

# COLLABORATE PROONENT GROUP

PROONENT GROUP NEWSLETTER \$20

FEBRUARY 2018

## NEW TAX LAW OFFERS ADVANTAGES TO GOLF INSTRUCTORS

Tax planning takes on a special importance this year, as provisions of the newly enacted Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) go into effect. The TCJA makes changes that affect all kinds of taxes—individual, corporate, partnership and other “pass-through” business entities, plus estate taxes (and even the treatment of tax-exempt organizations).



\$40,000 of it on his or her Schedule C. Instead of using \$200,000 as a figure for adjusted gross income, the sole proprietor (generating what is called “pass-through” income) would enter \$160,000 on that line. Once you’re over \$315,000 in Schedule C money for a year, you lose this advantage.

Also for self-employed instructors, there is a break encouraging you to invest  
(Continued on page 11)

## SUMMIT '18: COWBOYS CLUB IT IS

Mark Your Calendar for the most valuable education event in golf instruction. On November 4-6 we head back to Dallas for our 11th annual Proponent Group Summit at The Cowboys Club in Grapevine, TX located just minutes from DFW airport. More details to come this Spring. See you in “Big D”!



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## EXTREMELY URGENT: 2018 COMP SURVEY BEGINS THIS WEEK

Please keep an eye out for our annual Proponent Group Compensation and Operations Survey, which is heading your way this week. This is the crown jewel of our annual surveys and each year the results help dozens of our members as they renegotiate their contracts or negotiate with a new facility.

Our survey is the most in-depth, instructor-focused survey in the industry and it should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Everyone benefits when pay and benefits go up within the industry so it is critical that you provide your data in the survey to make our report as robust as possible. NOTE: Individual data is never identified or shared with anyone and no personal identification is included in the survey.

To view the results of last year's survey, log on to the members' website and go to the Member Surveys menu.

Thank you in advance for assisting with this critical portion of Proponent Group's mission to help our members improve their negotiating leverage in the current marketplace.

## PROONENT UNVEils FRESH LOGO

If you were in the Proponent Group education room during the PGA Show last month, you probably noticed that we have a new logo. The completely redesigned brand mark simplifies our company identity making it easier to reproduce on apparel and many of our other business-related uses. The new logo highlights the fact that we have assembled a "group" of professionals, emphasizing the "PRO" in PROONENT.



The new logo appears for the first time in this edition of the newsletter and over the next few weeks expect to see it across all of our company communications including the members website.

## A MONTHLY LOOK AT THE JOB MARKET MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

*Members who have recently moved into new positions include:*

**Renee Trudeau O'Higgins** is the new Director of Instruction at Quail West G&CC in Naples, FL

If you've recently made a move, please let us know at [lbombka@proponent-group.com](mailto:lbombka@proponent-group.com).

*New Job Posting:*

**Fiddler's Elbow Country Club** in Bedminster, NJ is hiring an Assistant Golf Coach. This is a seasonal position beginning in April. For complete details visit the Job Board on the Members website.



Renee Trudeau O'Higgins

## WHAT OUR MEMBERS ARE WATCHING

### MOST VIEWED PROONENT 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 January, these were the 10 most-watched videos on the Proponent website:*

- 1) **Mike Bender, Martin Hall, David Leadbetter, Lynn Marriott, Cameron McCormick and Pia Nilsson - Summit "Super Panel"**
- 2) **Cameron McCormick - The Journey to High Performance**
- 3) **Iain Highfield - Incorporating Mental Game Techniques in Practice for Your Students**
- 4) **Lynn Marriott and Pia Nilsson - Game Changers for the Future**
- 5) **Dr. Rob Neal - Forces and Torques Applied to the Handle of the Golf Club**
- 6) **Nick Clearwater - The Swing TRU Motion Study**
- 7) **Brendan Ryan - How to Structure Effective Practice**
- 8) **Jon Sinclair - Discovering the Differences Between 2D Video and 3D Motion Capture**
- 9) **Lorin Anderson and Jeff Penson - Secrets to Creating Long-Term Students**
- 10) **Mark Sheftic - Teaching with Boditrack**

# SHOW WEEK FOR MEMBERS – ALWAYS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

By David Gould, Staff Editor

The so-called “sharing economy” refers to Uber, Airbnb and similar web-based businesses. Yet when golf coaches hear the phrase they may think first about the forums they gather at to share insights and new information.

