

COLLABORATE

www.proponent-group.com

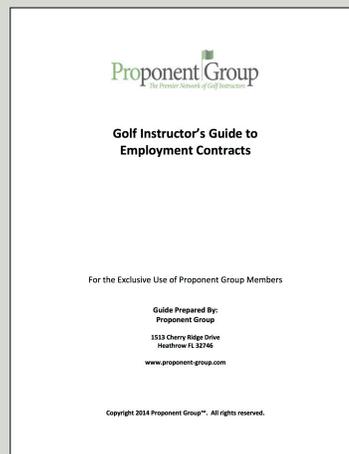
Exclusive New Member Benefit: Our First Guide to Contracts for Golf Instructors

For most of our members, you just want to get up each morning, get on the tee and help your students play better and enjoy the game more. The last thing you want to have to think about is your employment agreement with your employer or facility. We also want you to be able to focus on your students, but too often our phone rings at headquarters with a Proponent member who is in a messy situation because either he or she doesn't have a written contract or the contract or letter of agreement that they *do* have is vague or incomplete.

To help you navigate the world of employment agreements, we have created our Golf Instructors Guide to Employment Contracts to help you through the process of creating a contract that is fair for all parties involved and adequately protects you from unforeseen circumstances.

For example, you may have the best relationship in the world with your facility, the only problem is you didn't know they were going to sell the course to a management company you've never heard of before. Now what happens?

This is just one of the examples covered in the new guide which is excerpted on page 5 of this newsletter. You can always download the entire guide at any time from the Business Guides section of the members website.



Proponent Group Celebrates 7th Birthday

This month marks the seventh anniversary of the formation of what is now Proponent Group, which was originally launched as the Instructor Division of AMF Golf Management in September 2007. We are pleased to announce that our total membership continues to grow to a current total of more than 450 instructors including our Full, Associate and International members. In fact, we now have members in 16 countries. Thank you to all of our members and corporate partners who have made this steady growth possible as we continue our mission to assist the game's best teachers to protect and grow their businesses.

-Lorin Anderson, President

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PAGE 2
New Marketing Workshop Takes Center Stage at Upcoming Summit

PAGE 3
Proponent Summit 2014 Line-up and Registration Information

PAGE 5
NEW MEMBER BENEFIT: Golf Instructors Guide to Employment Contracts

PAGE 8
Marketing: Retail Tribe on How to Merchandise "Better Golf"

PAGE 12
Tap Into Traveling Programs For a New Revenue Stream

PAGE 16
Lorin's Column: It's Time for Dynamic Pricing in Golf Instruction

PAGE 18
Member Milestones: LPGA Award Winners, New Members and more


Proponent Group
 The Premier Network of Golf Instructors

PROPONENT GROUP NEWS

Summit Includes First-Ever Marketing Workshop; MobiCoach Becomes Newest Partner

Summit to Beef Up Marketing Assistance

This year's summit will debut our first-ever full-day Marketing Workshop. It's a hands-on opportunity for our members to review their current website, email, collateral and social media marketing strategies and execution in a collaborative group setting.

For the final day of the summit we would like all of our participants to bring with them screen shots of their website homepage and their bio page, samples of recent email blasts, samples of current brochures and other collateral



materials and printed screen grabs of their Facebook and other social media homepages.

During the Marketing Workshop, we will cover websites, collateral and social media design, implementation and best practices in three separate sessions. Each session will include a panel presentation covering the most critical areas that generate success using that particular medium. Each presentation will be followed by a roundtable discussion allowing for review of the materials each participant has brought with them. Finally, each session will conclude with a panel Q&A.

Panelists will include marketing experts, web designers, digital marketing specialists, public relations experts, editors and graphic designers. By the end of the day we fully expect that every participant will be able to go home with dozens of ideas to improve the effectiveness of their marketing efforts across all of these platforms.

Speakers Bureau Updated and Delivered to Key Industry Organizations

Proponent Group has now posted an updated members Speakers Bureau listing of qualified, available members. It's under Speakers Bureau in the member website.

The listing includes nearly 50 of our members who have significant speaking experience and are interested in future presentation opportunities.

We are also sending each PGA Section along with the LPGA, PGA of Canada and other industry media the complete list. They can refer to it whenever they need a speaker or expert in the dozens of teaching, coaching and business specialties that our members present on on a regular basis.

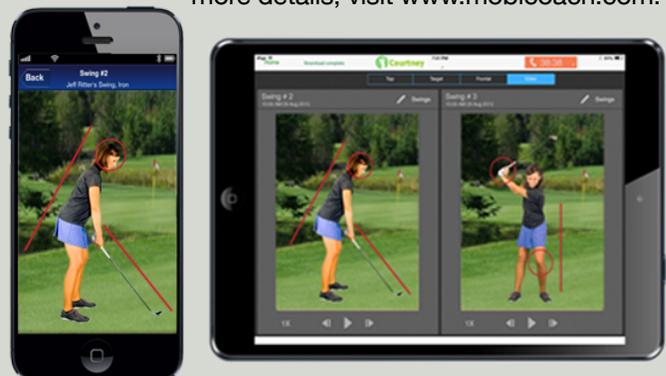
The new list is our third annual update and we will update the list again next summer.

