tells a different story from what we already know. I'm firmly in the camp that places golf instruction in the top right quadrant of the chart on the previous page.

The next set of questions I have is for people in charge at golf clubs:

1. Are you measuring how many of your golfers are participating in instruction programs or are touched by instruction at your club through the year?
2. Are you setting your instructors any targets relating to rounds of golf played and retail dollars spent by their

students? Are you using the coach-golfer engagement to lift sales of equipment, footwear, golf balls and other retail categories?

3. Are you setting improvement targets to measure the effectiveness of teaching and coaching?

In posing this last question, we are well aware that the improvement and progress a golfer makes can be measured in many different ways and truly *should* be measured in many different ways.

In the workshops we held, one of the goals introduced was coaching an adult female golfer to the point where she is "confident" enough to participate in events at the club. That's a great goal, though perhaps tricky to express and measure. Is "confidence" and comfort level being measured in some manner? Is it being reported? Is the club connecting coaching to any sort of metric or data point that benefits their club?

If you're an instructor, don't wait for the club to take the initiative to set you revenue targets. Set them yourself. Find ways to deliver on those targets and create a monthly, or at least quarterly, report for your management on the numbers you can measure. (See sidebar article on page 5.)

You have to make sure your conversation with your facility is built around their business goals. Even if you're treated as such, you are not an isolated staff member out on the range. You are linked to the club's success.

At workshops with Proponent Group instructors we reviewed anecdotal evidence on the number of golfers in coaching programs. The consensus was that, if you take out all the "new golfers" who are being coached by their Instructors, then between 8 and 10 percent of a golf club's membership will take one or more lessons in a year.

So in a club with a membership of 600 they would expect to see 48-60 of the golfers in a coaching program. The bulk of their instructor's lesson revenue is made up of children and adult women beginners, along with golfers

## Let RetailTribe Make 2014 Your Best Year Ever



*"I cannot believe the results that RetailTribe has achieved for me, my business and my golf club. Shop sales are through the roof and I have more coaching demand than I can manage. Every PGA Professional, golf club or instructor should be using RetailTribe."*

-Monte Meyer, PGA Professional, South Hills G.C.

You'll be surprised at how easy we can make effective marketing for you. Just give us 20 minutes and we'll show you how we can make an impact for you.

Contact Ian James at [IanJames@retailtribe.com](mailto:IanJames@retailtribe.com) or 972-743-0038 or visit us at [www.retailtribe.com](http://www.retailtribe.com).

The screenshot shows the website for Rob Noel Golf Academy. The main banner features the text "Awesome Learning Environment" over a photo of a golf club interior. Below the banner are three promotional cards:

- Aimpoint Green Reading System:** Learn Aimpoint Today!
- Driving Range Memberships:** Driving range memberships so you can invest in your game.
- Coaching and technology go together to make you better, faster:** Custom fit your game.

who are not actually members of the club.

That strikes me as a very low number. What percentage of your membership will invest in coaching at your golf club this year? My sense is that this is a big opportunity for everyone: PGA instructors, head professional and the golf club. Do you have a target?

What's needed going forward is for country club management to see the teaching professional as a bona fide "rainmaker." Each instructor needs to embrace their role in helping re-educate the industry. We can't sit back and wait for a big-brother organization to create change. We need our own movement. If 300 Proponent Group members are all creating a standard monthly "rainmaker report" for their management then that is a large leap forward.

It is 300 conversations that are going to happen every month, all of them spotlighting the fact that the teaching pro is focused on the facility's revenue or membership objectives.

I would also recommend that you keep the phrase "revenue model" in your communications to club management and elected leaders. It will take a while to educate them on the many ways that your teaching and coaching skills positively affect club income, along with attraction and retention of members. They need to hear more about the power of instruction to:

- retain paying customers as golfers on the tee sheet and members at the club
- increase the golf played by occasional golfers
- bring back lapsed golfers
- provide additional value to the core golfers and members so that they will spend even more time at the club; and of course,
- continue to introduce new golfers to the game

Your position isn't under-valued because of anything personal. Your role is under-valued because facility management doesn't understand the revenue model in golf.

**Questions for Instructors**

- What percentage of your members do you want to engage in coaching programs in 2014?
- Do you have a monthly target for the season of coaching revenue per member?
- Do you have a target for average equipment sales per pupil?
- Do you record club competition winners and whether they have had recent coaching with you?

A golfer in instruction will increase their rounds played by 20%

A golfer in instruction will spend 300% more on average than other golfers

100% of golfers in coaching programs in 2013 renewed their membership for 2014

## The Tools at Hand: Proponent Group Reporting Templates

The well-stated views and recommendations we see in this article by Ian James include a strong call-to-action. You can respond to that call by deploying the 12-page "Instruction Program Annual Report" and the quick, one-page "Golf Instruction Program Management Report."