Proponent Group once again used the PGA Merchandise Show as a setting to make more of that sharing happen. For three days in Room W109B—our convention-center home since 2009—a wide array of cutting-edge ideas and practices were covered in expert fashion.

Guiding golfers toward improved play and a greater enjoyment of the game is considered to be part science, part art—both sides of that coin received close attention from our presenters. Speakers such as **Martin Hall** and **Ann Marie Gildersleeve**, among others, spoke passionately about what goes into the coach-student relationship and how that bond deepens and intensifies over time.

“The adage is true – ‘People won’t care how much you know until they know how much you care,’ ” said Hall, quoting Theodore Roosevelt. He warned that, in one-on-one lessons, any shift of attention away from the student is risky. “The person in front of you has to be the most important person in your life, for that hour,” explained Hall, “and there are two reasons why: One, they’re paying you and they deserve your best, and two, you have to be concentrating fully if you’re going to perform as you should.”

Hall tapped his long experience in front of Golf Channel cameras to offer advice on how instructors can and should present themselves. If you follow his advice, you won’t move your head (“I was a bobblehead when I started doing TV,” he admitted) and you won’t move your feet, but you will move your hands—decisively and dramatically. Same with the speaking component: Whatever statements you are making, start strong and finish strong—don’t fizzle out with a series of faint farewells or even repeated thanks. Instructors are always videotaping students, but Hall advises you to

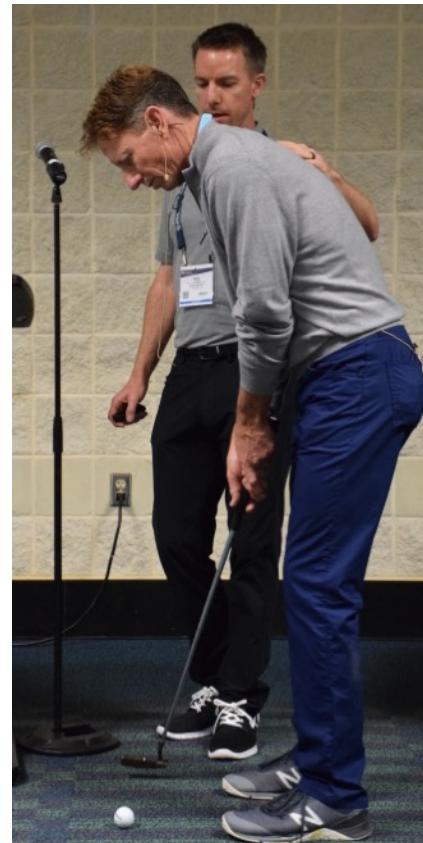
videotape yourself teaching, looking for what you do well and not so well.

As part of his self-training in these areas Martin videotaped TV ads for car dealerships, legal practices or any other profession where an individual had to sell himself or herself. “I played them back with no sound, to see how people stood and moved,” he recalls, “then I turned the sound back on and looked away, to hear what they did with their voices.” Through these studies and exercises he learned to look “through the camera, at one

person, someone I cared about helping,” Hall explained.

“We’re always presenting, that’s what a teacher does,” he said simply. “We need to hold ourselves to high standards in both content and presentation.”

The lessons-learned and poignant stories shared by Gildersleeve seemed to spread a notable quiet and stillness through the room. Part of that was the spirit of Harvey Penick inhabiting the space, as Ann Marie recounted her experience working with the iconic Texan. Every single coach



**Brad Faxon joined Blast Motion's Mike Duhamel to explain tempo in putting.**



**Layne Savoie (left) and Dr. Rob Neal talking short game spin.**

## P G A S H O W H I G H L I G H T S

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 1 8

in the audience raised their hand when she asked if they owned a copy of Penick's classic bestseller, "The Little Red Book."

