

COLLABORATE

Proponent Group

The Premier Network of Golf Instructors

PROONENT GROUP NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2016

PGA SHOW LINE-UP TO INCLUDE WIDE SPECTRUM OF TOPICS

Proponent Group will once again host an array of educational sessions during the PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando—on Wednesday, January 25th and Thursday, January 26th in Room W109B, our annual home during the show.

As in the past we will have a full line-up on both days with Thursday once again being produced in cooperation with Golf Biodynamics and **Dr. Rob Neal** and **Karen Harrison**. They have once again assembled a line-up of leading researchers and teachers to share latest insights.

Wednesday's line-up will include our traditional mix of business, player-development and teaching topics including PGA National Teacher of the Year **Mike Malaska** who will be explaining the ideas behind his new book "Invisible Swing." **Matt Reagan** and **Ryan**

Dailey of iGrow Golf will be on hand to share their fresh ideas for on-

boarding juniors and families into

long-term coaching programs that drive

more play at your

facility. **Will Robins** of

Robins Golf Logistix returns to the Proponent stage to talk about how you can make your group instruction more effective. GolfTEC's **Nick Clearwater** joins us to share some of the data that recently came out of the company's Swing TRU study.

On Thursday, presentations will include instructor **Ted Sheftic** discussing his four fundamentals for working with technology while his son, **Mark Sheftic**, will do a deep dive into Teaching with Boditrak. Proponent members **Dr. Rob Neal** and **Layne Savoie** will be presenting "Short Game: What the Experts Do." **Iain Highfield**, a popular speaker at last year's Summit, returns with a look at "How to Incorporate Mental Game Techniques into Practice for Students."

More speakers will be announced in the coming weeks and the full line-up and schedule will be included in the December newsletter. PG



PGA

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PROONENT MEMBERS MAKE UP HALF OF NEW GOLF DIGEST 'BEST YOUNG TEACHERS IN AMERICA'

Golf Digest's new list of the Best Young Teachers in America includes 49 Proponent Group members out of the 100 professionals who were named to the 2016-17 list. The compilation has become a staple at Golf Digest since it was introduced in 2010 and this year was expanded from 40 to 100 recipients.

The magazine reviewed 400-plus nominees this year, examining criteria such as professional accomplishments, desire to learn, social-media presence and recommendations from industry sources—including teachers on Digest's current Best in State and Top 50 Teachers lists. *Here's the Proponent contingent:*

NORTHEAST

JASON BARRY, 28, Mercer Oaks G. Cse., West Windsor, NJ
 ERIK BARZESKI, 38, Golf Evolution, Erie, PA
 JASON BIRNBAUM, 36, Manhattan Woods G.C., West Nyack, NY
 ANDERS MATTSOON, 36, Saratoga National G.C., Saratoga Springs, NY
 MEGAN PADUA, 31, Megan Padua Golf/The Maidstone Club, East Hampton, NY
 BRIAN ROGISH, 31, Crystal Springs Resort, Hamburg, NJ
 BILL SCHMEDES III, 31, Fiddler's Elbow C.C., Bedminster, NJ
 JASON SEDAN, 31, Lake Winnepesaukee G.C., New Durham, NH
 ALANA SWAIN, 28, Atlantic G.C., Bridgehampton, NY
 MICHAEL WHEELER, 30, Troon Golf Academy Lake of Isles, North Stonington, CT

MID-ATLANTIC

LEIGHANN ALBAUGH, 36, Magnolia Green G.C., Moseley, VA
 ERIKA LARKIN, 35, The Club at Creighton Farms, Aldie, VA
 BEN PELLICANI, 32, Family Golf Center, Antioch, TN
 TRILLIUM ROSE, 38, Woodmont C.C., Rockville, MD
 TYRUS YORK, 33, High Performance Golf Academy, Nicholasville, KY

SOUTHEAST

ANDREW DAWES, 39, Saddlebrook Golf Academy, Wesley Chapel, FL
 TRAVIS FULTON, 39, Golf Channel Academy with Travis Fulton at World Golf Village, St. Augustine, FL
 IAIN HIGHFIELD, 34, Bishops Gate Golf Academy, Howey-in-the-Hills, FL
 DAN LOCKHART, 36, Raptor Bay G.C., Bonita Springs, FL



JARUT PADUNG, 27, PGA Tour Academy at World Golf Village, St. Augustine, FL
 BRANDON STOOKSBURY, 36, Idle Hour C.C., Macon, GA
 RENEE TRUDEAU, 33, Biltmore Hotel, Coral Gables, FL
 SHAUN WEBB, 38, David Toms 265 Academy, Shreveport, LA

MIDWEST

KIEL ALDERINK, 33, Todd Sones Impact Golf Academy Vernon Hills, IL
 LUKE BENOIT, 35, Interlachen C.C., Edina, MN
 BRENNAN COOPER, 38, Staley Farms

G.C., Kansas City, MO
 DANIEL GRAY, 35, Skokie C.C., Glencoe, IL
 KYLE MORRIS, 31, The Golf Room, Dublin, OH

SOUTHWEST

JONATHAN BUCHANAN, 31, Dallas C.C.
 MIKE BURY, 35, Las Colinas C.C., Dallas, TX
 TROY DENTON, 33, Maridoe G.C., Carrollton, TX
 TYLER FERRELL, 35, Mike McGetrick Golf Academy, Humble, TX
 EUJONE KIM, 34, Axis Golf Academy & Fitting Center, The Woodlands, TX
 JUSTIN KLEMBALLA, 29, Paradise Valley (AZ) C.C.
 COREY LUNDBERG, 33, Altus Performance at Trinity Forest, Dallas, TX
 BRIAN SCHORSTEN, 37, Colonial C.C., Fort Worth, TX
 KAYLIN SKOVRON, 29, Jeff Isler Golf, Southlake, TX
 JOEY WUERTEMBERGER, 37, Jim McLean Golf Center, Fort Worth, TX

WEST

DEVAN BONEBRAKE, 31, Southern California Golf Academy, Carlsbad, CA
 NICK CLEARWATER, 38, GolfTEC Enterprises, Centennial, CO
 ALISON CURDT, 34, Alison Curdt Golf at Wood Ranch G.C., Simi Valley, CA
 JON HORNER, 31, CordeValle G.C., San Martin, CA
 NICK KUMPIS, 38, Santa Ana (Calif.) C.C., Santa Ana, CA
 PATRICK NUBER, 34, GolfTEC Enterprises, Centennial, CO
 AARON OLSON, 35, Poppy Hills G. Cse., Pebble Beach, CA
 TRAVIS OLSON, 30, Rock Creek Cattle Company, Deer Lodge, MT
 WILL ROBINS, 38, Will Robins Golf at Empire Ranch G. Cse., Folsom, CA
 KEVIN SHIMOMURA, 32, Ko Olina Academy, Kapolei, HI
 MATT WILSON, 31, La Rinconada C.C., Los Gatos, CA **PG**

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

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ALL OF OUR OPTIONS

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

Our Unique Members-only Website

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

Our Member Mentors

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

Our Private Edufii and Facebook Groups

Ask our Private Facebook or Edufii groups of more than 450 Proponent members your questions and you'll get answers from your peers across North America.