These easily customizable documents deliver the persuasive data points the article strongly supports and encourages. You can find them on the Proponent Group member-only website by clicking on Business Templates, then scrolling down to the sections titled "Monthly Golf Chairman Instructor Report" and "Annual Report Template."

Take a moment right now and print out one copy of each—to give you a sense of what data points are called for in each and how you can gather and record that data in the most efficient way possible.

Name of Facility

Instruction Program  
Annual Report

Prepared For:  
Name of Facility Golf Committee

Prepared By:  
Name of Professional, Director of Instruction

Name of Facility  
Street Address, City, State Zip  
Telephone

PGA LPGA PGA

Check all that apply (see back)



# 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 nearly 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 Facebook Group

Ask our Private Facebook group of more than 325 Proponent members your questions and you'll get answers from your peers across North America.

### Our One-on-One Consulting

Call our office anytime you need help with a career or business-related issue. We talk with half-a-dozen members or more each day and provide recommendations and advice in dozens of areas that can affect your bottom line.

**Log on to [www.proponent-group.com](http://www.proponent-group.com) or call 407-878-1235.**

## INDUSTRY TRENDS

# In a “ShotLink Nation,” Coaches Can Seek Results Using Stats and Data

Has golf arrived at its “Moneyball moment”? A wave of number-crunching tools should empower the golf coach to dissect on-course performance, offer strategy tips that aren’t guesswork and supervise practice in a way that fast-tracks lower scores.

By David Gould, Staff Editor

Numbers, stats, metrics—lately it seems that the game of golf really piles them high. Or, put it this way: Swings, strokes and their results during rounds of golf have been generated for centuries—it’s only now that we can efficiently capture and analyze the data. As a tournament, a season or even a player’s whole career grinds on, he or she keeps hitting toward the target with a certain club, from a certain yardage, in a particular lie or surface condition. The digital tools for recording, storing, retrieving and analyzing what happened are now basically in our pockets—or attached to our grip caps. Using measurements, metrics and round-tracking to unlock the mysteries of how a golfer scores is dramatically more possible than ever.

Then there’s all the off-course data generated by Trackman, Flightscope, SAM PuttLab, K-Vest, even TPI and the other fitness/wellness platforms. *For teaching professionals, part of the job now is deciding which metrics matter to which students and how to use improving readouts to underscore the value of a coaching program.* To get it all figured out and translated to the consumer will take time, and likely some trial-and-error.

One of the early converts to statistical performance analysis in golf was a trained systems analyst named Bob Ming who caddied on the pro tours in the 1990s so that he could study top-rank players and perhaps pick up clients for his fledgling company. Known as “Cowboy” due to his fondness for 10-gallon hats, Ming would at times irritate players he caddied for by cantankerously urging them to practice the skills they were weak at, as indicated by his records of their competitive rounds. “If you see a young tour player practicing his middle irons,” Ming once told a group of golf writers, “you can be sure he has been hitting his middle irons well. These guys practice what’s working, because it feels good and builds their confidence.” The eight-foot putt



Columbia University’s Mark Broadie (left) and top coaches including Sean Foley (right) are digging deeper than ever into golf’s numbers game such as at this conference hosted by MIT.

was his go-to drill on the practice green, based on a lengthy study of one-putting and two-putting. “Make ‘em from eight feet or we don’t eat,” was Ming’s mantra.

The recent publication of “Every Shot Counts” by Columbia University professor Mark Broadie is part of what seems to be a turning point in coaching, learning and strategizing. Broadie’s new book comes along just as the ShotLink system for recording and analyzing tour-player strokes (and the results of each stroke) celebrates a 10-year anniversary. Is this golf’s “Moneyball” Moment? Are we getting closer to the point when golf instructors and coaches turn to their students and flawlessly explain their scoring strengths and weaknesses—then fast-track them to lower scoring?

“I know probably better than anyone how easy it is to over-tax the golfer’s capacity to record data and also overwhelm their capacity to process it,” says Peter Sanders, inventor and marketer of the Shot by Shot game-analysis system and tool. Members of Proponent Group who employ Shot by Shot—and quite a number do—are ahead of the curve. Philadelphia-based Dom DiJulia is one such member. His website even shows graphs that depict a student’s “Long-Game Handicap” and “Putting Handicap” as they

fluctuate during a set period of time. Henry Brunton is another member who has taken the deep dive into performance analytics and made it truly work for his golfers.

It's interesting to note that the recent *Golf World* cover story on the "Data Game" in golf also spotlighted the winner of the Hyundai Tournament of Champions, at Kapulua. Finishing first was Zach Johnson, whose coach, Mike Bender, took the leap years ago and retained the services of Sanders as a guide and monitor of what Johnson and Jonathan Byrd were actually doing on the golf course to help or hurt their scoring. "When Mike and I first talked, he was using the old version of the PGA Tour statistics to try and make sense of his players' performance," recalls Sanders. "Those stats were probably worse than having no information at all. The 'Strokes Gained' metric is where you start to understand what's going on."

