

COLLADODATE PROPONENT GROUP

PROPONENT GROUP NEWSLETTER \$20

AUGUST 2018

PUTTING GURUS SIGN ON, COMPLETING SUMMIT LINEUP

If you were selecting a trio of experts to provide insights into how golfers can make more putts, you would be hard-pressed to equal the threesome who'll be joining us in Dallas in November. Rounding out Proponent's Summit 2018 lineup will be Eyeline's **Sam Froggatte**, renowned putter-fitting expert **Todd Sones** and Golf Digest Top 50 Teacher **Kevin Weeks** who has built a world-class putting studio in Chicago. In a 90-minute panel discussion with Q&A, this esteemed group will discuss the intricacies of getting the equipment, training and messaging just right so that students can markedly improve their putting performance.

The theme for our 11th annual Summit, to be held at Cowboys Golf Club in Grapevine, TX on November 4-6 is *Increasing Your Value to Your Students and Your Facility*. There is no doubt that our lineup will do just that as we will provide the foremost experts in a variety of areas where you have growing opportunities such as using statistical analysis in your teaching (**Scott Fawcett**), teaching very young children (**Kate Tempesta** and **Nicole Weller**) and teaching indoors (**Tim Cutshall**, with **Lucy Davies**, **Jeff Isler** and **David LaPour**).

We've also added a bonus session to help our members who are in job search mode with insights into how to thrive during job hunt stress.

If you haven't yet registered, do so soon to take advantage of our annual Early Bird Special and save \$70. Offer ends August 31st.

To learn more or to register to join us in Dallas, see pages 3-4 in this newsletter for all the details.



Sam Froggatte



Todd Sones



Kevin Weeks

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UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY WITH YOUR STUDENTS AT STREAMSONG

Golf Channel Academy is hosting its inaugural GCA Pro-Am Series event Oct. 7-9 at Streamsong Resort in Central Florida.

We are opening up the field to include Proponent Group members on a first-come, first-served basis until the field is full. We are projecting 3-4 team slots to be available so if you would like to bring a team, don't delay in registering for what will be a memorable couple of days of world-class golf and special treatment for your students. This is an amazing opportunity for you to team up with three of your students



Streamsong Resort

at one of the world's greatest golf resorts for some fun and a 36-hole best ball competition. Streamsong boasts two courses in Golf Digest's most recent rankings of "America's 100 Greatest Public Courses"— the Red Course at No. 17, and the Blue Course at No. 22. Streamsong Black, which opened last year, was named "Best New Course of 2017" by GOLF Magazine. You and your guests will get to play all three courses!

Coaches will receive \$1,500 per team (when you sign up three guests). You will only be responsible for your transportation to Streamsong—about a 75-minute drive from Tampa and Orlando International Airports. Resort accommodations, meals and golf are all-inclusive for the professionals. Caddie and forecaddie fees are also covered for the professional.

Since Proponent Group members bringing a team attend for free (with the exception of travel/airfare), you need not register. All students, however, must sign up and pay via the registration landing page. Cost is \$2,995 for the three-day, two-night package.

For additional information, or to have your students/guests register for this one-of-a-kind coach-student event, please have them visit: <http://static.revolutiongolf.com/landing-pages/gca-proam/index.html>.

Should you or your students have any questions regarding registration or payment, please contact **Chelsea Brummett** at 407-355-4577 or Chelsea.Brummett@golfchannel.com.

WHAT OUR MEMBERS ARE WATCHING

MOST-VIEWED PROPONENT VIDEOS THIS MONTH

One of the most popular benefits on our member website is the Webinar/Video Archive, loaded up with presentations from Proponent events over the past 11 years. Check out the top speakers in the industry, sharing their insights to help you improve.

In July, these were the 10 most-watched videos:

- 1) **Dr. Rob Neal** - 3D Putting: The New Frontier
- 2) **Tyler Ferrell** – A Good Release: The Shoulder or the Wrist?
- 3) **Chris Rowe** – Keys to Teaching Success at a Private Club
- 4) **Mike Bender, Martin Hall, David Leadbetter, Lynn Marriott, Cameron McCormick and Pia Nilsson** – Summit Super Panel
- 5) **Iain Highfield and Matthew Cooke** – Performance and Strategy
- 6) **Mike Duhamel with Brad Faxon** – Short Game: The Science of Timing and Tempo
- 7) **Kevin Sprecher** – Using Technology in Coaching
- 8) **Martin Hall** – How I Teach the Short Game
- 9) **Mike Bender** – Developing Elite Players
- 10) **Bryan Hepler** – Tathata Golf Movement Training

PROPONENT GROUP 11th ANNUAL SUMMIT

Increasing Your Value to Your Students and Your Facility

November 4-6, 2018 (Sunday - Tuesday)
Cowboys Golf Club
Grapevine, TX

Join us in "Big D" for our annual showcase of what's coming next in golf instruction and highlighting the freshest opportunities to grow your teaching business.



Jeff Ritter



Kate Tempesta



Todd Sones



Scott Fawcett



Trent Wearer



Nicole Weller



Kevin Weeks

Join us in Dallas to:

- Catch our Super Panel: Froggatte, Sones and Weeks dish on helping students make more putts.
- Take a Deep Dive into the three pillars for growing your teaching business.
- Hear the world's foremost expert on teaching buildings show what you need in your indoor facility to stay ahead of the pack.
- See a demonstration of how student training can now be automated.
- The Game's top experts on teaching the youngest golfers show you the secrets to their success.
- **BONUS SUNDAY SESSION:** Discover the keys to earning your next teaching position.
- Learn the tricks for helping your students effectively take their new skills onto the course.
- Gain new insight into statistically-based strategies for playing the game.
- Check out the latest teaching technologies at Demo Day and expand your network of peers.