Our One-on-One Consulting

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


Proponent Group
The Premier Network of Golf Instructors

Log on to www.proponent-group.com or call 407-878-1235

Tell Me Something I Don't Know

JOHN KELLEY, CEO OF COACHUP

By David Gould, Staff Editor

The logic behind CoachUp is well known to any Proponent Group member: “If you enjoy an activity that involves a skill, you’ll want to get better at it so you can enjoy the activity even more”—that’s the core concept of the four-year-old Boston-based company, as expressed by its CEO, John Kelley.

California-bred and Harvard-educated, Kelley is a marketing specialist with a shiny corporate resume who took over as chief executive two years ago when CoachUp was still a startup. Under his watch the company has enjoyed double- and triple-digit revenue growth and spread its operation into all 50 U.S. states. Endorsement deals carved out with Steph Curry and Julian Edelman have boosted awareness and helped tell the company’s story. Meanwhile, Kelley is also a CoachUp customer, working with two coaches of his own. One is for golf and one is for distance running, the two activities he wants to get better at.

He has a second core belief that guides his strategic planning, not about students but about those who teach them: “No matter what the sport is, coaches just want to coach,” says Kelley. “Very few of them take pleasure in the administrative or marketing aspects of the process.”

The basic CoachUp mission is handling those tasks for the 20,000-plus coaches registered on the company’s website (to apply you need to have played your sport collegiately or professionally, or coached at the high school level). “Half our business is basketball and soccer,” says Kelley, “and 80 percent of our lessons are booked by a parent on behalf of their kid,” with the typical age range of the kid being grade 6 through grade 10 or 11. Individual sports like golf or tennis certainly aren’t the company’s sweet spot, ranking way down below baseball, lacrosse, track-and-field and volleyball in CoachUp’s revenue sheet.

“Even though golf is a small part of our business, we would love to have more golf instructors register with us,” comments Kelley, who values his own weekly golf training in part because it helps him see first-hand how a skilled coach handles technology and the stream of data it kicks out.

“Golf instruction has been an early adopter of ‘teaching tech,’ which means golf coaches have been thinking for a long time about how to interpret the data technology generates, and how to talk about it to the golfer in an understandable way,” he points out. “We’re going to need to help our coaches do that in all these other sports.”



John Kelley (left) with NBA star Steph Curry

Among the products in this category that he’s impressed with, the wearable tech company Whoop is probably tops. Although it resembles a FitBit or an Apple Watch, the Whoop device is billed as much more big-picture in its data collection and interpretation, applying predictive analytics so that teams and individuals can better understand their bodies and how they recover after a hard game or workout. “No one was thinking about rest and recovery, which is a big factor in performance, so Whoop went and tackled that piece of it,” says Kelley admiringly.

The golf instruction industry might take note of Kelley’s keen interest in the business models of organizations like

Crossfit, November Project and Class Pass. These emerging companies sell their expertise and programming, which a student experiences in a fitness facility that some third party has built and manages. Or, they simply sell the freedom to take fitness, yoga and exercise-dance classes at studios all over town, or all over the U.S. and Canada.

Indeed, managers of CrossFit and Class Pass refer to the gyms and studios where their customers take classes or do workouts as “boxes”—these facilities are overbuilt and have excess capacity, so in comes a new concept based on the notion that “people want to be taught and motivated by experts” in sports and fitness. They also want to avoid boredom in their training, as well as find ways to make it more social. “Someone who spends half her life on a stationary bike in one gym, wearing headphones, suddenly finds herself in a cardio boxing class,” Kelley suggests. “That flexibility and spontaneity has a lot of consumer appeal.”

People who like to stay fit and play sports “look over the fence,” he says, at other sports they lack an entree to—cardio boxing and golf would be two fine examples. Companies like CrossFit and ClassPass send a message that says we’ll-provide-the-entree, and make it so you feel entitled to at least try the activity.

Through his capital-raising activities Kelley has become friendly with an investor in Topgolf, and from that has pursued a potential partnership. “Just to be associated with an organization that has harnessed the power of fun and enjoyment golf offers, even to new players, is exciting,” he says. “We all loved to play games and sports when we were kids—but I’d say most people who quit playing sports do so because it isn’t fun anymore.” True enough—and we’ll take heed of that reminder every time. **PG**

ARE YOU CREATING SAMPLING PROGRAMS?



By Lorin Anderson, President

Thousands of golf facilities are losing money across the U.S.—that’s what we’re hearing now from brokers who buy and sell golf courses. Estimates are as high as one in three courses are actively looking for buyers. Meanwhile, the white knights who ride in, buy the course, inject fresh capital and make it profitable are diminishing in number.

Course ownership, looking to exit, aren’t finding “golf people” to sell to, thus they are turning to developers whose plan is to plow up the course and build homes or offices on it.

Here in Orlando at least a half-dozen courses have recently been sold to developers and are no longer open for golf. Another dozen are looking for buyers—if you want to play those courses you better do it soon.

What I know is this: For a typical course to make enough money to function as a viable business over the long haul, *it will need more engaged golfers playing the game.* I would assert that the best way to fill the local pipeline with more enthusiastic golfers is to have more golfers engaged in quality instruction.

We know that a Pellucid study found that golfers who lowered their handicap by just one shot during the season played an average of 10 percent more golf. Proponent Group’s small study of eight courses/clubs found that golfers taking instruction on a regular basis spend 74 percent more at the course/club than golfers who don’t. We also found that incremental spending at facilities with a quality instruction program rose by an average of \$75,000 at both private and public facilities. (You can download this information from the Business

Templates menu on the members website under The Business Value of Golf Instruction.)