Broadie's book, "Every Shot Counts," is a strong endorsement of Strokes Gained, with long chapters and eye-catching tables that start to identify who on tour can out-putt the field on any

kind of a regular basis and who can move from tee to green in a consistently above-average manner. At many junctures, the author will qualify his citation of facts with the phrase "... in the ShotLink era." That's his nod to the decade-old data-crunching machinery represented by ShotLink, with its a capacity to probe, test, theorize—then confirm or deny the theory—how tour players are able (or not so able) to attack golf courses. It is only now being manipulated in a way that approaches what sabermetrics, a.k.a. Moneyball, provides to baseball.

One challenge for teachers, golf writers and the golfing public is to understand that PGA Tour ShotLink data is one discrete pool of information and analytics, pertaining only to the world's best. There are certain metrics that anyone in the golf spectrum can hang their hat on and use as a guide to performance, strategy and what to practice. A classic example is the tap-in putt, which on tour is basically 24 inches in length. Baseline "score" for that length is 1.008 strokes. The three-putt on tour begins somewhere between 30 feet (1.981 is the ShotLink composite for tour players at this length) and 35 feet (where 2.021 is the composite).

It's worth mentioning that some of the lessons and conclusions that Sanders hears coming from Broadie don't jibe with his own findings. "Gaining 15 yards off the tee seems to be a very widely prescribed path to lowering average golf scores," he paraphrases. "I don't share that point of view." Reading through the book, which has a foreword by Sean Foley, readers come upon various highlights of the research, including:

- "Among the 40 top PGA Tour pros, approach shots accounted for 40 percent of their scoring advantage, driving accounted for 28 percent, the short game 17 percent and putting 15 percent."



**"Those (PGA Tour) stats were probably worse than having no information at all. The 'Strokes Gained' metric is where you start to understand what's going on."**

**– Peter Sanders**

- "Across a range of golfers from amateurs to pros, longer hitters tend to be straighter hitters."
- "Most golfers [in laying up] will score worse from 80 yards from the hole than from 30, even if every layup to 30 yards lands in the rough and every layup to 80 yards lands in the fairway."

Remember, the pro tour is the laboratory where all these discoveries are taking place—just as major league baseball, not your corporate softball league, is where "Moneyball"-type data revealed what really matters to wins and losses on the diamond. Strokes gained putting (you may already recognize "SGP" as a featured PGA Tour stat on its website) is the tour average number of strokes to hole out minus the number of putts taken by the golfer being evaluated—ad-

justed for distance. In a given round, Player X has so many feet of first putts: if he hit every approach shot (or par-3 tee shot) to 10 feet, that would be 180 feet of putts, and there is a known tour average from that distance.

Far from the pro tour fair-

ways, the average golfer also needs baselines and benchmarks. To some degree, they can come straight from that player's own previous performance. The 2014 season is only slowly gathering steam and it will likely be a while before we get reports of golf professionals actively exploiting the new Game Golf technology. But in a recent radio interview, John McGuire, founder of the Galway, Ireland (now Silicon Valley-based) company that markets Game Golf said early adoption of the technology was highly encouraging. Golfers who have purchased their Game Golf hardware/software, packages, which uses a belt-mounted module and dime-sized tags on each club to produce dense but easily analyzed data from a round, have actually been making YouTube demo videos and suggesting product tweaks on a daily basis.

The company's launch of Game Golf at the 2014 PGA Show was mightily enhanced by the precedent-setting endorsement delivered by the PGA of America, along with a previously brokered partnership with Golf Channel. McGuire said his company had "completely blown our first-quarter projections out of the water." The upshot of a strong Game Golf rollout—and success on the part of similar track-it-yourself products – is that ShotLink-type data will be generated for use directly by that student's teacher or coach.

Practice was always a basically good idea, but supervised practice targeting the skills proven to be most needed and influential—followed by post-mortems on the round that accurately nail each of the stroke-saving or stroke-spending decisions—is a whole new ball game for both the golf coach and the golfer. Within the activities of Proponent Group, an ongoing effort will be made to gather and disseminate the wisest and most effective practices among teachers who go the Moneyball route and apply numbers and data successfully to the one-on-one teaching and coaching challenge.