Registration is Now Open. Log In and Click on Summit Registration.

PROPONENT GROUP PARTNERS



PROPONENT GROUP 11th ANNUAL SUMMIT

November 4-6, 2018

Cowboys Golf Club, Grapevine, TX

SUMMIT DETAILS

Host Site: Etched into the rolling hills of Grapevine, Texas, Cowboys Golf Club is distinguished as the first and only NFL-themed golf club in the world, and one of the region's only all-inclusive world-class resort golf properties.

The club is conveniently located 10 minutes from DFW International Airport.

PGA/LPGA Education Credits: Approximately 13 hours of education will be submitted to the PGA and LPGA.

Lodging: A special Summit rate is available at the Courtyard and Towneplace Suites by Marriott Dallas DFW Airport North/Grapevine for only \$142 per night SINGLE OR DOUBLE occupancy. Contact the hotel directly at 817-421-6121. We also have a room block at the Hyatt Place Dallas/Grapevine for \$159 per night.

Please contact the hotel directly at 972-691-1659. Our room block will likely sell out, as it has in past years, so plan accordingly.

Cost: Our "Early Bird" package includes ALL meals, ALL education sessions and participant gifts for only \$525.

Optional golf Sunday afternoon at the Cowboys Golf Club is an additional \$50 (tee times are limited and will be filled first-come, first-served). **NOTE: Summit rate increases \$70 after August 31.**

Registration: Log in to www.proponent-group.com and at the top of the Members Only menu on the left-hand side of the page you will find the Summit Registration link.

THE AGENDA

Sunday, November 4

- | | |
|----------|--|
| 1pm | Optional Golf at Cowboys Golf Club Course |
| 3-5:30pm | Bonus Session: The Early Bird Gets the Job. A workshop designed for members actively looking for a new position. Topics include resumes, cover letters, interviews and more. |
| 5:30pm | Cocktails at Cowboys Golf Club |
| 6:30pm | Welcome Dinner at Cowboys Golf Club |

Monday, November 5

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 7am | Breakfast |
| 8-10:30am | The 3 Pillars for Growing Your Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Seamless Marketing Campaigns • Leverage Sales Opportunities • Strengthen Your Branding |
| 10:30am | Break |
| 11am | Putting Panel: Sam Froggatte, Todd Sones and Kevin Weeks answer any and all questions on putting |
| 12:30pm | Lunch |
| 1:30pm | Transferring Skills from Training to the Golf Course (Trent Wearer) |
| 2:30pm | Junior Live Lessons: Secrets to Teaching the Youngest Golfers (Nicole Weller) |
| 3:30-6:00pm | Teaching Technology and Training Aids Demo Day |
| 6pm | Cocktails and Dinner at Cowboys Golf Club |

Tuesday, November 6

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 7am | Breakfast |
| 8am | What's Next for Teaching Buildings (Tim Cutshall with Jeff Isler, Lucy Davies and David LaPour) |
| 9:30am | Training through Technology (Tony Morgan) |
| 10:30am | Break |
| 10:45am | Leading a Balanced Life (Jeff Ritter) |
| Noon | Lunch |
| 1pm | "Birdie" Basics (Kate Tempesta) |
| 2pm | Strategizing with Statistics (Scott Fawcett) |
| 3pm | Summit Ends |

Registration is Open. Log In and Click on Summit Registration.

BUSINESS SUCCESS YOU CAN COUNT ON



By Andy Hilts, *Director*

The consultant and author Peter Drucker said it best: “If you can’t measure it, you can’t improve it.” Any veteran teacher will have a general feel for when things are going well, but the Drucker approach tells us we need to manage by the numbers. We don’t truly know if we’re

succeeding unless we can define where we are through metrics—and stay on track by checking our numbers over time.

Often I’ll hear a Proponent member say, “My business is great.” That’s nice, but it doesn’t mean much without answers to specific questions. Best place to start: What is my gross revenue year-to-date? Next question: How am I trending compared to my 2018 goals? Always good to ask: How many lessons did I teach last month?

I think we perceive that our business is good because we can make the house payment or because we felt busy all day. But imagine if you could use goal-setting, long-term strategy and ongoing measurement to make your business 15 percent—or 25 or even 50 percent—more profitable than it is now. Wouldn’t you want to give that a try?

If you agree with the premise, next step is selecting the stats and metrics to load onto your spreadsheet. Total lessons taught, type of lesson taught, total revenue, revenue by category, total fittings, merchandise sales, merchandise margin, average order value (AOV), close percentage, renewal percentage, number of referrals, lifetime value of a student, range revenue by student, rounds played, food and beverage sales, and the list goes on.

In choosing what numbers to track, you’ll want to consider what your club or facility cares most about. Which metrics will help you illustrate the monetary value you bring to the table? What coaching-related activity most drives the overall success of the club?

What’s most important to their bottom line? And, of course, what’s most important to your own bottom line?

Managing by measuring is always a three-phase exercise—historical, current and future business. Suppose you got word that your lesson book was accidentally damaged, and the only part left intact was the future bookings. You’d be relieved, because that’s the part that really matters, right? That being the case, wouldn’t it make sense to evaluate your coaching business by carefully analyzing future activity?