MobiCoach is Newest Proponent Corporate Partner

Proponent Group is pleased to announce that MobiCoach,  the world's first real-time, remote golf coaching and video analysis service, is our newest corporate partner. With the aid of the free SwingTIP iOS app, golfers can improve their game via a live lesson from a coach anywhere in the world.

MobiCoach is a powerful mobile, cloud-based software platform that brings coaches and students together wherever they may be in real time. With the MobiCoach service, golfers can get high quality coaching in as little as 15 minutes be it at home or on the range.

Proponent Group members Jeff Ritter, Mike Malaska and Tim Mahoney are all on MobiCoach's Advisory Board. For more details, visit www.mobicoach.com.





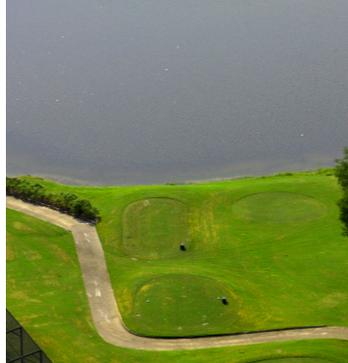
Summit 2014

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

Register Today. Space is Limited.





2014 Summit Line-up

Sunday, November 2

11:00am Registration Opens
 1:00pm Optional Golf at Heathrow C.C.
 6:30pm Opening Night Dinner at Heathrow C.C.

Monday, November 3

7:00am Breakfast Buffet
 8:00am Addressing the Industry's Disconnect Regarding the Value of Instruction (Lorin Anderson)
 8:30-10:00am The Journey to High Performance (Cameron McCormick)
 10:00am Break
 10:30-11:30am Panel Discussion: Protecting Your Business (Topics will include: Employment Contracts, Managing your Manager and Moving to a New Facility)
 11:30am Lunch Buffet
Outdoor Session at the Mike Bender Golf Academy
 12:30-2:00pm How I Teach the Short Game (Martin Hall)
 2:00-3:30pm Faults and Fixes Panel: Looking for a Fix? Ask Our Panel for Their Favorites (Mike Bender, Martin Hall and Gale Peterson)

3:30pm Teaching Tech and Training Aids Demo Day
 Aimpoint Clinic with Mark Sweeney at 4:45pm

5:45pm Cocktails and dinner at Heathrow C.C.

Tuesday, November 4

7:00am Breakfast Buffet

Hands On Marketing Workshop Day

NOTE: Participants are strongly encouraged to bring hardcopies of your website pages, email blasts, newsletters, and social media pages for hands-on review and discussion.

8:00am Workshop Goals for the Day
 8:15am Maximizing Your Website
 Panel Discussion, Reviews and Roundtable
 10:00am Break
 10:30am Creating Emails and Collateral Materials that Really Sell Your Services
 Panel Discussion, Reviews and Roundtable
 12:15am Lunch Buffet
 1:15pm Driving Your Lesson Business with Social Media
 Panel Discussion, Reviews and Roundtable.
 3:00pm Summit Ends

Summit Details and Registration Information

Host Site: Heathrow C.C. in Lake Mary, FL is located 45 minutes from Orlando International Airport at I-4 Exit 98.

PGA/LPGA Education Credits: Agenda will be submitted to the PGA and LPGA for continuing education for association members. Approximately 13 hours of education will be included in the summit.

Lodging: Proponent has negotiated our lowest summit rates ever at the Hampton Inn and Suites - Lake Mary (407-995-9000) for \$99 per night. The Courtyard Marriott - Heathrow (407-444-1000) for \$89 and the Hyatt Place - Lake Mary for \$109 (407-995-5555). Many other hotel

chains including Marriott, Westin, Hilton Garden Suites and Residence Inn also are located within three miles of Heathrow C.C. Contact your preferred hotel directly to book a room.

Meals: Six meals from Sunday dinner through Tuesday lunch are included in the summit fee.

Cost: The Full members and International members rate is \$475. Associate members are welcome to attend for \$525. **NOTE:** Optional golf Sunday afternoon at Heathrow C.C. is an additional \$50 (tee times are limited and will be filled first-come, first-served).

MEMBER BENEFITS

Get It in Writing: A Primer on Written Contracts for Coaches

By John Torsiello, Contributing Writer

Teaching professionals are known for being independent-minded. Because golf is such an individual sport it tends to attract self-reliant people. It's also true that an instructor's daily life is flexible and idiosyncratic—you set your own goals, keep your own hours.

These factors can produce a lax attitude toward contracts, which is unfortunate. Especially for non-employee instructors, there is a clear need for formal agreements that govern conditions, rights and responsibilities in the work environment. What we see instead is the informal spoken agreement. Coaches settle for a conversation and a handshake and trust that customary practices will persist. They do so despite a turbulent marketplace these days for golf. It is a familiar story that yields many an unhappy ending.

Here's the question: If you are an independent contractor, *why don't you have a contract?* Horror stories abound in the industry, and the suffering protagonists are mostly teaching professionals who failed to negotiate a formal contract. Just ask John Hughes, a PGA Master Professional and secretary of the North Florida PGA Section. He is dealing with a potentially costly legal matter that arose at his previous place of employment. The matter could have been avoided with the help of a well-written contract, but history suggested to Hughes that he didn't need one.