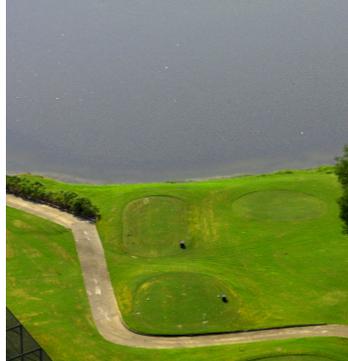
# Summit 2014

## Growing the Game, Growing Your Business

When Golfers Improve, The Industry Grows –  
It's Time to Teach, Promote and Profit

November 2-4, 2014 (Sunday - Tuesday)  
Lake Mary, Florida

Registration Opens June 1st



zeroRESTRICTION



## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

# Are You a Visible or Invisible Instructor?



By Lorin Anderson, President

To be honest, I'm getting tired of having golf instructors make the same comment to me over and over about how certain peers are "just marketers" and that's why they are on the Golf Magazine Top 100 list, or that's why they won the Section Teacher of the Year award or that's why they got the job at the ritziest club in town.

If you're really a better instructor, with more success stories, better communication skills and the best technical knowledge, then maybe the real fault lies with you.

The fact is, if all of the above is really true, why are you still invisible, or at least less visible than your peers? The fact is, they have cut through the noise to elevate their teaching brand. Let's be clear, I'm not here to identify who is the best teacher. This column is about identifying how certain teachers become better known for their abilities.

### You Are Your Own Director of Marketing

As we've discussed at Proponent Group events for years, you are your own Director of Marketing. Except in rare instances, nobody else is going to do the legwork to build your teaching brand for you so put some effort into telling your story to create more visibility. Do this effectively and golfers are drawn to book lessons or – in the case of your peers – to acknowledge your skills when they are voting for awards and lists, which, in turn, creates even more visibility and your brand continues to grow.

Marketing for a high-quality instructor is demonstrating competence to the public and your fellow teachers. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways such as:

### Being a Leader

Offer to serve on your section's education committee and/or volunteer to present at your local section instruction events. Position yourself as a leader in your region by getting in front of your peers whenever possible and you'll likely see yourself starting to be nominated for various awards and lists. The fact is Best in State lists are often heavily weighted towards teachers who have been presenting at section events.

### Building a Big Peer Network

A big part of attending Proponent events, PGA and LPGA Teaching Summits and major certification programs is that they allow you to expand your peer network and showcase what you do uniquely well. The teachers who have the most industry visibility attend multiple industry events every year.

### Tapping into Media Opportunities

Make sure your local media know who you are and your areas of expertise. Send an email to the local sports reporters and editors letting them know you would be pleased to help them anytime. After the initial contact, don't be afraid to stay in touch with them with news about your teaching success stories or industry accolades to remind them that you are an asset when they are working on a golf-related story. Media coverage adds fuel to the fire by fostering the perception of competence while creating more visibility.

All of the above create a cycle that feeds off each other creating new opportunities for you to shine and to be more visible. If you combine more visibility with quality teaching skills, very good things will come out of your efforts.

## Proponent Group Partners



## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: EDUFII



call us at 800.439.8505  
coach@edufii.com

# Retention = Retention

If we can help athlete's **retain** more training information, they can practice more effectively, improve their skills faster and we as coaches can **retain** them as clients.



# 90%

of what we learn is  
**LOST** within one week  
without review

Request your invite at  
**edufii.com**

### The Fault:

There has never been a platform solely dedicated to the basics of skill development. Existing coaching tools focus so heavily on technique they forget about building the entire athlete. However, coaches like yourselves who value the importance of **retention** are doing their best to use communication technology to improve the process, like; texting, Dropbox, Facebook, YouTube and the worst of all...email.

Well, now with Edufii you can truly build **RETENTION** into your model for the first time.

### The Fix:

Edufii TrainingSpaces let athletes access their techniques, drills, recaps and even results making sure that nothing gets lost or forgotten. An online space to combine data from leading training technologies, expert comments from multiple coaches, and support from family members, the Edufii platform is an invaluable **retention** tool that your athletes can refer to for the rest of their lives.

**@JamesRidyard**

*Coach of European, PGA, Asian & Ladies European Tour players*



"Loving Edufii from the @EDUFii\_Team, what a fantastic tool to help players & coaches connect **#gamechanger**"



coach@edufii.com

San Luis Obispo, CA

800.439.8505

# What I've Learned: Mike Barge

## Hazeltine National G.C., Chaska, Minnesota

Interview by Paul Ramee, Jr.



If a golf coach's reputation piques your interest, you can Google their name and quickly pick up information about their teaching approach and philosophy. This is certainly possible in the case of Mike Barge, longtime director of instruction at Hazeltine National Golf Club in Chaska, Minn. It's complicated, however, because the search results are riddled with information on Barge's high-flying success as a tournament golfer. Articles about the five senior

majors Barge has participated in turn up repeatedly.

Among Mike's finest-ever days between the ropes came during second-round play of the 2006 Senior PGA Championship at Oak Tree Golf Club in Edmond, Okla. Barge, a Fargo, N.D. native, made a 12-footer on his final hole to card 32 coming in and post a 3-under par 68. That gave him a cut-making 36-hole score of 141 and a weekend of jousting with major-championship winners.