Start simple: How many lessons do you have scheduled in the next month? Next three months? Next 6 months? Next 12? I’m serious when I say let’s take this out a full year! Your lessons-booked may be your most important indicator of success. The more lessons you have scheduled, the more you’re going to teach. The more you teach, the more people improve. The more people improve, the more they buy, and the more they tell their friends about your services.

When you’re the busiest game in town you can also charge more for your services. Funny how charging more *should* reduce the number of students you have but often has the opposite effect—there’s a real perception out there that more expensive means better coaching. A high volume of lessons on the books is important for your business but it’s even more important for your students’ improvement. How many times have we had a long span between lessons with a student only to have them come back looking the same as they did before their previous lesson? The more time you have with your students the more likely they are to get better.

And all that time spent with students will strengthen the relationship and deepen the trust. That additional trust will open up more opportunities for clubfitting and therefore merchandise sales—as well as golf trips and other potential revenue streams. Again, none of this is as important as your students playing better golf. The additional time spent with them will take you beyond just being a pro they come to for tips. It will allow you to become their trusted golf advisor, their friend and—most important—their coach. **PG**

PROONENT GROUP CALENDAR

Registration Open for Proponent Summit 2018

Early Bird Special: Save \$70 before August ends!



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WHAT'S NEW?

- Wrist Angle Measurement and Training
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“The future of golf instruction has arrived. Whether it's a PGA TOUR winner or a club player, K-MOTION products have allowed me to build on my teaching principles with objective 3D measurement and biofeedback training.”



CHUCK COOK

DIRECTOR AT CHUCK COOK GOLF ACADEMIES
Ranked #2 in 2017 Golf Digest Top-50 Golf Instructors

BOOK DEMO

“TELL ME SOMETHING I DON’T KNOW”

IN PHILADELPHIA, SEAN PALMER RUNS THE-CLUB-THAT-TEACHING-BUILT

By David Gould, *Staff Editor*

John Doe is a lapsed golfer but the game appeals to him. The city club he belongs to in Philadelphia decides to buy a local country club, which is creaking along with a membership that’s two-thirds empty. Suddenly there’s a vast pool to recruit from—thousands of affluent people who belong to the 165-year-old city club, though not to any golf club. For most of these folks, the first tee is foreign terrain. *Let’s quickly teach them*, someone suggests—and the “quickly” part gets addressed by offering instruction at no charge. This plan works like a charm, leading the organization—The Union League of Philadelphia—to

go out and buy a second golf property, with full intent to use no-charge coaching as a membership-builder there, as well. Along with dues, members pay \$10 a round into a pool, from which instructors receive a portion as part of their compensation.

Acquired in 2014, the Torresdale Frankfort Country Club is now Union League Golf Club of Torresdale, with former Merion assistant Sean Palmer as director of golf. Palmer also oversees



The Union League of Philadelphia uses no-charge coaching as a membership-builder. Along with dues, members pay \$10 a round into a pool, from which instructors receive a portion as part of their compensation. Top photo: Sean Palmer



Former Merion assistant Sean Palmer (second from right) is director of golf at the two Union League golf clubs, the original Torresdale facility and now Sand Barrens in New Jersey.

the former Sand Barrens course on the New Jersey shore (27 holes by Hurdzan-Fry) rebranded as Union League National Golf Club. Palmer is on the record saying that “complimentary lessons allow a friction-free approach to learning the game.” He’s also reported that, in a single season, 11 different Union League golfers who had never broken 100 shot 85 or better. Having the proper golf gear is certainly helping these new and returning players make decent swings. Give credit to a juggernaut clubfitting program that last year made ULGC Torresdale No. 1 in hardgoods sales among Philly’s private clubs.

The DNA of Proponent Group is about top golf instructors getting highly compensated for what they do, but experiments in player development that use teaching as the core will catch our interest every time. Proponent also searches constantly for data showing comparative “spend-per-golfer” between those who get coaching and those who don’t. The Union League’s top executive, Jeff McFadden, is no stranger to this concept—he told a trade journal that “for every dollar we give up in instruction revenue we take in \$7 from a satisfied, better-playing golfer.”

Curiosity for further details prompted a recent phone call to Palmer, who gladly fielded questions on

The Union League’s new golf division and its sudden prominence in the field of teaching and coaching. Here’s how that discussion went.

Your organization bought a struggling club in 2014 and all reports say you hit a home run with it. How are you measuring success there?

Golf memberships at the original club were around 115 when we came in. They rose at a fast clip, to our max of 450. At that point we established a waiting list. Retention is high, attrition is very low. If you’re a full golf member you’re entitled to one free lesson or clinic a week. Last year we gave 2,000 private lessons. The club’s revenue went from \$2.5 million in 2014 to \$6.5 million in 2017. People are happy.

You’re not starting with raw beginners in every case, right?

We did a survey and found that 60 percent of our city club members had played golf in the past, or are involved with golf currently. But the approach we use works just fine with absolute beginners. This afternoon I was teaching a guy who is a poster child for what we’re doing. He had never played and within

one year of joining the club he shot an 87. Now he breaks 80 regularly.

Maybe the guy is a natural, and you got lucky?

This gentleman is not an athlete. He's in management and works long hours. His two sons are always here with him, playing golf, which is a big motivator for him. But if he were at a traditional high-end Philadelphia golf club he could never have done what he did here.

You worked at one of those great clubs, Merion. How would you compare the two situations?

It's a totally different model. The fact that we don't charge for lessons resonates with people, but not having to pay—pay directly, that is—might only be part of it. What seems to matter is that taking lessons and learning and practicing and getting better are the regular thing, for members here. You're completely normal if you do it.