So how do we get more people engaged in working on their games and playing more golf? Let’s start by finding ways to make access to your services easier on a variety of levels: Financially, emotionally and time-wise.

Ideas to get the ball rolling could include:

Membership clubs could modify their “**range plan**” program that includes a free private lesson for each member each year. These can be restricted to weekdays for redemption. Say the current range plan is \$125 annually, bump it to \$175 and include a lesson. Do the math with \$50 x 300 members and you have \$15,000 upfront in revenue and if half those members actually redeem, you’re making \$100 an hour while building a pipeline of new students, many of whom will return for other instruction programming in the future.

Try a “**Bring a Friend**” program. Let someone who books a private lesson share the lesson with a friend or family member for the same price. A study by Troon Golf found that when golfers take lessons together they stay in the program for an average of twice as long as golfers who came by themselves. There is definitely a strong psychological motivation to avoid letting someone else down when you’ve made a commitment to engage in an activity with them.

Finally, don’t be afraid to “**give away a piece of chocolate to sell the box.**” This is the most basic sampling program used in just about every professional service industry. There are many barriers that get broken down quickly during the first free meeting or lesson. Our research shows that 70 percent of the time people will sign up for more, after that initial meeting. Once they see improvement students play more and spend more and that’s the biggest value you can bring to your facility. **PG**

PROONENT GROUP PARTNERS



How Swing Coach Will Help You Teach Better and Faster - and Improve Your Business

Despite its name, the new "Swing Coach" teaching aid is not meant to put you out of business. In fact, Swing Coach—which was developed with Top 100 Teacher Dean Reinmuth—can be a terrific aid to your students, your business, and your reputation.

Swing Coach can be used by the student on his own, but will prove an invaluable tool for you in helping pupils create a proper smooth, accelerating, in-balance swing. It simplifies the learning process for all students, regardless of skill level, and will have you getting them to make a correct swing more quickly and more efficiently. And that's both full swing and pitch shots.

Here's how it works:

When your student swings the Swing Coach, the ball flies out of the patented cradle technology, and the ball's flight indicates if the motion was good or bad.

With you guiding them, your pupils will see real improvement in their swings in as little as 15 minutes while also developing the muscle memory necessary to make their best swings.

When you're not with your student, Swing Coach becomes an extension of your teaching.

Your students keep improving, they play better, others notice the difference, and you get the credit.

**Swing Coach: Good for your students,
great for your business.**



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PROONENT SUMMIT 2016 AT TALKING STICK

“LEARN MORE, EARN MORE” CONCEPTS EXPLORED IN SCOTTSDALE

By David Gould,
Staff Editor

Issues and opportunities facing top instructors were covered from all angles at the 9th annual Proponent Group Summit in Scottsdale last month. Some 130 Proponent members, sponsors and industry associates took part in the event, gathering state-of-the-art expertise from speakers and panelists. In between presentations and during the always-lively social events they tapped each other's knowledge and networked enthusiastically. Organized to pursue the double-edged goal of “Learn More and Earn More,” this year's Summit at Talking Stick Resort seemed to show more than ever how keen the members are to sharpen their business and wealth-building skills along with their coaching acumen.

One message stood tall: When the focus is on the golfer—and that person's unique traits and needs—coaches and the industry in general will always be most effective. All well and good, but Proponent member Mike



More than 130 Proponent members from across North America made the trip to Scottsdale for two days of in-depth presentations on more than a dozen teaching and business topics.

Malizia came with a message of warning—and some fascinating insights—about what exactly happens in the teacher-student interaction. Malizia, based at Harbour Ridge in Stuart, Fla., told of his research into Behavioral Profiling, as pioneered by psychologist and author Dan Korem. “Everybody profiles,” Mike explained, “even if they don't realize it, but we only do it with about 30 percent accuracy”—and that causes problems, he has found, on a daily basis.

What started Malizia down this road was a search for the causes of greatness in the very top golf coaches. He came to discover that a primary reason for the unsurpassed skills of someone like Butch Harmon was Harmon's ability—and it's extremely rare—to quickly and accurately conduct a behavioral profile on his students, even without any training or formal study in how it's done.

The true head-scratcher driving Malizia's inquiry was that classic high-quality first lesson that fails to yield a second lesson. “I had a tour player come to me with ball-striking issues and I did exactly what someone in that

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Proponent's host professionals at Talking Stick, Lynn Marriott and Pia Nilsson of Vision54, took a deep dive into how to manage a golfer's day-to-day variables.

position would want,” recalls Mike. “I saw right away an angle-of-attack problem, confirmed it on Trackman, gave him some technique ideas and got the Trackman numbers and his ball flight fixed in that one session.” But the player never came back—and this had happened with golfers of various skill levels, so it added urgency to Mike’s quest.

As a sub-topic within instruction, profiling is similar to the study of human learning styles—visual, auditory, kinesthetic and so on—but in many ways it’s more crucial to understand. The relevant terminology includes descriptives like Control versus Express, Assertive versus Non-Assertive, Fearful versus Confident and Conventional versus Unconventional. An example of how things go wrong when behavioral profiles aren’t nailed would be a tournament golfer with the Express trait and a caddie who exhibits Control as a communication style.

“When that fiery, dramatic tour player wants a target line and a club pulled, his caddie could do a fine job of it,” says Malizia, “but because he speaks softly and behaves in a mild manner, the player is going to think the caddie doesn’t care.” This works in the opposite manner as well—a lesson-taker who feels threatened by a teacher simply due to the openly passionate way he or she conducts a lesson will recoil and likely not return. To repeat, everyone profiles—we just don’t a good job of it, and we fall short of our potential as result. Next time you’re looking for a good book to read, per Malizia’s advice pick up “The Art of Profiling: Reading People Right the First Time,” by Dan Korem.

The importance of remembering that golfers come in all different types with varied preferences was also emphasized in a session on “Fishing for Long-Term Students,” co-presented by Jeff Penson of Golf Channel Academy and Proponent president Lorin Anderson. It’s been Penson’s job to oversee the New Student Assessment initiative that’s getting such high priority in the GCA network of academies. Dropping one line in the water is fine, but “the more lines you put out, the more fish you are likely to catch” was Penson’s analogy to bringing new students into the lesson book.

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Bernie Najar (right) , with an assist from Kevin Weeks, discussed how being able to measure forces generated during the swing affect the shot outcome.



Michael Boyko of Tempo in Motion demonstrated tempo by tapping into his night job as a professional drummer.