In a talk designed to balance high-tech digital teaching with traditional instruction, Gildersleeve said emphatically that "Harvey would have embraced technology—he would have known how to balance it" with the other skills and assets a teacher must bring to the task. And she spoke in heartfelt tones about the community that grows up around a teaching practice, if the coach encourages that to happen. In photos of her small academy space audience members saw walls of college pennants, one for each student who went on to play NCAA golf. "Those pennants," said Gildersleeve, "never come down—they remind each student that for as long as I'm here, their school flag will be on the wall, and they are welcome to visit and tell me how they're doing."

She also pointed out benches where students who aren't taking a lesson can watch their fellow learner take one. "They enjoy that environment," she said. "They pull for each other, they're in it together." Indeed, Gildersleeve students have, in two separate cases, paired off and gone on to become a married couple. "Those are unforgettable weddings," she said, "watching two of your students start a life together." (Ann Marie is also our featured interviewee in the "What I've Learned" Q&A this issue—see page 22.)

Some day Proponent Group member **Alison Curdt** will address a group of golf instructors who practice her sub-specialty of Bilateral Stimulation and related psychological tools for improving golf performance. For now, she seems to be the only one doing it. Selected as the LPGA's National Teacher of the Year in 2015, Curdt is also a Golf Digest choice for its Best Young Instructors in America list. Along with traditional golf coaching, she is a practicing psychotherapist in the state of California. Her presentation



From Top to Bottom: Greg Rose, Chris Rowe and Iain Highfield

in Orlando centered on experiences of trauma and post-traumatic stress. "Any deeply disturbing event that induces fear or hopelessness and interferes with your ability to function is definable as trauma," she explained, adding that neurological studies showed what we consider "small-t" trauma produces brain activity similar to what is found in classic combat-related PTSD cases. The actual physiology of how trauma gets stored in the brain was explained to the audience—the hippocampus being responsible for processing and storage of short-term memory, with the amygdala in charge of emotions and moods, as well as being the site where fear-based memories are stored and beliefs about those experiences begin to be formed.

This is not exactly material that golf pros have been chatting about in the bag room, over the years.

"Memory can be processed adaptively—meaning, you learn and grow from the experience—or maladaptively, meaning you don't learn from it," said Curdt, who is soon to be finished with a PhD dissertation on these topics. "Traumas can get stuck, rather than shifting over to long-term memory," she pointed out. "When emotional sensations from past events don't get processed, they can recur as symptoms in present-day experience." At one point Curdt referred to golfers who make sure never to play golf at that certain course where they crumbled under pressure to lose a big event, and a few heads nodded.

Leading off the Wednesday program—the original "day of education" that Proponent puts together on its own—was a presentation entitled "Increasing Athleticism on the Golf Course through the Training Floor," with **Damon Goddard** and **Tim Mahoney**. It began with some interesting history that connects golf to a level of physicality that seemed to fade in the era of the golf cart and sedentary lifestyles in general. Harry

Vardon, over a century ago, declared that a golfer “needs muscles like a boxer’s” to play the game well.

“Don’t let golfers tell you they ‘used to be’ athletes,” Goddard advised. “Help them get back to being athletes now, and encourage them to continue self-identifying as athletes.” That sounds like an aggressive path, but the presenters insisted it could be carried out through a program whose every segment was also about reducing the chance of injury. And so, while the resistance-training exercise known as the dead lift is “super helpful for golf swings,” in Goddard’s words, “your player has to ‘earn the right’ to do those dead lifts,” through a conditioning process that brings the likelihood of injury way down.

**Brad Faxon**, eight-time winner on the PGA Tour and a player whose putting skills are admired worldwide, teamed with **Mike Duhamel** of Blast Motion to share definitive data and impressions about how to coach the putting stroke, especially as it regards tempo and the length of time that elapses during its backward and forward segments. Based on a vast sample of pro-tour putting strokes, a bottom-line truth of excellent putting emerges, translatable as “the time stays the same, the length of stroke changes.”

Along with that core fact comes a refinement, namely that the total time of the stroke (start to impact) absolutely has to work out as a 2:1 ratio, with the forward movement taking one-half the time that the movement back takes. In the case of Faxon, himself, it is an astoundingly consistent ratio of .60/.30 seconds, back and forward. “After testing Brad for a while,” Duhamel reported, “we were convinced the testing device was broken or had a glitch, because the readings never changed. But that was just world-class tempo repeating itself over and over.”