That's certainly not the typical club culture when it comes to instruction. But coverage must be demanding, right?

Of course we need a big professional staff, but once you have a lot of teachers, and the model isn't telling you that Teacher A has a student Teacher B can't work with, everything becomes fluid. You can do whatever's best to turn a person with no clue into someone who can make bogeys and a couple pars and get around the golf course. If I don't gel with a student pretty quickly, there are six other teaching pros and one of them is probably perfect for that student. So, we switch off, when it's indicated.

What does all this look like—the process and what you're able to accomplish?

Lessons are set up to run from a half hour to an hour, but you become good at noticing when the points you've made are sinking in and the session can end. I have what I call checkups with people that could last 15 minutes, because what I showed them last time has clicked and they have what they need for the time being.

Apparently you also work with golfers as they come off the course?

All the time. When a player walks off 18 shaking their head we'll get with them on the range right away and

“It's a totally different model. The fact that we don't charge for lessons resonates with people, but not having to pay—pay directly, that is—might only be part of it. What seems to matter is that taking lessons and learning and practicing and getting better are the regular thing, for members here. You're completely normal if you do it.”

— Sean Palmer

straighten things out. Approaching it our way, you are going to improve as an instructor. You'll help more people, faster. I know I have.

Your clubfitting program gets a lot of attention. With customfitting, it's easy to build half sets for a newer golfer, or just sell the person three or four clubs to get them going. Is that type of approach common at Union League Torresdale?

It really isn't. With a woman student who is first coming to us it might happen, but generally there's no need for that. People aren't taking a halfway approach—they're buying the whole set. It's part of their overall commitment and wanting to be all in. We have “Fitting Saturday” every week in season, with every major vendor represented. Last year our golf shop

did over \$1 million in sales.

Along with financial compensation, job satisfaction does matter to a dedicated teacher. Sounds like you do well in that area.

It's a solid team of professionals that we've put together, for sure. They're motivated. In part that's because we're able to pay a little higher than market rate for salary, and partly it's the working environment. We have a drug, which we call golf. We're drug dealers. Only, with this drug, your health doesn't deteriorate, it improves.

Who came up with this concept?

It was Jeff McFadden's idea—he's the GM and chief operating officer of the organization. We were starting from scratch with our golf program and there were lots of us saying “wouldn't it be great if we did this, or if we did that.” So, we were ready to experiment. You need to, in today's golf market.

Your concept is bold, but it's also simple. Could the idea catch on like wildfire?

It's hard to say. I probably get three calls a week from people who are looking for information and giving thought to trying what we've done. So that tells you something. But my guess is that it would be quite difficult to do this at a traditional, long-established club. It would depend on how committed a club could be about going in a new direction. You would definitely need golf professionals who were ready and willing to lead the way. **PG**



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WHAT I'VE LEARNED: JOHN WEBSTER

JOHN WEBSTER GOLF ACADEMY AT THE BREAKERS — PALM BEACH, FLORIDA



Hearing the various turning points in John Webster's career and not having met him, you'd be excused for wondering how people like Dennis Satyshur, Jim McLean and the top brass at The Breakers decided with such little hesitation to hand him important duties. But if you've spent time around Webster, experiencing his rare mix of confidence and humility, his blend of knowingness and curiosity, you would expect nothing less.

Raised in one of America's great short-season golf markets, the Buffalo, N.Y., native has been a PGA member since 1996 and director of instruction at the John Webster Golf Academy at The Breakers for the past decade. He helped design and develop a two-bay learning center at The Breakers' Rees Jones location, in addition to the center already established at The Breakers Ocean Course. Extensive experience in academy startup work for the McLean organization were brought to bear in both those efforts.

The branding umbrella he stands beneath is "Total Package Golf," a multi-faceted system that includes world-class instruction, clubfitting, golf fitness, course management and the mental approach.

John has earned multiple TPI accreditations, including Certified Fitness Professional, Professional Club Fitter and Leadership Advisor. He has coached players of all skill levels from beginners to PGA Tour winners. Among his

noteworthy students are a U.S. Open champion, U.S. Amateur winner and an NCAA individual champion. In 2011 he earned South Florida PGA Teacher of the Year honors.

Prior to joining The Breakers, Webster had extensive tenures with Caves Valley Golf Club in Maryland—where he spent six years as director of instruction—and the Jim McLean Golf Schools. During his eight years with the McLean group he designed and oversaw construction of the company's center in Grand Traverse, Mich., then served as its director for two years, en route to his role as vice president of operations for McLean Enterprises.

An accomplished player, John had a fine collegiate career at Loyola University and also competed on the Australian/Asian Tour and a number of Florida mini-tours. Paul Ramee recently interviewed John about his life and work. Here are highlights of their conversation.

You're from a part of the world that's snowy and cold but also a hotbed of golf. Talk a little bit about that.

My father loved to play and he got me into the game at a really early age. Growing up in Buffalo, it was hockey in the winter and golf in the summer. We started at a little par-3 called Audubon and eventually joined The Park Club. I was about 10 years old at the time we joined and I remember

Webster has put a lot of effort into building an accessible junior program for kids in the Palm Beach area.





Clubfitting is one of Webster's favorite parts of being a teacher.

feeling very lucky to be at a place with such history and sense of tradition. The club had a reciprocal agreement with Oak Hill, which allowed me to see a major championship venue. When the PGA Championship came in 1980 I got the chance to sit behind Jack Nicklaus on the range. This ignited my love for the game and I started playing more competitive junior golf, high school golf and then went on to Loyola University of Baltimore.