"I did not have a written contract for 10-plus years, going on the word of the person I worked for," John explains. "There were good and bad times throughout those years, but ultimately, not having a contract in my hand that spelled out everything led to the person 'eliminating' my position and not paying me for services rendered or commissions owed me—totaling in the mid-five figures."

Because of this experience, and the vagaries of today's golf industry, Hughes says a contract is not only wise, but mandatory to ensure your financial and emotional well-being, along with your good reputation. "A contract is necessary in any situation now more than ever. With the ever-changing climate of our industry, a contract spelling out specifics for each party is essential," he says. Without a formal contract, a teaching professional is "just another number to corporate decision-makers that have no respect for what that individual contributes to the organization." It

sounds somewhat jaded, but let's face it, it's good business sense for teaching professionals to take steps to protect themselves when beginning a new position.

Scott Novell, an accomplished attorney and CPA, has familiarity with a situation in which a golf instructor had an oral agreement with a facility's management company, and the instructor's teaching privileges at that facility were summarily cancelled. Novell, who is co-founder of Golf Coach, LLC, and the managing director of Nexus Group, Inc., a mergers and acquisitions firm, practiced law for many years at one of Florida's most prestigious law firms.

"The golf facility in question had an ownership change and the new owner informed the on-site instructor that they no longer had teaching space for him," explains Novell. In these cases the owner can and will act with literally no notice, forcing the ousted instructor to find a new facility to work at, whether or not the new site is able to service his



It sounds somewhat jaded, but let's face it, it's good business sense for teaching professionals to take steps to protect themselves when beginning a new position.

or her former students. In this situation, the instructor typically has no legal recourse with the new owner.

Nor will the instructor have legal recourse with the old owner, because, again, oral agreements are so difficult to enforce. Typically disputes that arise among parties who have nothing in writing devolve into a battle of "bad memory" claims, and there is rarely supporting evidence other than the testimony of the parties.

A variation of the above scenario can occur when there is a written agreement between the facility and the instructor, but the agreement does not address unforeseen issues, such as change of ownership or management. So, even if the instructor has a written agreement, it may not sufficiently provide for various contingencies. Give contingencies careful thought on the front side, is Novell's advice. "You have to ask whether the agreement will cover the situation in which a facility changes management and then

terminates the agreement without providing any cause for the termination,” he says.

Tim Mahoney, director of education for Troon Golf and a GOLF Magazine Top 100 Teacher, says it “just makes sense” for all teaching professionals at Troon’s academies to have written agreements. “They aren’t cookie-cutter agreements, either,” says Mahoney, who notes that every Troon facility may vary the contents of a golf coach’s contract. “I’ve been in this business for 35 years and at the start it was less formal,” he recalls. “But there is so much involved now in terms of equipment, some of it very expensive, and insurance costs, and both employee and employer need to know what is expected of them at all times.”

Novell sees it the same way. “Life is uncertain, but at least a written agreement can anticipate many uncertainties and provide resolutions to issues, as they arise,” he says. Going along without a written, binding agreement courts trouble. “Covering important contingencies does not mean the agreement needs to be confusing and unnecessarily long,” Novell says. “It should be a road map, or reference document, for the business relationship.”

Hughes says trust and respect are vital to a positive and lasting work experience, for both employee and employer. “A contract should be fair and a win-win for all parties.”

Independent-contractor agreements and employment contracts have much in common, even though they cover two different types of work relationship. In crafting an employment contract, avoid unilateral agreements that strongly benefit one side over another. These types of contracts rarely hold up in court, but lacking the funds to do legal battle can stifle an employee's options. Thus, teach-

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ing professionals should always look for a mutually beneficial set of written terms. Consider what the company stands to lose and what you stand to lose, then decide if the contract protects both interests without unfairly favoring one side. Also, by signing a contract, an employee demonstrates a desire for a long-term relationship, and that trust may mean more money up front.

Each individual will have his or her own opinion of what they would like to see in a contract. Hughes would err on the lengthier side. “Put in everything and anything that you believe spells out the specifics of what the position entails, what your responsibilities are, and what the employer’s or

owner’s responsibilities are,” he advises. “Be willing to set down goals and expectations in a contract that each party should meet and be willing to suffer the consequences if you do not meet those expectations.” The buzzword “transparency” in any business relationship is key for both parties and tends to ensure good relations.

Mahoney says Troon’s contracts provide a clear understanding between employee and employer about what is expected from a teaching professional, what the objectives of the company are, and clarity on such items as who provides the equipment and the insurance coverage for that equipment. They go all the way down to details like range balls, space allocation and who pays the PGA dues.

Often, the employer will insist on some type of quarterly or twice-yearly review of the employee’s performance. An employee should ask to have included in the contract when pay reviews can be expected. Any bonus agreements for goals met or exceeded should also be in writing. If the contract is longer in term with automatic renewals, it is a wise idea to review it each year.

As pointed out by Novell, here is a list of “must-have” provisions and questions that should be addressed:

Independent Contractor Status: The agreement should clearly address whether the instructor is an independent contractor or an employee.