Since 1986, he has run the instruction program at Hazeltine. In that time, Barge has received many awards, including Minnesota PGA Teacher of the year twice. Six different times he has earned recognition as Top Teacher in Minnesota by the panel of experts at Golf Digest. Barge won the Minnesota State Open in 2006. He has been named Minnesota PGA Player of the Year and Senior Player of the Year. Proponent Group member and dedicated Q&A man Paul Ramee recently did some interview time with Mike and filed this transcript.

**Over your career you've had a chance to stand in the bright lights, Mike. Apparently you started out in pretty quiet surroundings. Could you describe that?**

I grew up in Fargo, N.D., and lived within walking distance of a golf course. My parents played and exposed me to golf early. By the time I was 14 or 15 I developed a love for the game. I played with other kids my age for a nickel or a dime a hole.

**These days our grow-the-game programs come with instructions about reminding people the game should be enjoyable. It doesn't sound like you and those kids needed reminding.**

We had so much fun. It was a pure experience. I had a chance to learn how to play the game of golf out on the actual golf course. There was access to formal instruction but I really didn't utilize it.

**Lately our thinking on game-improvement focuses a lot on motor skills. Golf instructors talk about "repetitions" for their students. You had that opportunity, without the supervision.**

The great thing about my experience of playing golf as a kid was that first, we had access to the golf course and second, we had a 9-hole par-3 golf course, with holes that ranged from 60 to 120 yards, we would go out with our wedges and putters and it was great short-game practice.

**Interesting—your experience is what academies now are deliberately trying to replicate. How did you take advantage of the opportunity?**

I played all through school and won the State High School Championship as a senior. I wanted to play college golf, but it had to be someplace warm. A kid who had graduated high school a year ahead of me was playing golf at a junior college in Odessa, Tex. He convinced me to come down and play on that team. I played in Odessa for two years and then moved on to Southern Methodist University.

**What was your experience like at SMU?**

I was fortunate to play on that team with Payne Stewart for a year. As my college career went on I knew my grades weren't going to get me into medical school so during my senior year when I was told about an opening at Moorehead Country Club, back in my hometown of Fargo, I applied for the position. I was hired and worked in the shop as well as in outside services. It was a five-year stint and it gave me my first exposure to teaching. After that I got a chance to move to Minneapolis Golf Club. I ended up working in the shop there, since the club did not have much of a range. I knew that I wanted to teach more. In 1986 I began teaching at Hazeltine and I have been there for 28 years.

**Almost three decades at the same club—what's the recipe for making that work?**

First, I love Hazeltine and I hope they love me. But for anyone to be successful at a private club for that long it has to be a fit for both sides. I love the club's commitment to hosting state, regional and national championships. I really admire the membership's adherence to the traditions of the game and their respect for the rules, playing without delay, respect for the golf course



**Barge has been Hazeltine National's Director of Instruction for 28 years. He has been named the top teacher in Minnesota six times by Golf Digest.**

and if possible walking the golf course. These core values are in line with my beliefs, so that is one of the reasons I believe it has worked out so well.

**Those values you describe are what we hope would be universal in club golf—though it's not always the case.**

When you have a group of people who are that passionate about their game and their club it tends to make the job easier. They have been great to me. They tend to want to get better and will do what I ask them to do. They really are willing to learn. Plus, it is an exciting place to work, what with all the championships. I have been around for the 1991 Open, 2002 and 2009 PGA Championships, a U.S. Amateur, a USGA State Team Championship and a USGA Mid-Am. To top it off we have the Ryder Cup coming here in 2016.

**That's a high-profile club with a very active membership. Not exactly the sleepy kind of place that is ideal for a club professional who wants to keep his game tournament-sharp.**

It has been hard to try and do both and the only way it works is if you work hard at both playing and teaching. Fortunately they both work hand in hand—that's how I view it. It's pretty important to be able to budget your time and make practicing a priority. For some reason, I have played my best golf after the age of 50. I am unsure whether it is technology, titanium, the ProV1, access to launch-monitor information, or just finally knowing what to work on after all these years.

**How has the private club scene changed over the years?**

It is more of a challenge now to attract members. This situation is not typical, as I've mentioned. Hazeltine is a special place so we are doing better than most and with the excitement around our championships we continue to attract quality members.

From a day-to-day standpoint, there is a huge time issue in families, the kids are playing other sports and being based in Minnesota we compete with Elite Hockey which is a 12-month deal. I wish more people would understand that golf is a lifelong sport and sports like hockey are not. Maybe with concussion issues coming to the forefront, more families will turn to golf.

**Did you ever think about starting up your own academy?**

Never very seriously, however if you look at how many Top 100 Teachers are at private clubs, it is probably less than 20 percent. But, I have never been handcuffed. I have been permitted to teach non-members and we have a huge junior program that continues to keep us very busy.