What were your thoughts as you were finishing college?

I wanted to give it a try as a player, so I went to Australia and entered a lot of qualifiers for different events. It was really competitive and also expensive, so after a while I packed up and moved back to the States. I got a place in Orlando and tried playing mini-tours for a while. After a year and a half, I saw that I was spending more money than I was making and it just wasn't working. Buddy Antonopolous, who had previously been head professional at Park Club had just helped Greg Norman open The Medalist and was kind enough to put in a call to Rick Whitfield at Loblolly Pines. Rick had an entry-level spot open. I took the job and worked outside operations—the range and the carts and whatever else. Things went well there and I made some good connections.

Any in particular?

Most notably Henry LeBrun, who belonged to Green Spring Valley back in Baltimore. His daughter had been a very good amateur player back in the day. Henry told me about a club that had just opened up in Maryland, called Caves Valley, and advised me to make contact with Dennis Satyshur there. So I ended up meeting with Dennis that winter and did two years back and forth between Loblolly and Caves Valley. Charlie Briggs was teaching at

Caves Valley at the time and he brought the Jim McLean connection, from his time as one of Jim's lead instructors.

That started a new chapter for you.

It definitely did. I remember I picked Jim up at the airport one day for a three-day school at Caves and he told me if I was interested, I could go South and help him in the winter. So I went down to Doral to learn more about the teaching side of the business. So, very early on I was in with two of the best guys in the business—Jim and Dennis—quite a bit of good luck.

It was also a very active era, the mid-1990s—opportunities were plentiful.

There was a lot going on, for sure. In 1998 Jim asked me to go up to Michigan and design and build a golf academy for him at Grand Traverse Resort. I went there and did everything from the ground up, over a two-year period. We opened in 2000 and I stayed on full-time for Jim. I became his lead instructor as well as VP of McLean Operations, helping him run everything in his business. After those two summers I got back into playing summer mini-tour golf. One day I got a call from Dennis concerning a new opportunity back at Caves Valley. With the help of Dave Phillips, the club had built a learning center but Dave was in the midst of starting TPI and was moving on. I returned to Caves as Director of Instruction from 2002 to 2008. This still allowed me to work seasonally at Doral as well.

What was your overall experience, working within the McLean system. Pretty rewarding?

It was awesome. Jim is one of the most passionate and enthusiastic guys in the business. From a business standpoint he goes after everything as hard as he can. Jim always kept trying to grow, and I loved that challenge. He didn't really have a northern facility, so Grand Traverse was

Webster's teaching brand is "Total Package Golf," a multi-faceted system that includes instruction, clubfitting, golf fitness, course management and the mental approach.



a way to build an audience in the Upper Midwest that would translate into winter business at the Sunbelt facilities. I was doing everything from top to bottom and working every hour of every day. Those few years were the hardest I've ever worked, but it turned out beautifully. We were motivated by all the other instructors there because they were great to be around and everyone was trying to be a better teacher than the next guy. It was really a lot of fun.

Seems like your foundation in running an instruction operation was pretty complete by that point.

I felt it was, and I knew I wanted to expand my career and possibly start my own business. An opportunity came up at The Breakers, in Palm Beach where my parents were living. I ended up going there and really wanted to settle in, and The Breakers agreed to let me put my name on the school. So, that became my own academy, and I stayed year-round. Now 11 years have gone by, and we're settled in. Everyone is here—my parents, my wife and our four-year-old boy. So, this is home for us.

The Breakers is such a major brand. What convinced them to let you put your name on the academy?

Part of it was the longevity I had with some of the better-known people in the business like Dennis and Jim. From their standpoint, seeing that history, plus my high-end resort teaching experience, they felt confident that it could be a long-term relationship. It was a very thorough interview process and I made sure they knew I was committed.

You developed the "Total Package Golf" coaching system. Can you explain what that is?

The concept is a six-part learning module. Long game, short game, clubfitting, the physical side, the mental side,

and on-course management are the six. You can use these with any caliber golfer to keep them as a student for life, because there's always something to improve on. We're working to make each golfer better and get them enjoying the game as much as possible while learning how to apply these components properly.

What is the marketing and promotion process like?

We are very fortunate to be associated with The Breakers. That, in itself, adds great exposure and credibility to our programs. We have members, resort guests, juniors and then local clientele, which all require slightly different approaches to marketing. One challenge, albeit a good one, is the expense of coming to such a luxurious location. This does narrow our target market. We stress the relationships our instructors create and try to build on those.

Your infrastructure will be expanding soon, right?

We've already started. Fortunately, we have our Breakers West location and Learning Center during this time that The Ocean Course is being completely renovated. The new facility at the Ocean will be much bigger, to include more bays and a putting studio. We currently run V1, Trackman, Foresight, SAM Lab, Blast, K-Motion and are really looking to advance our social platform in association with Golf Channel. We truly are lucky to have all these tools at our disposal, but it is an important art and skill to know how and when to use them with guests and clients.

Many coaches who haven't been connected with Jim McLean do know his books. Which is your favorite?

"The 8-Step Swing" to me is a real classic. A lot of it came from research that he had his guys conduct for him. It wasn't theory, it was literally guys sitting in front of a



Webster is heading into his second decade operating out of The Breakers in Palm Beach, FL

computer doing research and questioning everything and seeing what worked and what didn't.

As a devoted clubfitter, whose gear do you work with?