Ownership of “Client Relationships”: Who does the student relationship belong to? If the instructor leaves the facility, who gets to keep and use the client contact information and related data?

Revenue Production and Instructor Fees: The parties must clearly establish if and how revenue is to be shared.

Term and Termination: How can the business relationship be terminated and under what circumstances? What are the various consequences to the parties, in the event of a termination? Is there an option to renew the agreement by either party?

Insurance and Third-Party Claims: The agreement should state which party (if not both) is responsible in the event of a third-party claim.

Restrictive Covenants: Is the instructor restricted from teaching at other facilities? Is the facility restricted from having other instructors at the facility? Are there restrictions regarding who the instructor may work with?

Contract Length: Novell says term length should accord with the teacher’s investment of time and/or capital. A big push at the start, in what you spend or in work you do to help prepare the facility, should add up to more years.

Being involved in working up a formal contract, whether it be as an independent contractor or as a full-time employee, doesn’t have to be an intimidating experience.

As Mahoney says, “Common sense and good faith should govern the negotiations, and both sides should want what is best for the relationship.”

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.



“Better Golf” is a Merchandising Strategy

By Ian James, CEO, Retail Tribe

The merchandising of golf equipment in shops is deeply flawed. Then there’s the merchandising of coaching and practice—which is even more flawed. The underlying cause in each case is a fragmented selling process, stemming from a lack of cohesion in the business model and the marketing. The golf industry, whether it is after more rounds, more members, more equipment sales or more coaching revenues, is confused.

Golf clubs want more revenue. PGA Professionals want more revenue. Equipment vendors want more revenue. The various players aren’t in competition with each other. It should be easy to connect the dots for everyone’s benefit. But that isn’t happening. And, in part, that’s because no one seems to understand that ‘Better Golf’ is a bona fide merchandising strategy (see illustrations at right).

Observe the way golf equipment and game improvement are presented to the customer and what you’ll see is flour, milk, eggs and yeast offered to somebody who wants bread. It’s a case of selling ingredients when what’s being sought is the finished product. I witness this all the time in both equipment and coaching. We’re trying to sell the driver when the golfer wants to buy an extra 17 yards. Listed for sale on coaches’ websites are lessons and prices. The golfer looking at that website wants to find a way to break 80.

Your shelves (web sites, emails, social posts, signage, flyers, videos) should be dominated by Better Golf. You

ness this all the time in both equipment and coaching. We’re trying to sell the driver when the golfer wants to buy an extra 17 yards. Listed for sale on coaches’ websites are lessons and prices. The golfer looking at that website wants to find a way to break 80.



should be selling Better Golf, promoting Better Golf, and making sure the topic of every conversation you're part of is Better Golf.

We can start with equipment. A set of Titleist AP1 Irons is actually an ingredient. Your expertise with the swing and the selection of the right equipment for that swing is also an ingredient. A professional fitting is another ingredient. You can merchandise all three of those separately, and many professionals do. But what you should be merchandising for golfers (in the case of the Titleist AP1) is an iron shot that travels straighter, and probably higher, with more consistency.

The best way to merchandise the Titleist AP1 iron is to get the club into the target golfer's hands. Now you're identifying and specifying improvements you can deliver through a combination of the faster face and forgiveness plus your fitting expertise and swing advice. The product on display to the golfer is THEIR better results as a finished product of the various ingredients.

Write your new record on Saturday 23rd August

Rory MacIlroy credits his Nike Covert Driver and RZN ball for his distance. What can they do for you?

On Saturday 23rd August from 9am, spend 20 minutes with us and let us show you how the right Nike Driver and Golf Ball partnership, set up perfectly for you, can significantly improve your game.

There are certainly enough adjustments we can make to fit you for the right Driver for you to get the best launch and ball flight. Then, matched with the right ball for your golf swing, you will start writing your new records.



McIlroy booms out 320 yard+ tee shots that consistently find the fairway. That's a big advantage. How much further could the perfect Driver-Golf Ball partnership take you?



Nike VR_S Covert 2.0 Drivers
Learn more >



Nike RZN Golf Balls
Learn more >

Rory McIlroy credits his Nike VR_S Covert 2.0 Tour Driver and RZN Black Golf Ball as the best Driver and Golf Ball partnership he has ever experienced. He is playing exceptional golf at the moment. With the right Driver-Ball partnership, you can too.

Book your improvement now

Book in with us and let's spend 20 minutes and see if we can add 10, 20 or even 30 yards to your game with right Driver-Ball combination. Spaces are limited so contact us now.

Book now >

There are so many different ways to create events that give you the chance to show a golfer 'better golf'.

But what about coaching? It's about skills challenges and skills gaps.

You need to find a way for a golfer to see the potential of improvement and the impact it will have on THEIR final result. We recommend that you do that by creating skills challenges and skills gaps. You need to allow golfers to benchmark their ability with specific skills, then identify a performance level they want to reach and feel capable of reaching. Here are three ways to create those skills gaps:

Spotlighting the Impact of Improvement

There are many ways to highlight the impact of improvement. If you want golfers to see the benefit of a more solid short game, you should run a 10-shot challenge with a number of golfers and communicate the results (see illustration at left). A 10-shot challenge involves a 12- to 20-handicap golfer playing one ball and recording their score in stroke play. As soon as they're within 100 yards of the hole, you drop a second ball at



Take the 10 shot Challenge

Let us show you how much better your short game can be.