Also, we are close to breaking ground on a 9-hole "minimalist" golf course that will be great for our growth-of-the-game initiatives and the plan is to have a teaching building where we can teach 12 months of the year.

**What have you been incorporating recently that has you and the members excited?**

In 2011 we developed a new indoor teaching facility and we have been using a Foresight along with the Ping nFlight Program. We built an indoor putting green that allows us to offer a complete off-season practice plan.

**What influences are driving your own learning recently?**

I have been reading more and more about the mental and emotional side of the game, both for my students and myself. I have been focusing on Gio Valiente, Bob Rotella and Vision 54. Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott have a lot of good ideas that I have been incorporating into my coaching.

**Can you talk about what you are doing in your winter facility?**

The mentality of working in the winter is totally different than the work we do in the summer. It is good for making swing changes and while it is not as good as being outside, it is better than not working at all. We also work a lot on feel in the simulator. We have our competitive juniors learn how to hit a PW shorter distances. This is a club they will hit 125 or 150 yards. We want them to develop the feel associated with less than full shots.

**What are your secrets for remaining at a club through so many different boards, golf chairmen and club presidents?**

I have not really thought about it, but it's probably true that getting involved with someone's golf game is the best way to connect with a member. You are not going to form those relationships from selling a sweater or running a tournament. Not to disparage merchandising or tournament operations, but making a positive difference in someone's recreation time is meaningful.



**"...it's probably true that getting involved with someone's golf game is the best way to connect with a member. You are not going to form those relationships from selling a sweater or running a tournament." -Mike Barge**

**What advice would you offer to younger instructors?**

I'll answer that by talking about a student of mine who is an NBA referee. One day in the grill room we were having lunch and a Hazeltine staff member introduced himself. This young man was interested in refereeing as a profession and requested advice. The answer he got was to make sure he could "pass the eye test." But not like in a doctor's office—this "eye test" has to do with looking the part. For whatever he or she wants to do, a young person has to look the part, both in the way they dress and in the way they organize their teaching stations.

Second, they need to always be ready for a big opportunity. You never know who your next lesson is going to be. You could have a young junior come to you with immense talent and you could have the opportunity to lead him through the development stages. Also, try not to neglect your own game. It is important to be able to play and relate to your students. Be a good listener, let the students talk to you and tell you what they are feeling.

Lastly, develop your own style and develop different ways to get your point across. Personally I try and use fewer words. Some simple, minimal words that I will use include "slower," "faster," "taller," and so forth. This approach helps me keep my students' thoughts to a minimum.

## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: SUMMIT GOLF BRANDS

# Take Advantage of One of Proponent's Finest Member Discount Programs

### Summit Golf Brands' Personal Use Program Exclusively for Proponent Group Members

ALL current products from ALL three of Summit Golf Brands' outstanding lines: EP Pro, Fairway & Greene and Zero Restriction are available to Proponent Group Members at the following preferred pricing:

Without brand logo: **30% off standard wholesale pricing**

With brand logo: **50% off standard wholesale pricing**

To place an order: Go to the brand-specific website pages exclusively for Proponent Group members: <http://pg.fairwayandgreene.com>, <http://pg.eppro.com> or <http://pg.zerorestriction.com>. For any questions regarding your order, contact Customer Service at 855-924-2228.

If you would like to place bulk orders for outings, golf schools or other student usage, contact Customer Service for pricing information and availability.



## EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

# With Independence Comes Responsibility - Negotiate and Verify the Terms

For the independent instructor, employment law is there to protect you as a worker and tax law is there to ensure you pay what the IRS considers fair. Here's a quick education in both.

**By John Torsiello**, Contributing Writer

It is perhaps the most dreaded message a golf professional can receive by mail—notice from the Internal Revenue Service that you've been flagged for a tax audit.

That unwelcome letter sparks visions of anxious hours spent gathering documents, searching for receipts you probably tossed and meeting with stone-faced bureaucrats who pore through every detail of your professional life.

For golf instructors who are employed on a staff and paid a salary, the IRS audit is a very slight possibility. Those of you who operate as independent contractors are the ones likely to attract attention from fed auditors. There is an array of benefits as well as drawbacks to functioning (and being classified) as independent and self-employed. But if you opt for independent-contractor status rather than employee status—or if the club chooses that option for you—you're advised to make very sure what you can and cannot deduct on Schedule C of your tax return.

Meanwhile, any golf professional who's involved with teaching activities that use non-employee instructors needs to understand how federal employment law views the relationship between a golf facility (or academy) and the lesson-giving pros who are on property plying their trade.