I love seeing new gear and we fit a variety of brands, but I've been a Titleist partner and fitter for 15 years now. I like their philosophy of not having to pump new product out too fast, just to jump on a trend. It's great to be first in certain arenas, but it's more important to get it right, in my view.

Your clientele includes elite players, high school players, plus resort guests and members. How do you cater to the different groups?

With golf academies it is now necessary to have everything, if you expect to grow your business. We have staffed our academy to include fitness professionals, clubfitters, trick-shot performers and junior specialists. Your staff must have the knowledge, playing ability and personality to fit these different groups. We've built a lot of our recent success with juniors and made a point of targeting local schools. We currently work with three local schools on after-school programs and have gone so far as to provide transportation from school to our course.

How did you get the junior piece ramped up?

In 2008 our corporate business dipped with the economy. We turned our focus to growing our junior programs and business. Over the last 10 years that's grown by more than 400 percent, to where it's now nearly 40 percent of our business. From after-school programs to holiday camps, we try to keep these juniors with us. As a result, we've seen juniors from age 5 all the way into college programs.

You have a reputation for something uncommon these days—promoting in the corporate category.

That's right—we're working on our corporate groups pretty strenuously. It's interesting because we are helping corporate people literally re-learn how to entertain. We have simulators that we bring into the hotel so we can do in-house entertaining for groups or outings. Growing that side of the business is our newest objective. We'll evaluate our progress and see what kind of return we're getting.

What are you reading right now?

Thomas Friedman, the author and *New York Times* columnist, is a friend, so I always keep up with Tom's books. I really like psychology and have been into that most recently. Having a young son has inspired me there. Just dealing with different types of people and trying to figure out the best way to pass along information is so important. I just read and enjoyed Angela Duckworth's "Grit." I was a philosophy major in college, with a business minor, so I still have a curiosity for psychology and development studies.

When you step back and look at the path you've been on, what comes to mind?

I'm getting older, but I've learned that surrounding myself with juniors and youthful colleagues is really good for me. It is important to stay current with everything, in and out of our business. It also keeps me motivated personally, physically and mentally. All industries are challenging to keep up with as times change, but if you're motivated and passionate you can work through any challenge to be successful.

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A WORTHY ADDITION TO THE WOMEN'S GAME



By Lorin Anderson, *Founder*

I realize that in the grand scheme of golf competitions the inaugural United States Women's Senior Open probably didn't generate as much buzz as one Tiger Woods birdie, but for me it was an amazing addition to the USGA competition lineup because I never thought I'd see the day. This was the feel-good addition

to the 2018 golf schedule and the competitors were excited, grateful and determined to put on a good show. It was especially gratifying to see Proponent Group member **Jamie Fischer** play very well and earn a tie for 12th! It was also fun to see **Laura Davies** take home the trophy and the biggest chunk of the \$1 million purse with an outstanding display of golf at age 54.

These women have worked extremely hard for everything they have ever gotten from the game and often with minimal fanfare or appreciation. So, this new celebration of the women's game that included 48 current teaching and club professionals in the field of 120 was a very big deal. This was a celebration of the women who have made golf their lifelong career and in the process contended with a "good old boys" network that hasn't always been accepting of their successes.

To this day Proponent Group fields too many calls from women members who are dealing with a variety of discriminatory issues where they work. Anecdotally, it seems that the industry is becoming more enlightened to the benefits of promoting diversity among its ranks, but we're definitely not where we need to get to just yet.

I'm also concerned that young women are not coming into the game to teach at the rate they were 25 years ago when my wife Cheryl began teaching golf. In the mid-90s more than 85 women professionals taught in just the Metropolitan PGA Section alone. Today that number seems to be diminished. It could be for a variety of reasons including the fact that less golf is being played, facilities have closed and young women have more opportunities to continue playing after college including a much more robust Symetra Tour. All of these may have combined to dissuade more young women from deciding to become golf instructors.

Hopefully, future factors will make it more enticing for more young women to join the industry as more diversity in our ranks is beneficial for the game's future.

As we celebrate the addition of the U.S. Senior Women's Open to the calendar, remember how hard these women have worked to make the game more inclusive and accessible. They have done this while typically enjoying fewer competitive opportunities and less respect for their teaching and playing accomplishments. I applaud all of the women professionals who are now in their 50s or beyond and have stayed in the game. They simply love the game and they love helping their students. We have all benefitted in that they have made the game more accessible for women amateurs and for all the junior girls who now have these successful women as role models to inspire them.

Congrats to the USGA for adding this wonderful competition and thanks to the talented golfers who participated. We applaud the women who have added so much to golf by choosing to make it their careers. **PG**

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NEW SERIES: CASE STUDIES OF TEACHER-STUDENT COLLABORATION

FIRST LESSON AT 14 STARTED A JOURNEY

Kenny Nairn was on the phone from Blackpool, Lancashire answering questions about Jacqui Concolino. He wanted to go to sleep. It was 11 p.m. and Nairn had been coaching his way around Scotland and England for a few weeks now.

Here in the summer of 2018 his student of 16 years duration, now age 31, was playing some of the best golf of her life. Kenny spoke about the KPMG tour stop at Hazeltine National in late June—Concolino tied for 8th there. He mentioned the Women's PGA in Chicago in early July—another tie for 8th place. Two weeks later, at the LPGA Tour stop in northern Ohio, she tied for 5th—"and should have closed it out," her coach insists. A couple weeks after that, in the Ladies Scottish Open, Jacqui had another T8—on the rugged links of Gullane, where her final-round 66 was equaled only by the winner and the runner-up.