Tee off and once you're within 100 yards of the green, I will play alongside you and we will compare scores. You will also receive valuable advice on your game.

- Date: [Date]
- Time: [Time]
- Cost: [R cost]

Reserve your place in the shop

Showing a golfer how much the score for their round could be improved with a better short game is the product to be displayed, not more words about ball position.

Let RetailTribe Make This 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 or 972-743-0038 or visit us at www.retailtribe.com.

The screenshot shows the Rob Noel Golf Academy website. The main header features the academy's name and navigation links. Below the header is a large banner image of a modern golf clubhouse interior with the text 'Awesome Learning Environment'. Underneath the banner are three service cards: 'Aimpoint Green Reading System', 'Driving Range memberships so you can invest in your game', and 'Coaching and technology go together to make you better, faster'.



Pitch and Win and support The Lewis-Manning Hospice

Find time on Saturday to hit one 30-yard pitch shot in our 'Pitch and Win' competition for charity.

Closest to the pin, or every golfer who sinks their pitch shot, wins a "Short-Game improvement" programme worth £150.

Each entrant will also go into a draw with 4 lucky winners receiving a dozen of the super premium Srixon Z-Star golf balls.

The entrance fee is your own personal donation to the Lewis-Manning Hospice. There are no other obligations.

This is for a great cause so make sure you find 60 seconds to have a go this Saturday 26th April.

Contact us for more information

This event is supported by:



By the way, golfers love skills challenges. These are short events that are fun, and they get to spend time with a Golf Professional. During next season I would really recommend you schedule these every week in one of your evenings.

at bottom of page).

Next month I'll talk about how to "present the product on your shelves" (your web pages, emails, social posts, in-store or academy signage). In the meantime, if you can't get started this year, put in place a plan for next season to:

- Schedule at least one skills challenge with you per month
- Educate golfers at least twice-monthly on a skills challenge they ought to do themselves and what performance level they should be aspiring to
- Give feedback on the result of your skills challenge each month.

The benefit of this to you is far greater than just your revenue increase. By presenting yourself this way you are linking yourself to better golf and more fun. You're doing your part to connect the industry dots, and that will bolster the industry's appreciation for the value of a golf coach and head professional.

that point, inherit their score, and close out the hole with your ball, recording your score. Do this for 9 holes and my bet is that you will be at least 5 strokes better off than your partner (10 shots over 18 holes). Now you promote what happened in an email / social post to all your golfers. If they're in the 12-20 handicap range you are showing them the scale of improvement that is possible if they invest in a better short-game.

Run Skills Challenges

You should have a schedule of at least one skills challenge per month. A skills challenge is an event where individual golfers get to spend five to 10 minutes with you to benchmark a particular skill. These can be as simple as a "30-yard pitch shot challenge," a "10-foot putting challenge" or "Target Golf." Each challenge gives you the chance to provide the golfer with a finite measure (a score) and an analysis of what part of their technique is failing them (see illustration above).

By the way, golfers love skills challenges. These are short events that are fun, interesting, and provide members an opportunity to spend time with their golf professional. During next season I would highly recommend you schedule these every week in one of your evenings.

Self-Service Merchandising

Get your golfers into the habit of getting out on their own or with friends and taking your skills challenges. Make sure they know how to score them, so that they can benchmark their skill level. Make sure they know what target score they should be aiming for (see illustration

Have fun, turn practice into a skills challenge

Here are two skills challenges that ought to interest different golfers. Depending on your skill level, pick one and add it to your list of golfing activities over the next weeks. Set out to improve your score.



You're a master, or even a wizard of the short game, ready to take on the more delicate challenges. You know that attacking pins will occasionally leave you short-sided or on the wrong side of a hazard. You need to be able to recover from this position.



Set yourself up to have a short lob shot immediately over a bunker that has to land on the green on the other side of the bunker, thin no more than 6-10 feet of the flag. This is a delicate shot you have to get up and down very quickly. Take 10 shots, scoring points every time you hole out, 2 points if you can get the ball within 3 feet, and 1 point within 6 feet. Take 1 point off for every shot that lands in the bunker or goes off the back of the green. Make this a drill you practice. If you want to be a master of the short game, you should be looking to score at least 14 points. Consider yourself a wizard if you're scoring 18 points or more.



You're looking to become a master of the basic chip and pitch shots. Better control of distance will see you shooting lower scores.



Set yourself up to have a short lob shot immediately over a bunker that has to land on the green on the other side of the bunker, within no more than 6-10 feet of the flag. This is a delicate shot you have to get up and down very quickly. Take 10 shots, scoring 3 points every time you hole out, 2 points if you can get the ball within 3 feet, and 1 point within 6 feet. Take 1 point off for every shot that lands in the bunker or goes off the back of the green. Make this a drill you practice. If you want to be a master of the short game, you should be looking to score at least 14 points. Consider yourself a wizard if you're scoring 18 points or more.