### PROPONENT GROUP MEMBERS SPEAK TO THE TAX-AUDIT ISSUE

Erika Larkin, Director of Instruction at Stonewall Golf Club in Gainesville, Va., had to endure a two-year audit by the IRS and called the entire process "aggravating and upsetting." Larkin found out in the fall of 2009 that she and her husband were being audited for two years' worth of income and deductions. "The matter became somewhat clouded," says Larkin, "because we also own a family business, a restaurant, and they were eyeing our busi-

ness deductions, such as a home office we keep."

She said the IRS came to her and her husband's home and measured the square footage of their home office. "One of the big issues the IRS had with some of my personal write-off expenses was golf clothes. I put them down as uniform expense because I wear them when I'm teaching and to promote the companies I have relationships with. I wrote off sunglasses to protect my eyes when I'm teaching and they wouldn't accept that as equipment for my job." In the end, the Larkins wound up paying no more than what they paid their accountant to help with the issue. "It was an amazing waste of time."

Larkin advises golf professionals to keep detailed records, electronically if possible, so that they can be quickly retrieved if and when needed. And she advises you to be sure such seemingly insignificant matters as deductions for work clothing and equipment can pass muster with IRS officials wielding sharp pencils.

Another Proponent Group member who preferred not be identified for this article said his place of employment endured a long auditing process by the IRS. In hindsight, he sensed that payment in cash by his students was the precipitating factor in the decision to audit him. But it was also his independent-contractor status that stirred the pot.

"The simplest way, in my view, for the IRS to generate additional tax revenue is to target businesses with independent contractors and force them to justify the classification," he surmises. This could be presented as an effort to protect the worker, given that Social Security and Medicare benefits depend in good part on regular infusions of funds via payroll deduction. He asserts that businesses using contractors to do a job that people often do as a salaried employee are subject to the "very subjective '20-Factor' test," wherein an



**Independent Contractor Erika Larkin recommends keeping detailed records of all your deductions.**

audit is done on everything from timesheets and payroll transaction to “control” of the workforce and “everything in between.” This allows the IRS to make a subjective judgment as to whether or not workers are classified correctly. Part and parcel of that is judging whether or not sufficient tax dollars have been withheld.

In 2012, this Proponent member’s business was asked to justify its classification for the tax year 2010 and satisfactorily did so. But a year later they were asked to do so again for years 2011 and 2012.

“It was an incredibly painstaking process and took roughly 10 months,” he reports. “It is necessary to account for everything, at all times. But in all honesty, there did not seem to be good reason for additional scrutiny from the IRS, especially with a past successful defense of the workforce classification.” The longer the ordeal went on, the more this golf instructor felt there was some correlation between type of organization—in this case an S Corp—the deployment of an independent contractor workforce, and IRS scrutiny. “In our case, and possibly a few others from my research, S Corporations set off many of the IRS’s red flags,” he says, “which may cause them to want to take a look. Otherwise, it might just come with the territory.”

Those who have undergone this scrutiny agree it is important to decide early on the type of business/academy being operated (proprietorship, LLC, S Corp, etc.) and to choose whether you're using independent contractors or employees. Take an honest look at why you are making your decision, because the IRS may one day ask you how you came to that choice. If this decision is long since made, you are advised to seek safe harbor before acquiescing to the demands of the auditors if you believe you meet the criteria for safe harbor.

Parity is hugely important, as is documentation if you go the independent contractor route. “Everyone's the same and they have been made hyper-aware of how they are classified,” our Proponent Group member reports. “That means W-9s for all involved, a signed statement of understanding, and equal treatment when appropriate, which, in my opinion, is across the board.”

### **A SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE**

The “tax gap” is a point of contention between the IRS and businesses claiming the use of independent contractors. For the last three years, the IRS has audited employers with heavy usage of independent contractors in an attempt to identify any “misclassification.” There are several guidelines regarding the classification of a workforce but no specific requirements. There are also tests and case law that come into play.

Ken Heuer, a CPA with Brock and Company of Colorado, warns that golf professionals “have a new risk in that

**More Specifics and Examples Online**  
This article is an excerpt of a longer and more detailed Business Guide prepared and researched for Proponent Group members. You can access the complete Guide to an Instructor’s Status as an Employee vs. Independent Contractor by clicking on Business Guides in the member-only website.

the IRS will be looking into individual tax returns that show one IRS Form 1099MISC. The IRS wants to know why the person only did work for one company, i.e., is this person an employee?” He adds that there is a national joint task force involving the Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. Department of Labor,

and state revenue and labor departments that is charged with “going after noncompliant businesses on independent contractor issues.”

The risks to the club or a business can be significant, including:

1. Additional Federal and state payroll taxes.
2. Penalties and interest for not paying in the payroll taxes.
3. Possible additional audits as a result of the payroll tax audit—i.e. an audit of the income tax returns of the club or business.
4. The audits will cover three years, possibly more years depending on filing issues related to the statute of limitations.
5. Possible personal liability for the taxes, interest, and penalties to the club’s GM, CFO, and board members.
6. Additional costs for workmen’s compensation insurance, general liability insurance, other overhead costs, etc.