"Her fellow professionals looked at her differently after that 66, and her 5-under finish," says Nairn. "Any coach whose student takes their game to a new level gets rewarded by the look in the eyes of that student's peers. It's extremely satisfying. I've taught 20-handicappers who got down to 10 and seen the respect they've earned. It's validation, and we all want that."

The journey that turns a talented kid into a world-class player is long and unpredictable. With success comes greater demands on the player, coach and caddie. This past winter the task was to evaluate Concolino's best year—\$469,300 in earnings, three top-10 finishes including a 2nd in Asia, only a handful of missed cuts—and decide on a next step. "A tour player's skill set gets built from the ground up," observes Nairn. "Some parts of the process reach completion. At that point the coach has to adapt."

Nairn is one of the best clubfitters in the business but he made what he considers an error in judgment last off-season. Concolino's notion of how to improve her long game in 2018 was to up the trajectory. "She wanted to hit the ball higher to improve her landing angle into greens, especially with the longer irons," says Nairn. "We switched her to a shaft with a different kickpoint that would produce that higher flight. It achieved that goal but the overall effect wasn't positive."



Nairn and Concolino at the recent Women's British Open

Concolino is an unusual modern player—powerful but extremely creative in her shotmaking, with a repertoire of shot shapes. "My hero in golf will always be Seve Ballesteros," Nairn says, "so it makes sense that I'd end up coaching Jacqui. But her imagination and her unique ball control depend on a fine degree of feel, and in the early events we could see that the new shafts took some of that away." It was up to the coach, in tandem with caddie Jeff Howanitz, to tell a visual player that the higher ball flight, so appealing to her eye, wasn't in her best interest and to work on other aspects of her swing.

It's a bit of a thrill for any tour player when they can add a new tool to their toolbox. Taking away one of those shiny objects is something you've got to be able to do. Nairn found himself saying, essentially, "You have to play with what you've got, and do it on a more consistent basis." Concolino is a woman of great inner strength, but when the two males who act as her guides bring a joint message of "we're your team and this is what we need you to do," it can put her in a vulnerable position.

The toolbox did end up with an addition, however. On an early-summer visit to the UK Nairn noticed what a dry season it was turning into. He insisted on making Jacqui an alternative set of wedges with notably less bounce on the soles. She liked the suggestion, and liked the idea all the more once she got to Gullane. "All of Scotland was brick-hard," says Nairn. "She was absolutely glad to have those wedges and she performed very well with them."

Kenny is not on tour very much, so he studies Concolino intently when he is. "There is nothing better than being with your student in the height of competition," he says with emphasis. "You see everything."

Still, there's a paradox around all the subtle detail a top coach can and must observe. The responsibility to not miss anything is quite grave, and yet being able to fulfill that responsibility really just works at the margins. "You walk these events and see competitors from all over the world, you see the talent and what's supporting it, and it gives you perspective," says Nairn. "I need to be the best coach possible, and I need to keep in mind that most of what happens is out of my hands." **PG**

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PROponent MEMBER SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHES LEARNING CENTER

BILL McINERNEY TEES UP A DREAM COACHING COMPLEX

By David Gould, Staff Editor

The game of golf is in the doldrums. Business is slack. And yet this industry keeps producing new concepts and astounding new facilities. In the Boston suburb of Natick, Mass., the first full season of operation for KOHR Golf is halfway along and all indications are positive. Meanwhile the 17-acre academy complex is continuing to draw raves for its physical beauty and brilliantly versatile layout.

The creative force behind this little green kingdom of skill-development is Proponent Group member Bill McInerney, Jr. Several years ago he was talking to investors about a coaching app and an e-commerce coaching website when the property became available. Living just up the road from it, he was aware of its condition—a neglected dustbowl range with half-disintegrated mats. McInerney mentioned it to one of his committed investors, who suggested that the range and the app be merged into one business proposition with the learning center bumped up to first priority.



Bill McInerney, Jr. and team member Oliver Segal at KOHR Golf

Soon, daily life became a series of sketches, pro forma spreadsheets, town meetings, interviews with contractors, permit applications and the like. The all-in cost would come to roughly \$3.5 million, not far off the original budget. The



Kohr Golf is designed for the serious golfer with annual practice memberships running \$3,500 and a waiting list for the junior academy.

likes of Reebok founder Paul Fireman comprise McInerney's finance group—indeed it was Fireman who had taken Bill aside for a brief conversation that would prove life-changing.

"Paul volunteered a large sum to back me—more money than I was comfortable taking," recalls McInerney. "He then reminded me of the goals I'd laid out, which were all about helping the largest number of people I could help. He told me if I didn't come by in the morning to pick up that check I was turning my back on my own vision."

A central ridgeline defines KOHR Golf, with the range's landing field sloping moderately but continuously down. That landing area looks like someone stole a half-dozen greensites from classic golf courses and arranged them logically on one parcel. There is so much definition and charm to this acreage that the 300-yard poles with their 125-foot-high netting appear to be half that distance away. Kyle Franz, a lead associate on the Gil Hanse architectural team that built the Olympic golf course in Brazil, did the design work.

Farther along the ridge you come to a separate tee area that merges with two fairway-style bunkers, plus a variety of uneven grass lies, again with plenty of target green complexes to play to. Walk backward from this section of tee line and you come upon a 2,000-square-foot natural grass tee, stretching out in front of the facility's indoor-to-outdoor hitting space. It's a high-ceilinged, two-bay, climate-controlled teaching building with a Cool Clubs fitting studio on one side and a general-use bay beside it.