Proponent member **Chris Rowe** delivered a classic how-to presentation about building your business — and keeping it filled through a lengthy career. Among the techniques he touted were the following:

- Private clubs are like high schools, full of cliques, and each clique has a ringleader. Give every ringleader a free lesson, make them better, and you’ll get business from



Martin Hall dispensed more of his favorite teaching ideas.



Henry Brunton kicked off Tuesday's Junior Golf Forum

every group. “Help that leader person, and you’ll get 10 followers,” he said.

- Walk the range and talk to people. Shake hands with the members and make extra sure to help out a guest who needs it. “It’s like the food court at the mall,” Rowe asserted. “Free samples get handed out, and they taste better because they’re free. After that, a person is willing to pay.”
- If you’re surrounded by small towns, go find the best golf talent each one has, and become the one teacher whose name is known to everyone in that town.
- Write a book—it will set you apart. But don’t sit down and do it from scratch—instead find an existing publication that will let you write articles for it, and after a few years put the articles together to make a finished book. “It’s like getting a graduate degree—it will give you credibility,” Rowe promised.

The task of highlighting Proponent Group education activity at the PGA Show used to be a lot easier, before wonderful people like **Dr. Rob Neal**, **Karen Harrison** and **Brendan Ryan** began complementing the basic one-day event with additional days of hard-hitting presentations by outstanding speakers. The first additional day of learning was all about juniors—especially elite juniors—and how to serve that market effectively and profitably. The likes of **Henry Brunton**, **Trillium Rose**, **Tony Morgan**, **Mike Bender** and so many others contributed world-class insights.

A second co-hosted day featured **Dr. David Grecic**, **Dr. Greg Rose**, **Kevin Sprecher**, Rob Neal and the team of **Iain Highfield** and **Matthew Cooke**. All these highly valuable examples of great teaching and business-building can be experienced through the medium of video, as we gradually add all our PGA Show tapes to the Proponent website. Sincere thanks to all who contributed—at the podium, behind the scenes and out in the audience. Indeed there was a steady stream of excellent questions and comments coming from members who filled the room to listen—eagerly taking part in the sharing economy that is golf instruction today. PG

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# GET MORE OUT OF “LEARNING SEASON”



**By Andy Hilts, Director**

We've often heard it said that "you learn something new every day." During PGA Show week I must have learned something new every five or 10 minutes. There was a PGA Global Youth & Family Summit, a Junior Golf Development Forum, plus more than 20 hours of education in Proponent Group's famed room W109B. Added

to that was the vast array of seminars that make up the PGA Education Conference. If you got to town early or stayed afterward you could take advantage of multiple certification programs, each one adding another notch to your credentials belt.

Thinking back on all that I notice a challenge that emerges. We have to take what we were exposed to and work it into everyday business life. For many of us that means transferring all the excitement, energy, and education to your staff.

I got a first-hand example of this at ChampionsGate, the Orlando facility where instructors on the David Leadbetter Academy staff gather each year at the start of Show Week. There was even some Proponent Group input, in the form of Lorin presenting his "10 Current Trends in Golf Instruction." (That's a good one to grab from our video archives, if you haven't seen it.) Each year Leadbetter brings his entire staff to Orlando for a few days of education, celebration and planning for the year ahead. Seeing his entire team on hand, building stronger bonds and all trying to improve as coaches, was inspiring.

All professions seem to be more keen on training and professional growth—not just golf instruction. I've witnessed team meetings recently at the offices of my chiropractor and

my dentist, as well. There are early-morning pow-wows that start each office's workday. Even though the various practitioners are working on their own patients, they still have a common mission to achieve—providing great experiences to the client base while supporting individual health and wellness. I noticed that during those brief huddles the staff members discuss which patients they will see over the coming day. They set daily goals and work to develop the right mindset for the day, as a group.