RetailTribe's Ian James opened eyes and got our members thinking with his view of teachers' growing role in golfer engagement.

Another aspect of his metaphor involved “the type of bait” to be used. For teachers and coaches, the possibilities include your website, email, various forms of social media, search-engine optimization and pay-per-click advertising, as well as appearances on local radio and articles written for local publications. Some of these channels and tactics work well with a particular group or type, still others are needed for other golfer types—sticking to one or two methods will limit your business.

One slide from this presentation drew particular attention—it showed the revenue implications of new-student on-boarding programs that are designed to retain the client over an extended period. The arithmetic Jeff and Lorin put up assumed just one new student per week paying \$75 for a single hour of instruction. Multiplied by a hypothetical 52-week season, that kicks out \$3,900

annually. The next metric was based on the assumption that two-thirds of those new students would continue on, at a spending level of \$350 over the course of the season. The math on that is \$12,250 in incremental dollars—add it to the initial-session money and you’re looking at \$16,150 your business would not have otherwise earned. Plus you’ve now got 35 new students in your pipeline and in your network.

Several gatherings of Proponent members have benefitted from the knowledge and coaching acuity of the Vision54 team—that’s Pia Nilsson and Lynn Marriott—and this group of Summit-goers did, as well. On their home turf in Scottsdale, Lynn and Pia treated members to an indoor talk plus a live on-range demo of their most recent refinements.

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Topgolf a Smash Hit to Kick off Summit ‘16

The Sunday evening festivities that kick off most Proponent Group Summits take place in hotel ballrooms with carving stations and sauté chefs—women members dressed in skirts and the guys wearing sport coats. This year something much more golf-y, and at the same time highly significant to the state of our industry, formed the backdrop for reception night. Topgolf Scottsdale, 1,000 yards across the desert scrub from Talking Stick Resort, provided an ideal setting for Proponent members to eat, drink, talk shop and hit chip-embedded balls into the Arizona night.

A few members knew the Topgolf drill and hopped into their hitting stations knowing how to read the on-screen data that reports where a ball has landed and how many points have been scored. But for many the golf-entertainment phenomenon of fast-growing, industry-impacting Topgolf was a novel and highly fulfilling first-time experience. — D.G.



For three-fourths of our members, this was their first visit to the establishment.

These concepts will soon be available in “The Human Skills of the Game,” the teaching duo’s latest co-authored book. “We’ve taken the principles and strategies that are the basis of Vision54 training,” said Pia, “and come up with some approaches that speed the improvement process. We’ve been using these new ideas and we’re finding that golfers are progressing faster.”

One of the new Vision54 concepts would have seemed unthinkable years ago—it involves that Holy-Grail notion in golf, “consistency.” Pia and Lynn have shifted away from it, toward a recognition that “managing variability” is much more realistic and practical. “There are different feels and different experiences—physical, mental, emotional—each round you play,” explained Lynn, “so let’s stop looking for consistency and turn that around so we learn to manage variability—if we do that, actual outcomes will be more consistent. For us this change in mindset has made a huge difference.”

Their presentation provided a highly appropriate intro to the on-range segment that followed, which was persuasive and percussive at the same time. It featured the world-class rock drummer and outside-the-box golf instructor Mike Boyko, whose segment on “The Code of Rhythm” threw a curveball at the idea that golf—unlike all the team sports we played as kids—is not a reaction-based physical activity. Boyko sat at his drum set on the groomed bermuda grass and warmed attendees up with a few minutes of snapping, crashing drum licks—you know his work if you’ve heard the Smash Mouth hit “Walking On the Sun—then explained how he came to create a company called Tempo in Motion, which takes a rhythmic approach to improving a student’s golf game.

Using a computerized tempo-setting device akin to a 21st-century metronome, Boyko brought audience volunteers up to the tee and worked with them to find the ideal timing of their pre-swing and trigger process, from establishing a stance to checking the target to wagging then pausing and letting it rip. Cheryl Anderson, a Proponent member/staffer who has worked with Boyko’s concept, shared the story of a high-level junior she coaches who went from frozen over the ball—think Sergio Garcia back when—to smooth, relaxed and decisive through her sequence of preparing and ball-striking.



Bryan Hepler (right) of Tathata Golf shared his philosophy grounded in the movements taught in ancient martial arts and how these teachings can help speed the learning of golf.

The notion of meeting the golfer more than halfway was also espoused by Ian James, longtime friend and collaborator of Proponent Group (*Ian’s regular column in our newsletter is especially on-target this time—see page 15*). As a world-trotting expert and consultant on vendor-consumer dynamics, James has come to the understanding that, in his words, “brand-building has faded as a priority in favor of relationship-building.” The rank-and-file shopper-buyer-customer-consumer has lost his or her loyalty to the big logos and mass-consumption values, he notices. “Buy local”? It’s stronger than you even realize—and the implications for the teaching profession are profound and highly promising.

“The teaching professional should be the CEO of the golf club or golf facility” is the first statement Ian makes to club owners and managers who retain him as a consultant. Interestingly, the ‘E’ in his ‘CEO’ stands for Engagement, and the market forces this founder/owner of RetailTribe sketches out were absorbed with rapt attention by Summit attendees.

A man not easily impressed, Ian is continually struck by the skill level and talents of the Proponent members he has met over the years. “I think you know that you are game-changers, and on a one-by-one basis you do that,” he told the assemblage. “For the sake of the industry, for yourselves and for the instructors who are coming along behind you,” he told the group, “you could step up and do more—very easily, just by using your abilities in a programmed way.”

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On the subject of what's needed and has been missing, James described a secret-shopper exercise his company conducted. Some 250 golf courses and clubs were contacted by phone, with the callers describing themselves as wanna-be golfers. Astoundingly, *not one of those 250 calls led to the person at the golf facility asking for a name, phone number or email address.* Do a 180 on that mindset, he told the group, and this industry could pick money up off the ground by the bushel—and increase its golfer population at a steady clip.

This Summit also took a close look at equipment. From the end of the hickory-shaft era to the arrival of Ralph Maltby and Henry-Griffitts in the 1980s, the unique equipment needs of the golfer weren't recognized or served. Now precision clubfitting is the norm for even the semi-serious golfer. This year's Summit called upon a trio of experts—**Kenny Nairn, Randy Henry** and **Mark Timms**—to examine current trends in this area, with inspiring results. “The Performance Triangle: The Club, The Swing Motion and Ball Flight” was the theme and one trend it hit upon repeatedly was whether all top teachers should be actively and enthusiastically fitting clubs, even in this age of specialization.