KOHR Golf gets a percentage of gear sales that the Cool Clubs business generates, based on a variety of considerations, including deep discounts for Bill's academy kids plus the fact that Glen Sutton, the fitter and business owner, paid for

construction of the building. At the mid-season mark, Sutton's highly touted fitting skills were generating revenue on track to produce a seven-figure year-end total.

Oh, and to the rear of the building is another acre or so of practice greens and practice bunkers with elevation changes and immaculate, fast-running turfgrass. On a recent weekday Don DeRico, the facility's full-time superintendent, was inspecting this short-game complex and selectively watering the still-young turf. "The roots are coming out the bottom of the cup cutter," he says with a degree of pride. McInerney is as quick to praise his team members and stakeholders as any top manager you'll meet in the golf industry, but he's particularly effusive in describing DeRico's bentgrass-nurturing magic.

KOHR Golf has a 75-member youth academy with a waiting list, plus members who pay \$3,500 for basically unlimited use, and then public walk-up business. Fifteen



KOHR Golf sits on a former rundown range and was designed by up-and-coming architect Kyle Franz.

miles away is the McGolf roadside golf center built and managed by McInerney's father, Bill Sr.—it was the site of Bill Jr.'s teaching practice for decades. McGolf is a perfectly located, carefully managed golf property that sells practice buckets and mini-golf tickets—plus burgers, shakes and fries—all day and night from April to October, piling up profits every year. Knowing intimately the contours of an enterprise like that, McInerney, Jr. nonetheless created a far different and in many ways less commercial variation on it.

"I'm motivated to succeed, and there's every reason to believe that this business will do well," says McInerney. "I'm not motivated by money, and never have been." He was a standout youth hockey player who got fairly close to having a pro career, and golf came along later for him. He made one try at PGA Tour qualifying, then got busy teaching. The early years of his instruction career left him still unsure where his true passion lay.

That all changed when a letter arrived from a teenage boy whom McInerney had worked with but had not seen in some time. It started out "Dear Coach Bill," and proceeded to express thanks for the caring and guidance that had been part of the boy's golf lessons. "He told me he had been messing up and getting into drugs before he came to me,"

recalls the coach. "Now his life was different, he was on a good path, and I had made a difference for him. That letter was it for me. I never looked back."

The name "KOHR," by the way, is simply a homonym for "core," given a new spelling for brand purposes and to add some subtlety. "The core of anything is the important part, whether it's your physical fitness or your golf swing or the values you stand for," says McInerney.

Several months after the complex opened he was going through old records and found a sheet of paper with "dream range" scrawled at the top in his handwriting. On it was a detailed diagram of what an ideal practice and learning center would look like.

"This was a sketch I made one night when I woke up at about 2 in the morning and wanted to record what had come to me in my sleep," Bill says. "I must have tucked that piece of paper in the nightstand drawer and forgotten all about it." If you're wondering, the answer is yes: What the sketch showed is almost exactly what the new complex looks like.

Many of us have similar aspirations sketched out and tucked away someplace. McInerney's story is about not turning your back on the vision of what you might achieve—and all the people you may help along the way. **PG**



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DAVE FINETHY, Stowe Mountain Club, Stowe, VT –
Associate Member

MICHAEL HARGER, Stowe Mountain Club, Stowe, VT
– *Associate Member*

MICHAEL HODGES, Peninsula Golf and Country
Club, Millsboro, DE – *Full Member*

MATT ISLER, Jeff Isler Golf, Southlake, TX –
Associate Member

CHRISTOPHER KAMYS, The Golf Academy of North
Florida at Blue Sky, Jacksonville, FL – *Full Member*

ANASTASIA KOSTINA, Randy Henry's Dynamic Golf
at Hayden Lake Country Club, Hayden Lake, ID –
Associate Member

ABBY MANN, Quaker Ridge Golf Club, Scarsdale, NY
– *Associate Member*

ANDREW RICE, Andrew Rice Golf, Savannah, GA –
Full Member

HELP YOURSELF BY HELPING YOUR FACILITY SAVE \$\$\$

Want your boss to treat you like a hero? Don't forget to forward page 22 from this month's newsletter to your facility's management team. The Ride program described there provides significant discounts on food and beverage, agronomy purchases and other business related expenses. More than 700 courses and clubs are saving an average of 17 percent using this program.

OUR MONTHLY LOOK AT THE JOB MARKET: MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

Recent Job Postings include:

The Address Montgomery in Dubai is hiring a Teaching Professional.

Bobby Clampett's Impact Zone Golf Academy in Naples, FL is hiring a Junior Player Development/Academy Teaching/Coaching Professional.

Topgolf is hiring Directors of Instruction in Bridgeville, PA, Chesterfield, MO and Doral, FL.

For complete details visit the Job Board on the Members' website. Please let us know if you have a position to post.

CURDT EARNS LPGA MASTER PROFESSIONAL STATUS

Congratulations to **Alison Curdt** who becomes the first full-time teacher to earn both PGA of America and LPGA Master Professional status. Last month Curdt completed the requirements to finalize her Master Pro status with the LPGA T&CP. She is currently the Director of Instruction at Alison Curdt Golf at Wood Ranch Golf Club in Simi Valley, California.



Alison Curdt

She was also named LPGA National Teacher of the Year in 2015 and is just one of only nine women to earn PGA Master Professional Status.

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Proponent Group's newsletter is published 12 times a year. Back issues are available at no charge for active members and at a per-issue price of \$20 for non-members. Subscriptions are available to non-members at an annual fee of \$240 at lbombka@proponent-group.com.



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