You can't always get to spend 4 hours playing 18 holes and sometimes practice can seem tedious. So let's change it up. Let's find ways to make practice fun. Let's find ways to have a competition with friends in 45 minutes. If you're looking for other ideas, please contact us.



The quickest route to better golf
Contact us

Set better players with lower handicaps a performance target with a lob shot over a bunker to a tight pin. If they fall short, they've "seen" a skills gap.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: MOBICOACH



The future of live, remote coaching is here!



Introducing Mobicoach, the ultimate live, remote coaching solution that brings students together with the world's best instructors through the use of their iPad – anytime, anywhere

All instructors that are members of the Proponent Group are being given the opportunity to become coaches on the Mobicoach platform. Please contact David Grove at dave@mobiplex.com to setup a free, no obligation demo to see how Mobicoach can take your business to the next level. – Lorin Anderson

See what our Instructors are saying...



INDUSTRY TRENDS

Outside Experts Bring in Specialized Knowledge, Helping More Golfers Improve

By David Gould, Staff Editor

The young MIT economist Alexander Wolitzky will be a Visiting Professor at Princeton University this fall. But let's get something straight: Prof. Wolitzky wasn't invited to teach at Princeton because nobody there knows anything about economics. The focus in the academic world is on constant learning—that means talented people with an edge in some particular specialty will get invitations to speak, teach and do breakthrough research.

Here in 2014, the forward-thinking golf professional is tuned into this proactive mentality.

"We bring in at least one guest instructor a year," says Jeff Barton, a Proponent Group member who works at Preston Trail Golf Club in Dallas as director of instruction. Barton's outside experts "will work at least with the staff if not our membership," he explains. "We're always looking to learn from our peers. We feel it's important to research every avenue to help our members get better."

Daniel Gray, teaching professional at Skokie Country Club outside Chicago, is another Proponent member who displays a bring-it-on mentality that puts improvement first and doesn't worry too much about who gets the credit.

"I have a fairly open concept toward bringing other instructors or professionals to the club to help work with my students," says Gray. "We have a fitness professional whom I trust enough to have in every Saturday morning. He has a very good understanding of movement in the golf swing." In the off-season, Gray will send groups of players to the specialist, Silviu Gansca, who is a fellow with Gray Institute, a Michigan center for the physical movement discipline known as Applied Functional Science.

Shared affiliations are part of this new era of expertise-seeking. "Silviu is a Nike NG Golf Fitness Professional, like myself," says Gray, citing the knowledge base they hold in common, and that makes a consistent message to students much more likely.

Among other training areas that Gray would like to tap outsiders for, he mentioned nutrition for golf as



John Graham, Proponent Group member from Rochester, NY, typically conducts AimPoint Clinics at about 20 facilities nationwide each year.

well as the Aimpoint green-reading program, which is gaining momentum nationwide. "I have also talked with Dr. Mo Pickens," Gray says, "about possibly coming up to do a mental- approach seminar."

Dr. Morris Pickens, or "Dr. Mo" for short, is a sports psychologist based in Sea Island, Ga., whose clients have a combined 25 PGA Tour victories including three majors. His focus is on success as a conscious choice, specifically as it relates to putting confidence and scoring. According to his Orlando-based publicist and editorial director, Joy Green,

when Pickens is not at PGA Tour events or handling groups at Sea Island, he is enthusiastic about partnering with on-site instructors as they work in a clinic format or one-on-one with their stable of students. "Dr. Mo will participate in different types of formats, depending on how the host professional wants to organize the event," says Green. He generally needs three to six weeks of advance notice in order to clear his

"I wasn't sure about golf professionals—how open they might be to letting somebody from outside have the floor," Farnsworth says. "There is still a dichotomy between the golf pros who welcome it and those who welcome nobody."

schedule for a half-day or full-day event at an academy or club. His fee, according to Green, is more reasonable than people generally expect.

Having budget dollars to cover fees and travel costs so that you can bring in that “name” from outside is obviously a consideration. Dr. Craig Farnsworth, considered to be golf’s original expert on the human visual system and short-game performance, devotes much of his summer to seminar work at clubs that invite him in. The author of “See It and Sink It” and “The Putting Prescription,” Farnsworth is an ophthalmologist who became an expert in vision and sports performance, receiving major credit from Nick Faldo and many other PGA Tour players for building a new visual technique and discipline into their competitive play. He became one of the first professionals trained in AimPoint green-reading by company founder Mark Sweeney and remains one of Aimpoint’s most prolific roving instructors.

But he also has a self-styled curriculum of vision- and visualization-based performance training that he brings on the road enthusiastically. His fee is \$2,400 for a full day on-site, plus travel expenses. An Indiana native known for Hoosier-style ironic wit, Farnsworth says the learning and sharing custom within golf is well developed and seems to be getting better.

“Coming from a different field, I wasn’t sure about golf professionals—how open they might be to letting somebody from outside have the floor,” Farnsworth says. “There is still a dichotomy between the golf pros who welcome it and those who welcome nobody.” The host professionals he works with are people who routinely invest dollars in trips to summits, institutes and other continuing-education venues. But many have advanced their knowledge of the human visual system and its effect on aim, alignment and contour reading simply by inviting him to speak.