Nairn and Henry described their approach to helping golfers in a way that made the challenge seem nearly impossible—and certainly unsatisfying—if clubfitting weren't part of their repertoire. For Kenny it's a matter of the golfer standing on the range, hitting poor shots and longing for help—in that very moment and from that very person in whom he or she has placed trust. “You're the expert,” he told the audience, “so that means you're the expert on whatever it takes to get them the results they want.”

Henry shared this view, explaining that when a fine swing coach adds first-rate clubfitting acumen to their skill set, it's more than one plus one equals two—the golfer's opinion of you jumps up to a new level and the degree of trust they feel deepens greatly. “People want this—I can't tell you how much they appreciate it when you can put these two things together—teaching and fitting,” Randy said. “I've had lumberjacks and long-haul truckers sell their wives' cars so they could put the right clubs in their golf bags.”

Timms, founder and CEO of Cool Clubs (and Hot Stix before it), is not a golf instructor. His success



Randy Henry, Kenny Nairn and Mark Timms served on our club fitting panel with moderator David Gould.

and the sheer range of his expertise on club design and custom-manufacturing is testament to the fact that clubfitting is already a specialty and will likely continue to need people who work on the gear side only. “The big-box stores that have been trying to sell golf gear from normal inventory—while also offering custom clubs—they're having problems,” said Timms. “Meanwhile the custom-fitting segment of the business continues to grow.”

The swing coach's experienced eye will always be a vital diagnostic tool, but science and engineering have come along to reveal secrets of swing dynamics that visual observation can't capture. Ground-force measurements generated by technology like Swing Catalyst is a prime example, as Bernie Najjar's presentation on “Better Golf from the Ground Up” explained in detail. The award-winning teacher from Caves Valley in suburban Baltimore is a devotee of ground-force coaching.

“I look at horizontal force, torque and vertical force with every player I work with,” Najjar said flatly.

A classic distinction in engineering, between kinetics and kinematics, can now be seen and understood in the context of a golf swing, he stated, and that's a leap forward. Kinematics is defined as the study of describing movement—think video—while kinetics is the study of forces that cause motion, including torque, gravity and so on. “There's a big movement in golf instruction toward kinetics,” said Bernie, and the advantage of being able to isolate actual causes of motion is the reason for that.

Along with Mike Boyko's demonstration of instruction that uses tempo training, the presentation by Bryan Hepler on “Tathata Golf Movement Training: A Revolution in Golf Instruction” was this Summit's prime example of a next-new-thing for Proponent members to learn about first.

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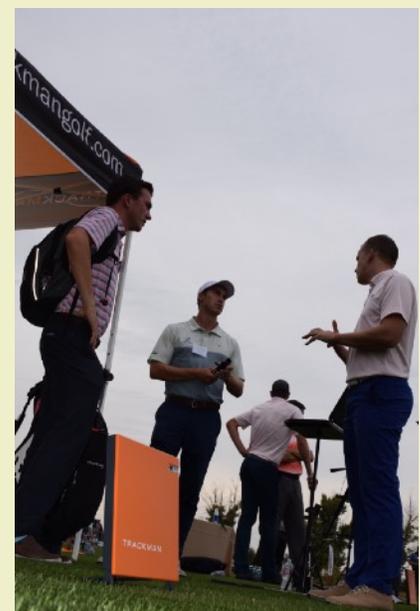
Actually, the principles of Tathata Golf (pronounced “Ta-thak-ta”) are quite ancient, adapted from martial arts and “the way of the warrior” as understood in Eastern traditions. In fact, during his talk and demonstration, which included two trained students modeling the movements, Hepler had sacred-sounding flute music playing softly as an aural backdrop, and he refers to the company’s training center as a dojo, rather than a golf academy. Bryan’s instructions to the students included phrases like “lift the ribs,” “snap to level,” “do the soccer kick” and “do the hockey push-down.” For the first third of the presentation his two students held nothing in their hands, then a wooden “bokken” was given to each—that’s a martial arts implement resembling a cricket bat or sword.

Small movements performed in isolation, understood and mastered by the student, then woven together in the full swing motion, is the

idea. Hepler attests to the unusually swift pace of learning the Tathata technique produces in new players. Interestingly, “it’s not position-oriented,” he emphasizes, “it’s movement-oriented, and it will give us a new way to talk to students about what is really going on” in the swing.

The movement going on in a final-day presentation by Brad East was upward—a rising line on a chart to indicate growing personal wealth for the hard-working Proponent Group member. Billed as a “Golf Instructor’s Guide to Managing Your Personal Finances,” it reminded one and all that teaching and coaching is personally rewarding, but it can be—and needs to be—financially rewarding as well, so that one’s lifelong journey in the profession provides choices and freedom in the later years. **PG**

Plenty of New “Goodies” at Demo Day



Nearly 20 companies including diagnostic technologies, scheduling software, statistical analysis programs, credit card processing, nutrition bars and training aids were on hand to show off their new products to the assembled participants.



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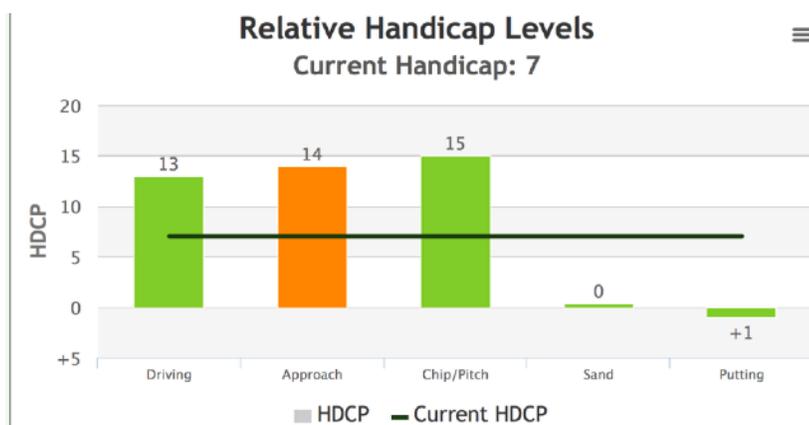
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PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

By Ian James,
RetailTribe CEO

"I can't see any pathways." That was the observation of the Sports Commissioner for Utah as he bemoaned the way the golf industry—and golf instructors in particular—introduce the game to new players.