I got curious and asked what other training sessions or meetings these offices engage in. Turns out both of them head off-site at least once a year for in-depth sessions. One of them does a destination trip as a team over a long weekend. In addition to these annual planning events they each provide in-house professional-development sessions, where they close the office for a half-day or full day, every few months.

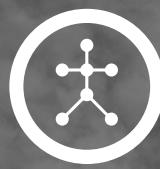
Whether it is quarterly, weekly or even daily quick-hitting catch-ups, these various techniques will help to keep your team well-informed and all in agreement on performance expectations. Ideally you would utilize a blend of all of the above, depending on what outcome you are trying to achieve. If you have a post-PGA Show meeting, it should likely be more than just a quick-hitter, given that staff members will have gathered so many new ideas and be in such a good position to build an implementation plan together.

In cases like this, make sure you prepare a written agenda for the group the day before your meeting, so attendees get time to prepare for any topics. Over time you may even have a staff member who needs more management experience develop the agenda and run the meeting. Get your new-season meeting on the calendar ASAP so you can pass along the energy of the "learning season" and get the team focused for a successful 2018. **PG**

## PROONENT GROUP CALENDAR

**Be on the Lookout for...  
Proponent Group's 2018 Compensation Survey  
arriving in your inbox this week.**

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Please take a few minutes to complete the survey.**

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**10 Proven Ideas Covering 5 Approaches:**

# TROVE OF TIPS TO MAKE YOUR MARKETING MORE EFFECTIVE IN 2018

By David Gould, Staff Editor

**C**reativity, discipline and the occasional daring idea all weave together in a sound marketing effort. Some marketing efforts can take place whenever the golf coach chooses, some of it requires advance planning and some of it is tied to certain parts of the season or dates on the calendar. Below are 10 classic marketing concepts or tactics devised for Proponent members or else adapted to fit the member's needs.

They divide into sub-categories of audience-building, leveraging social media, running skill-based events, customer appreciation and marketing via special events. Give all 10 a fresh look and see if they can boost your business in 2018.

Besides these 10 tips there are nearly 100 more in the Instruction Marketing Guide which can be found in the Business Guides section of the members website. We also bring you a brand new marketing tip each week in the Members Weekly Rundown in your email in box every Tuesday. Now is the perfect time to review all of our tips as you plan your marketing strategy for the new season.

**1) Do Some Database-Sharing with a Non-Golf Business Nearby:** The people who spend money on golf coaching also spend money on—fill in the blank. It could be a luxury auto dealer, a jeweler, a conference center or some other local business. Test how well you and a partner business can pull good prospects from each other's databases. You can even openly cross-promote each others' services in the emails you send. For example, test-drive a certain car by a certain date and get a certificate for a group clinic series. People are highly receptive to recommendations that come from businesses



they already trust and have had positive experiences with. It's even possible that the car dealer or jeweler is already a student of yours, which would make the partnership all the easier to initiate.

**2) Connect Your Golf Instruction Offerings to the Yoga Community:** It's highly impressive to see how intently golf coaches have studied bio-kinesiology and other aspects of the fitness-golf connection. Question: Do any of the 1,000 regular yoga students in your upscale know that flexibility and golf success go together? Do the yoga instructors?

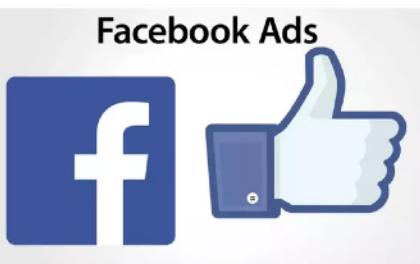


Think about this: Whatever value the local yoga teachers feel they are delivering to their students, you could give them one more arrow for their quiver—they are helping their clients develop the type of flexibility, balance and conditioning that a good golf swing thrives on. Any yoga student who has remotely considered trying golf is, at the very minimum, going to get a little thrill at knowing they've got a big advantage over the non-yoga beginner—and that's incentive for them to come to the tee. How about a Get Golf Ready just for active yoga students? Or a demo at the yoga class showing how well a limber and yoga-trained body can make good golf swings? Self-improvement is the umbrella concept, for the yoga student and golf student alike—make that connection in your local market and see what happens.