Says Heuer: “This has been going on for a long time and the IRS has put this problem in their top five audit priority list. The possible tax monies along with the related penalties and interest to be recovered are generally large and worth the tax authorities’ time and resources to go after non-compliant businesses.”

Heuer reports that a client came to his firm with the results of an IRS audit assessing \$80,000-plus in penalties and interest and additional taxes of approximately \$200,000 related to employees being misclassified as independent contractors. Heuer’s advice was to settle the case. “My client did not believe me and decided to litigate the case and spent \$70,000-plus in legal fees to find out that I was right.”

Mitchell L. Stump, a Florida-based CPA with Club Capital Planners and author of the “Club Tax Book,” says a common mistake made by golf pros and their employers in setting up classifications for tax purposes has involved lesson income getting placed in a separate, off-paycheck stream. “Many clubs were reporting lesson income on Form 1099 and designating the professional—for purposes of lesson revenue—as an independent contractor. The rule of thumb is this: Once you pay a person as an employee, all pay they receive is as an employee.”

Knowledge of guidelines for independent contractor/employee tax status, choosing the correct status that meets your day-to-day duties and responsibilities, and keeping detailed records of all expenditures and income can go a long way toward keeping that dreaded letter from the IRS away from your mailbox.

## MEMBER MILESTONES

### Please Welcome Our April New Members

**Nicholas Pelle**, GolfTEC, Minnetonka, MN – Full Member

**Tony Corvi**, Tony Corvi's Academy @ Fairways Driving Range, Branford, CT – Full Member

**Bill Schmedes**, Gary Gilchrist Golf Academy, Howey-In-the-Hills, FL – Associate Member

**Keith Morgan**, Taylor Made Golf Experience/Eric Meeks School of Golf, Las Vegas, NV – Full Member

### Wilson Named Director of Instruction at La Rinconada

**Matt Wilson** is the new Director of Instruction at La Rinconada C.C. in Los Gatos, CA. He was most recently a coach for Henry Brunton Golf in Maple, Ontario.



### Fedder Heading to Jim McLean Schools at Doral

**Bill Fedder** is the new Lead Assistant Instructor for Jim McLean Golf School at Doral in Miami, FL. Fedder was most recently at Druid Hills G.C. in Atlanta.

### Krebs Moves to Waverly Woods

**Rick Krebs**, who has been teaching nearby in Maryland for many years at Turf Valley, moves his teaching operation to Waverly Woods G.C. in Marriottsville, MD, near Baltimore.



### Ritter Moves to Poppy Hills

The newly renovated Poppy Hills G. Cse. in Pebble Beach, CA, will launch an innovative golf instruction program in partnership with MTT (Make The Turn) Performance beginning this month. MTT is operated by **Jeff Ritter** and Poppy Hills will become his permanent home base.



## Proponent Group Adds American Express Travelink Service to Member Benefits

Proponent Group is pleased to offer a new member



benefit and discount program that will provide you with a higher level of service and save you money on your travel expenses. We've partnered up with American Business Travel's Travelink service to provide our members with the highest level of travel booking assistance along with best-in-class air, car and hotel rates.

By direct phone or email, you will have access to Proponent Group's designated travel advisors to make your reservations. Travelink has great flexibility and can also assist you in setting up group travel when you take students on golf trips. You will have access to all airlines, hotels and rental car companies (including Southwest Airlines).

By accessing business travel pricing through American Express, you will have access to exclusive offers. Your most significant savings through this program will be for hotel, car rental and international air reservations.

All travel can be reserved and paid for with the credit card of your choice (it does not have to be an American Express card) and you will continue to earn your preferred mileage program credits as you do now.

Travelink charges \$10 for each booking for a hotel and/or auto rental and \$25 for each flight reservation. When booking a flight there is no additional fee for adding a hotel and/or auto rental reservation to the trip.

Proponent Group also earns travel credits from Travelink based on the volume of our members' bookings. These credits will lower company costs for future education events, which in turn benefits the membership.

Contact **John Higgins** at Travelink at **615-277-5174** or email him at [john.higgins@travelink.com](mailto:john.higgins@travelink.com) to set up your account and to ask any questions you may have about the program.

For complete details on using the Travelink program you also may visit the Member Discounts page on the members' only website.

### The Proponent Team:

**Lorin Anderson** President

**David Gould** Staff Editor

**Lori Bombka** Operations Manager

**Debbie Clements** Accounting



1513 Cherry Ridge Drive

Heathrow, FL 32746

407-878-1235 Phone

321-363-1191 Fax

## The Premier Network of Golf Instructors

Copyright ©2014 Proponent Group. All rights reserved.