"Mothers can't see a pathway. Retirees can't see a pathway. And, even though I'm in the sports industry, I can't see a pathway," he lamented.

What irked this particular gentleman was an investment state government had made to bring a couple of minor golf tournaments to Utah. He had hoped the move would inspire children, families, and retirees to embrace the outdoor health and social benefits of the game. Assessing the net benefit of Utah's expenditure on the tournaments, he said there was none. And why? Because there was no accepted and proven way to on-board golfers.

To my view, the man underestimated this problem. He doesn't know how bad things really are. He thought the fact that we were so fragmented meant that each golf club had its own pathway and that each, though different, was measured and managed. If only he knew that in most cases we do the equivalent of taking skiers (the industry he's familiar with) who have managed a snowplow run on the

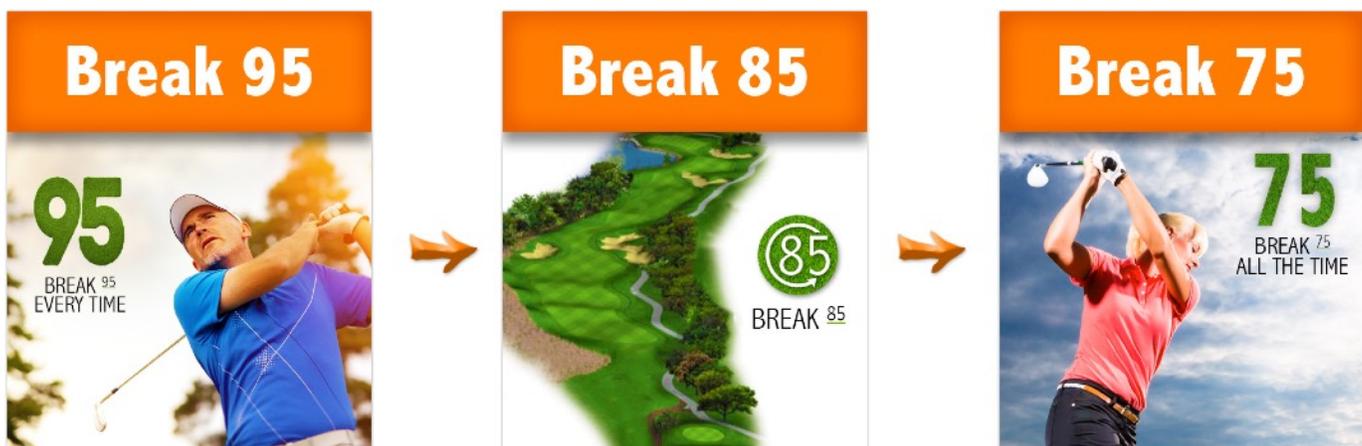


Of golfers who participate in an introductory program, 85% don't make it to the recreational level

bunny slope, ride them to the top of the mountain and say: "Now see how you like it!"

Is it any wonder that Wall Street Journal research showed 85 percent of golfers deciding the Royal and Ancient game is not for them? The step from an introductory program to playing 18 holes that range from 170 to 500 yards in length, with bunkers, trees, water and what have you, is like the leap from a bunny hill to double black diamond trails.

We can't continue taking people with very limited skill and turning them loose at the top of our mountain. At the end of an introductory golf program there needs to be a "game" that our new player can find fulfilling. And what's more, it's our responsibility to ensure that recreation and entertainment is what they feel they're experiencing.



Even the more casual player will embrace a program that targets measurable achievements and offers them drills and advice that seem appropriate for their skill level.

Cary Cozby and his team at Southern Hills have gone a little farther than most and created three levels of development with different scales of challenge for each.

They start with the normal introductory program (Get Golf Ready I) and on the back side offer a weekly 70-yard event for those who've completed that course. There are two other programs that follow, each equipping the new golfer with additional skills, knowledge and experience, such that they can then embrace greater challenges and still find them fulfilling.

Right now Cozby has over 100 women at Southern Hills in one of three programs—GetGolfReady I (70 yards), GetGolfReady II (150 yards), and GetGolfReady III (full-length holes).

If golf facilities like Southern Hills or St. Francis Links (a very exclusive club in South Africa) can embrace the need for people to take on shorter challenges more commensurate with their skill level, why can't every golf club? It's your job, as part of a group of this industry's 300 top coaches, to lead. Yes, there will be board members and general managers who can't see the merit or feel it is in some way diluting the game. In those cases, share your experiences with each other. Describe intro-golf successes and the impact they have had on membership, revenues and the overall energy of the facilities where these events have been introduced.

But why stop there? Surely after Get Golf Ready III there are additional steps up the development pathway. There is no end of skills to be gained or refined. There is knowledge to be acquired. You'll notice that Golf Digest and GOLF Magazine have regularly published feature articles guiding and encouraging readers to "Break 100, 90 and 80." They've done this because they know golfers respond to the



Right now Cary Cozby (top photo) has over 100 women at Southern Hills in one of three programs—GetGolfReady I (70 yards), GetGolfReady II (150 yards), and GetGolfReady III (full-length holes).

defined challenge of these scoring goals. Even the more casual player will embrace a program that targets measurable achievements and offers them drills and advice that seem appropriate for their skill level.

At RetailTribe we tweak this concept, recommending to customers that the pathway they set out be: Break 95, Break 85 and Break 75. We see the score of 85 as an aspiration for a very large group of golfers.

It's simpler for the magazines, of course. They call their challenge Break 100 (or whatever score) and just fill a few pages with tips, drills and skills pegged to each level. If you as an in-person coach are going to have a program, you're going to need to define the key concepts being addressed by that program, target some performance benchmarks as outcomes, identify challenges players can embrace *after* the program, and specify the sort of golf knowledge and golf skills they will need to acquire. As they go up the levels, course management would also be included.

In designing programs such as these you can have sub-programs that support them. So, for Break 80 you might include Aimpoint training and "Graduate of the Short Game" programs.

At RetailTribe we tweak this concept, recommending to our customers that the pathway they set out be Break 95, Break 85 and Break 75. We see the score of 85 as an aspiration for a very large population of golfers.



Start with the normal introductory program (Get Golf Ready I) and on the back side offer a weekly 70-yard event for those who've completed it. There would be other programs that follow, each equipping the new golfer with additional skills, knowledge and experience.