“There is a charge passed on to the amateur golfers who want the instruction experience, and that usually covers my fee and expenses,” says Farnsworth. “After I’m gone, the staff will give many more putting and chipping lessons than they had previously, because they took part in my clinic and learned a lot of new information—without having to travel or pay a tuition fee themselves.”

The well-known sports psychologist Bob Winters sometimes thinks the major difference between himself and many of the golf professionals who bring him in is a willingness to travel all the time. In fact, the resume of Dr. Bob Winters, self-described as a “mental conditioning coach,” is pretty much without any gaps. He has played the PGA Tour,



Mike Bender has conducted summer traveling golf schools for 20 years at clubs across the country in conjunction with the host professionals.

coached college golf, earned a Ph.D, written three books, served as the David Leadbetter Academy mental-side specialist, and piled up a host of other qualifications. The tariff for a seminar, clinic or other on-site work with Dr. Bob slides from about \$5,000 to \$10,000, plus his travel costs.

His approach, he feels, is expressly collaborative with the person who is connecting him to their students and clientele. “Whoever is hosting me, I want to bring them into the program,” says Winters. “The point of it is the collabo-

ration. I have golf professionals I’ve worked with at their clubs several times, and the style we develop together takes on a value and effectiveness that is more than the sum of the parts.”

There is surely a great chance for personal growth by staff professionals and instructors as they share the stage with someone who is polished and poised in a specialized skill or knowledge area. “I would honestly say that the staff at Preston Trail appreciates our guest teachers the most, because we feel like we always walk away from the experience learning something we can continue to pass along,” says director of instruction Jeff Barton.

The willingness of open-minded instructors to tap outside expertise has a bonus benefit. It triggers the startup of small companies that can provide new forms of coaching enhancement. One of those providers, Miami-based Golf BioDynamics, is in its 11th season of road-show work with an impressive training and software system. The Golf BioDynamics approach is about sophisticated biofeedback training as the means of changing physical motion patterns. “We’ve been running our event days mainly in the Northeast with a tremendous amount of success,” says Karen Harrison, marketing manager of the company, whose CEO is Dr. Robert Neal. A small outfit, GBD works from its base at the Doral Resort location of the Jim McLean Golf School. “That success, however, does depend on the enthusiasm, support and organizational abilities of the instructional staff at clubs and academies that host us,” she says, “and somewhat on the membership base of the club.”

Seemingly the younger generation of teaching professionals will be geared toward the guest teacher and outside consultant even more than the generation that came before, given how specialized the field had already become even as they were entering it. Kai Aoki, first assistant professional at Sakonnet Golf Club in Rhode Island, has more experience with outside teachers and specialists at his previous venue, CordeValle Golf Club in Northern California. “We would have guest instructors in for 2-day and even 3-day clinics at Cor-



Katherine Roberts' Yoga For Golfers can come to your facility with a series of programs to help the professional staff tap into a new group of golfers and create a higher level of engagement. Healthier golfers take more lessons and play more golf.

devalle,” says Aoki. Members were excited to hear what the visitors came to share, because they clearly recognized the trend toward specialization in golf. Watching their devoted on-site golf staff “keep track of who played in the 8 a.m. group this morning and what the weather forecast is for the weekend tournament,” they understand that this person won’t be up to date on everything that’s happening in emerging sub-categories of the sport.

One more relevant aspect of this scenario is to notice how commonly a new sub-category will be the subject of a guest’s presentation, then slowly emerge as a full-time staff specialty. It happened with precision clubfitting, which back in the 1980s was a road show that came to only the most progressive clubs and courses. It happened with fitness and stretching, which was a cult practice 20 years and now we’re living in a TPI-trained world. The knowledge keeps getting developed, it’s limited at first, you connect with it through visiting experts, then eventually it’s part of the everyday curriculum where you teach. So, better to be on board early, and learning from the pioneers themselves.

Booking an Expert Who Has Written a Book

Whatever the field or industry, it’s fairly common for a visiting expert to be a book author. As a credibility-builder, that published book with the visitor’s photo on the jacket makes a strong statement. Promoting the appearance, a host professional now has a bonus benefit to offer potential attendees. They will be able to walk away from the clinic or presentation carrying a book that is signed and personally inscribed by the author.

But books and book-signings are more complicated than they might appear. For starters, the visiting speaker/author often can’t be of much help in getting you the copies. Books tend to be too heavy and bulky to carry on planes, except in very small quantities. If your visiting expert is traveling by car from event to event, that makes things easier, but only if the inventory is getting moved in a predictable manner. Books that are transported, unpacked, stacked on a table and then repacked (given the option, most attendees probably won’t buy one) will start to look shopworn and feel like a burden. It simplifies matters to have the cost of the book built into the registration fee, but some attendees may tell you they already own a copy—so can they pay a lower fee?

Craig Farnsworth, for his part, eventually phased out the book-signing facet of his road shows, having decided it was “quite often more trouble than it was

worth.” The situation is a bit different if you are hosting an author in the first three to six months of their book’s release. At that stage of the game, creating a buzz is top priority, for writer and publisher alike. A publishing company’s promo department will be willing to absorb shipping costs, take back returned copies, supply you with signage and otherwise contribute to the effort.