**3) Devise a Plan for Effective Use of Facebook Ads:** At least for now and into the near future, Facebook advertising is so inexpensive you really can't justify ignoring the opportunity. A recent study of golf courses using

Facebook Ads found the price of getting a text-only ad in front of a very targeted audience came to 25 cents per 1,000 impressions. For a photo ad on Facebook it was under \$3 per 1,000 people reached and for a sharing of a blog post that got to 1,000 sets of eyeballs it was about \$3.75.

The various filters used by these golf facilities to ensure an appropriate audience for their ads included age, sex, home address, education, marital status, work status and several other key traits. The trackable results of the investment were measured in home page Likes, click-throughs to website home page and click-opens of the blog. Don't expect 1,000 impressions to be enough for major results, but at these prices you can test a few messages and hone your approach. Someday, when Facebook totally rules the media world, it won't be cheap to take out Facebook Ads, so give it a try this year.



#### **4 ) Messaging to Mobile Devices, Using Pictures:**

Instagram, which is owned by Facebook and has 80 million daily users, started as a mobile app, so when you use the platform to promote golf instruction your message will show up on a smartphone or a tablet. The latest wisdom on effective

Instagram posting includes these tips: Only use two-thirds of the screen for the photo you post—surrounding blank space will help draw the eye. Work on your captions, so that they don't just identify



what's shown—if you add questions and strong statements you will heighten engagement. And remember to reply to people who have liked or commented on your Instagram post—now you're in a true conversation with a current or prospective student

**5 ) Combine Custom Wedge-Fitting with Coaching and Supervised Practice:** You can promise—and deliver—an impressive double-down on scoring shot accuracy when you pair wedge fitting with your coaching sessions. No less a golf facility than Haggin Oaks, in Sacramento, Calif., does this on an "event" basis, scheduling its combo teach-fit opportunities on Friday evenings and Saturday afternoons. For these events, the award-winning Haggin Oaks crew will try to bring two or three vendors together who provide an array wedge lofts, sole designs, shafts and

grips for the fittings. A golfer will split his or her time 50-50 between instruction/practice and the fitting. Haggin Oaks charges participants \$150 and for that price customers receive one fitted wedge plus instruction. As many as 40 to 60 people participate in each event, roughly dividing into 30 percent women, 60 percent men and 10 percent youth. Four to six instructors will cover it, sharing \$25 from each customer's fee. On average, anywhere from \$6,000-\$9,000 in revenue is brought in during this two-hour event, with 15 to 20 percent of participants actually purchasing more than one wedge.



#### **6) Create a Putting Expo and Show All the Putting-Performance Help Now Available:** All under one roof (although there's no actual roof) you can gather your staff of fine teaching

professionals, a putter-fitting expert, perhaps a rep from a manufacturer known for its putter line, putting practice-aids, an AimPoint teacher and all sorts of other resources from this putting-intense era. Proponent member Nicole Weller called her event at The

Landings Club in coastal Georgia a "Putting Fair." Weller's members received coaching in distance control, putt reading and alignment/aim, along with all the other bells and whistles gathered on her practice green. The direct result, says Nicole, was increased exposure by members to the club's golf professionals, nine putters sold at the fair plus interest in spin-off lessons, extra practice sessions and clinics to advance ideas that were discovered during the fair.



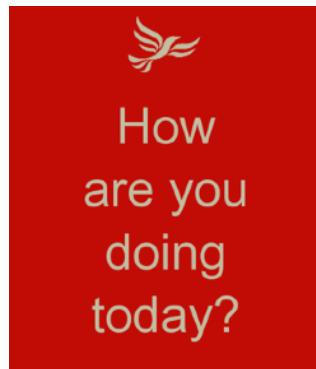
#### **7) Use Nameplates as Rewards and Recognition for Regulars:** It used to be said about Mercedes-Benz ads

that they weren't designed to convince non-Mercedes owners to buy the car, they were all about congratulating Mercedes owners for having bought the car. At any golf academy, creative use of tee-station nameplates will perform this same important function. Even if you all you use are plastic plates that with an erasable surface, golfers

will still enjoy seeing those beautiful words—their own first and last name. The plates you order could even have preprinted titles, like “Golfer of the Week” or “Fast-Improving Student” or “Top 20 Most Improved,” etc. You don’t have to have one of these plates ready for every student every time, if doing so would be too time-consuming. Instead use them as an incentive for those who don’t yet have one, as well as a reward and retention tool for those who do.