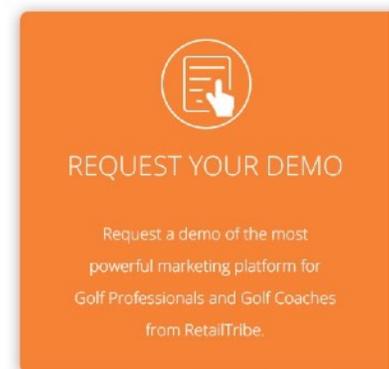
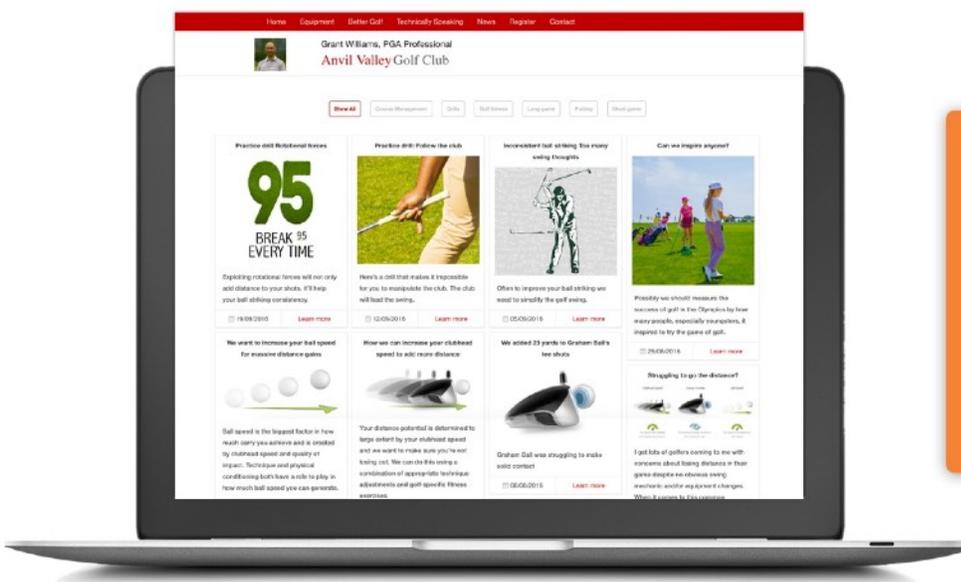
The beauty of designing your programs with that level of flexibility is it allows you to assess and benchmark the golfer at the start of the program and decide what their requirement for improvement and coaching is in each case.

You know you've devised a comprehensive and workable program when a Pathway is visible to anyone seeking the opportunity for development or improvement.

Yes, there's effort in putting together these programs. But as a Proponent Group member

you're the best of the best when it comes to coaching. In the end your combined efforts can and could produce a Standard Development Model for golfers of all types, which, if you want my opinion—and that of the Sports Commissioner for Utah—the whole industry should have, and every consumer should be able to see. Think of it as a map or network of routes up the mountainside, leading to whichever heights the individual golfer is desiring to reach. **PG**

It's not what you do, it's what you say and who you say it to



*You're out front with the customer, changing golfers games, even their lives.
We're behind the scenes, creating marketing that drives more revenue.*



TRENT WEARNER

TRENT WEARNER GOLF ACADEMY, ENGLEWOOD, CO

INTERVIEW BY PAUL RAMEE, JR.

It's been nearly 10 years since Trent Wearner self-published "Golf Scrimmages: Realistic Practice Games Under Pressure." The book continues to sell despite zero marketing, and the author is pretty sure why: Golfers don't want to just beat balls—they have a hunger for effective and enjoyable ways to practice.

Wearner, rated the No. 1 golf instructor in Colorado by Golf Digest, has doubled down on that book by going live with a companion website, golfschimmages.com. The site is filled with competitive practice games, along with 'leaderboards' for all members of the site, private leaderboards for individual academies and a dashboard function so each golfer can archive their practice-game scores. Response to the site has been enthusiastic.

Trent's coaching career, by his own reckoning, has been informed by waves of refined new information and breakout technologies. User-friendly video and precision clubfitting came on the scene around the time he made his entry into teaching. Not long afterward came Doppler-radar launch monitors and other sensor-based devices. Wearner's first mentor was Keith Lyford and his second was Mike McGetrick—two highly successful teachers who pushed their staff instructors to stay on the cutting

edge of new developments.

Wearner grew up on a golf course and joined its staff as an entry-level worker at age 16. He was a competitive junior golfer and remains active in tournament play on the PGA Section level. His state-of-the-art golf academy is a landmark at the Meridian Golf Learning Center, just south of Denver.

The drive to redefine golf practice stems in part from Trent's work with Dr. Rick Jensen, and his advanced understanding of motor learning is one reason Wearner earned Colorado PGA Teacher of the Year honors in 2004 and why his elite junior program has produced 70-plus players in the college ranks. There is more to come from this restlessly curious coach, whose reflections and views on game-improvement in golf are highlighted in the conversation he and Paul Ramee recently shared.

Trent, like so many leading instructors you started in the game early. Tell us about that.

I grew up on a golf course and had an uncle who played the Tour in the 1950s and '60s, so I come from



Wearner is ranked as the No. 1 teacher in the state of Colorado and has sent more than 70 juniors on to college scholarships.



Trent Wearer self-published “Golf Scrimmages: Realistic Practice Games Under Pressure.” and a companion website, golfscriimmages.com, to help golfers better engage during their practice sessions.

a family of golfers. One day my mother told me to go find a job, so off I went to the golf course and at age 16 I was picking the range at Hyland Hills Golf Course in Westminster, Colo. When I graduated from college I found work as an assistant pro at Blackhawk Golf Club in St. Charles, Illinois and was handed a decent junior program to oversee. I got active with that and realized this is what I wanted to do.

I was fortunate along the way to work for Keith Lyford, which was great since we worked in New England in the summers and Scottsdale in the winters. I couldn't have had a better start than I did with Keith. I did that for three seasons then I went to work for Mike McGetrick at Meridian Golf Club and I've been here for 17 years.

As you look back, how would you say the club has changed over that time?

Well, Mike left in the middle of 2003 and not much was done because not much was needed, really. We did have a new general manager come aboard in 2015 and he has instituted some great changes. The change that's had the biggest impact on me is the renovation of the learning center, which should open back up any day now. Everything was renovated to include the hitting bays and putting areas. We're now complementing our FlightScope, Boditrak and SAM Putt Lab with a TrackMan as well as adding more space to the building.