Dr. Bob Winters is a speaker-presenter who also writes books and goes the extra mile to support the publishing end of his activities. This spring St. Martin’s Press published “Mistake-Free Golf: First Aid for Your Golfing Brain,” which is Winters’ third book. His website has a window devoted to book sales and loaded up with links to five different vendors that carry the title. In advance of a live Winters appearance, it’s easy for a host site to instruct people who have signed up in obtaining a copy of the book in time for it to be signed in-person. – D.G.



Lynn Marriott and Pia Nilsson at a book signing at a club in New York.



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STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

It's Time for Dynamic Pricing for Golf Instruction



By Lorin Anderson, President

I have seen a lot of questions and fresh ideas on pricing models starting to make their way into golf instruction and – while I'm not sure which ones will maximize earnings for every individual teacher – I can say with certainty that there are more effective ways to maximize your revenues than the ol' one-price-fits-all for every single slot

in your schedule.

I know this is on a lot of instructors' minds these days as I've recently seen multiple Facebook group threads about alternative ways to price instruction. Meanwhile, at least one of the major scheduling services just added dynamic pricing options for slower "shoulder" periods.

Dynamic pricing is something I've talked about before and I know more of our members are trying to figure out if it makes sense for them. My belief is that if done well, it will absolutely increase your overall revenues. Think restaurants early-bird menus, hotel room rates, airfares, and, of course, green fees. All have limited inventory that has a fluctuating demand depending upon time of day or day of the week or month of the year - or all of the above.

Another good example is professional sports. If I want to watch the Orlando Magic play the Milwaukee Bucks, my regular seat costs about \$35. If I want to see LeBron James play when Cleveland comes to town, the same ticket will go for \$90. The reason these industries are able to use dynamic pricing so effectively is because they've invested in a bunch of really smart mathematicians and computer models to figure out how to create optimum

pricing to squeeze maximum revenues and profits out of their available inventory. Wouldn't you like to do the same?

My current thinking on dynamic pricing for instruction – until I see empirical evidence to the contrary – is to:

- Determine which two days per week you most often are turning away business and increase your rate on those days by \$10 an hour.
- Determine which day is almost always your slowest of the week, then create programming that provides a lower price point only on that day or reduce your normal rate by \$10 per hour for lessons given on that day.
- In the Northern region consider lowering your hourly rate in April and October or creating special budget priced programming during those times to attract new business. In Southern climates look at your past bookings and determine the two slowest months of the year in your locale and do the same.
- If you find your book getting overloaded late in the day pushing you to stay later and later to get everyone in, consider a lower rate for lessons booked before noon.
- Finally, experiment over the course of a couple of seasons with all of your price points to find out how much you can increase during peak times and decrease during lulls to keep your book filled for the schedule you would prefer to be teaching.

This is a pretty simple idea to execute, but it's startling how little pricing flexibility we have in golf instruction today. We have a ripe opportunity for dynamic pricing.

Proponent Group is working on a software system that will allow for dynamic pricing trials and for measurement of the results to determine best practices in pricing for golf instruction. We'll have more on this as the data comes in.

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MEMBER MILESTONES

Please Welcome Our August New Members

Wes Altice, Hammock Beach Resort, Palm Coast, FL - Associate member

Peter Arnott, Craigmillar Park Golf Club, Edinburgh, Scotland - International member

Brandi Jackson, Green Valley Country Club, Greenville, SC - Associate member

Andrew Johnson, Non-affiliated, Orlando, FL - Associate member

John McCartin, Chicagoland Golf Academy, Chicago, IL - Full member

Brad Myers, Sam Houston State University, The Woodlands, TX - Full member

Nick Pateman, Pinner Hall/Ego Golf, Hemel Hempstead, England - International member

Tim Ressa, Singapore Island Country Club, Singapore - International member

Rea Schuessler, Gulf Shores Golf Academy, Gulf Shores, AL - Full member

Pete Weber, Cress Creek Country Club, Naperville, IL - Associate member

Floriani Earns PGA Master Professional Status

Rafael Floriani, who teaches at the PGA Center for Golf Learning and Performance in Port St. Lucie, FL, earned his PGA Master Professional in Teaching and Coaching earlier this summer.



Yarwood Take New Position

Jonathan Yarwood has moved back to the states and joins Bishops Gate Golf Academy in Howey-in-the-Hills, FL as their Director of Performance. Bishops Gate is a new prep boarding school program in the Orlando area.



Henderson Moves into College Coaching

Matt Henderson, formerly of the Tour Academy in Las Vegas, NV, has been named the new Director of Instruction and Player Development for the University of Tennessee Mens Golf Team.

LPGA Names 2014 Section Teacher of the Year Award Winners

The LPGA Teaching and Club Professionals have announced their 2014 Section Teacher of the Year Awards and Proponent Group members have earned three of this year's five awards including: the Northeast Section's **Tiffany Faucette**, 1757 Golf Club, Dulles, VA; Southeast Section's **Anne Cain**, PGA Tour Golf Academy, St. Augustine, FL and

Sheri Hayes, owner of the Sheri Hayes Golf Performance center, San Diego, CA.



Anne Cain



Tiffany Faucette



Sheri Hayes

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