Your book, “Golf Scrimmages”—tell us how you came to write it.

It was back in 2002 when I started writing down some of the games I was using with my students, many of which I had played as a kid. I realized after a while just how many I'd accumulated—it was quite a lot. In the process of organizing them and categorizing them I realized that I had the makings of a book. Eventually in 2006 the book was published and I can't express how pleased I was with the final product—and how humbled I was by the entire process.

Would you say that you consciously saw a void in the market for a book of this type?

Yes, definitely, and I grew up playing a lot of sports and I remember that our practices in team sports were a lot of fun. And they very often would simulate an actual game. Golf was so different. It was very mechanically-driven, in the way you went about training. I recognize that technique it is important — it's one of our “Three Elements” for improvement, but it was overdone. We were so steeped in mechanics when what we needed was for people to play the game, in order to become better players.

Tell us about your “Three Elements.”

One is to help people with their technique and have them understand why the golf ball does what it does. Two, we teach them how to practice. Three, we spend a lot of time on the golf course. The three elements have created a great deal of success for our students and filled a huge void in their learning.



Wearner during a recent appearance on Golf Channel's Morning Drive program.

With each of my students I use ShotByShot to review data that's generated on the course, then I'll prescribe games from "Golf Scrimmages" to work on the weaknesses identified through ShotByShot. Is there a better way to use your programs?

I would say no, there isn't—your process is ideal for taking the information at your disposal and using our games to enhance the student's practice. In fact, we're looking at partnering with a company to blend on-course data with our games, just as you've described. We have all seen the guy with the great swing, who has great technique, but who practices poorly and does not play up to his capabilities. Or the player lacks any method of creating pressure in his or her practice and cracks under the stress late in a round. It's not uncommon for a golfer's style of practice to actually be detrimental to their improvement.

What's next in your plans?

Expanding to a second location is the priority currently. I have done some preliminary work on that and it has gone well. Also, as I mentioned, we are looking to partner with a stats company to combine stats and practice all in one package.

What is the off-season like for you in Colorado?

It gets pretty cold, but we have some great days too. I spend the

down time looking for more games to add to the golfscrimmages.com website—including some indoor ones. We can also still run some of the games on our launch monitors, negating the weather factor.

Ever think of approaching TrackMan to help them better develop their combines?

Yes, we have had some discussions and are currently still talking. Hopefully something will work out.

I have interviewed Mike McGetrick in the past and from that experience I presume he was a valuable mentor to you. Care to share anything you learned from him?

The most important thing I learned from Mike was to be careful with good players. He always reminded me to "learn how their swings work, because they do work." Mike also taught me, "Never rearrange the person to look like a model—figure out the person."

The most important thing I learned from Mike was to be careful with good players. He always reminded me to "learn how their swings work, because they do work." Mike also taught me, "Never rearrange the person to look like a model—figure out the person."

What are some things we need to work on as a profession, generally?

Every time I teach a seminar it strikes me how the general public would be amazed by how much we know. And yes, it is extremely important to have the factual base. However, what is hard to learn or takeaway from a seminar is the art of communication – the art of the relationship. We need to take what we

Wearner uses questionnaires and assessments to quickly figure out what each student's motivations and deficiencies are, at the outset of training.



discover through teaching tech and relay it to students so they can do something with it on their own and on the course.

When I sign up for a first lesson with Trent Wearner, what will the process be like?

You would begin by filling out our online questionnaire, which includes questions like “If you’ve had instruction in the past, what were your likes and dislikes?” and “What are your goals?” This is our first touch point. The day of the lesson, we would put you through a skills assessment —using a launch monitor for the full swing and other tools for putting, chipping and pitching assessments. We use

Jerry Tucker’s short game assessments. We then tally it up and create a plan. But as you know there is more to golf than just executing the various types of shots. We will also rate your on course skills like decision making and management as well as your practice patterns. The student rates each item using a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 needing help immediately, a 2 means it needs attention at some point and 3 not needing help at all.

Is your assessment different for juniors and adults?

It is, for a couple of reasons. Adults have less time to practice and usually want us to just fix their ball-striking. You cannot believe how many adults return their

questionnaire saying they just want to hit it better. They simply want to reduce the risk of embarrassment. Juniors typically have bigger aspirations and have a longer journey ahead of them, which calls for true coaching.

How about the assessment of a male adult golfer versus a female?

Men need to learn to control what they have and reduce their swing thoughts. Women need confirmation, distance upgrades and an overall cleansing of their minds—to erase all the bad advice they have been given by their boyfriends or husbands. **PG**



“...many adults return their questionnaire and just want to hit it better. They simply want to reduce the risk of embarrassment. Juniors typically have bigger aspirations and have a longer journey ahead of them, which calls for true coaching.



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DANIEL BLACKWELL, The Royal Adelaide Golf Club, Seaton, Australia - *International Member*

CHRIS COUCH, West Orange Country Club, Winter Garden, FL - *Associate Member*

NATHALIE FILLER, Suzi Whaley Golf at Philadelphia Cricket Club, Bloomfield, CT - *Associate Member*

COREY KRUSA, Krusa Golf Academy, Pennington, NJ - *Full Member*

KRISTI MEYER, Wayzata Country Club, Wayzata, MN - *Associate Member*

LUKE RUNDELL, Alberta Springs Golf Resort, Alberta, Canada - *Associate Member*

NEIL HUNTER-SMITH, Urban Golf Performance, Los Angeles, CA - *Full Member*

PETER WIESEL, Roanoke Country Club, Roanoke, VA - *Associate Member*

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SUMMIT SPECIAL: TATHATA 60-DAY PROGRAM FREE FOR MEMBERS



Tathata Golf has extended its Proponent Summit special to allow all of our members to learn more about the company's innovative movement training for golf. The company is offering its Tathata Golf 60-Day Training Program *free* to our members. To experience the program, visit: TathataGolf.com/60day. Add the 60-Day Training Program to your cart. Enter code: **proponent60** and click "Apply Coupon". Proceed to checkout to fill out your account information. After completing, click "Place Order" to submit order.

Tathata also is offering our members *50 percent off* the Tathata Movement Specialist Program. This certification program can be found at TathataGolf.com/certified. To register, add the Movement Specialist Program to your cart, enter code: **proponentcms** and click "Apply Coupon". Proceed to checkout, fill in your account information and click, "Place Order."



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