**8) “My Golf Teacher Reached Out to Me!”** Apparently this was the excited thought that went through the minds of 10 students who received texts from New Jersey-based instructor Brian Dobbie. The question Dobbie sent to his students, none of whom were currently active in his book, was disarmingly simple—he asked: “How is your game?” The message went out to the 10 golfers simultaneously and results came back to Brian quickly. All 10 golfers responded and the outreach resulted in Dobbie booking three standard lessons plus one playing lesson. He puts this nice success down to “the importance of following up,” in all kinds of different ways—including a quick, simple text.



**9) The “Cinco de Mayo Approach” to Events and Engagement:** A marketing how-to article in Inc. Magazine once told seasonal businesses to “Invent holidays,” just like Hallmark does. More accurately the advice was to leverage obscure events like Grandparents Day and Teacher Appreciation Week, create a relevant program and e-blast an offer. One of your first efforts in this direction

could well be Cinco de Mayo—you’ll get millions of dollars in promotion help from Mexican beer companies, and May 5—a Saturday this year—is a classic “hall pass” day for adult males, since families don’t go

away on it. Give a 15-minute clinic on “Lee Trevino’s Driving Secrets,” bring in a Mexican restaurant to cater, perhaps create a charitable tie-in, and use this theme and occasion to drive bonus revenue that day—meanwhile demonstrating how you help golfers play better the other 364 days of the year.



**10) Get Strategic with Your Father’s Day Program and Pricing:** Proponent Group member Doug Holub draws upon his experience as a GolfTEC instructor when he mounts a marketing effort geared toward events like Father’s Day. His primary targets are names from his “defector” or “lost” list—inactive students. He also targets the children of current clients, knowing they will be in need of a worthy gift for Dad. Doug is careful not to schedule these promo-priced lessons in prime-time slots, reserving those for full-rate bookings. Menu items include “45 Minute Lessons for \$99,” “Lesson Plus TPI Golf Body Evaluation for \$149” and a “One-Hour On-Course Lesson for \$199.” The 2016 version of this promotion generated many responses and drew several “defector” clients back into Doug’s lesson book. **PG**



#### (Taxes, Continued from page 1)

in equipment. TCJA allows full expensing for five years (and increases the Section 179 small-business expensing cap to \$1 million, from \$500,000.) If you’re a W-2 employee being compensated via the standard paycheck, you may find that your federal tax burden is reduced because you’ve dropped into a lower tax bracket. That’s information you can readily access online by inputting a certain annual salary and letting a calculator gadget spit out the bracket (and tax liability) that goes with it.

Those are the elements of the law that are most likely to affect golf instructors and, at the same time, are easily explained. The factors that are likely to impact your taxes but are more complex—and more influenced by specific family situations—involve the deductions you’ve been taking on your Schedule A. Mortgage interest, charitable contributions, the dependents you claim, state taxes you pay—those items may disappear from your return based on a much higher “standard deduction”—a blanket figure that is widely expected to reduce the number of taxpayers who itemize from roughly one-third to fewer than 10 percent. — *David Gould*

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# **PROONENT GROUP**

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# ARE WE CERTIFICATION-OVERDEPENDENT?



**By Lorin Anderson, Founder**

Ten years ago, the PGA Show was literally begging Proponent Group to run education events to incentivize our members to come to the Show. At the time, there was almost nothing that would induce a serious instructor to attend the merchandise-focused event. Fast-forward to 2018, and seemingly everyone tied to the instruction industry was running education seminars and certifications aimed at teachers. Yes, this is great news for any instructor who wants to continue learning. And, for the game's top teachers, the learning should never stop. But, I'm a bit concerned that some instructors are becoming fixated on certification programs as definitive proof of their legitimacy.

Look at any teacher's website these days and you're likely to see five, six, seven or even a dozen or more certification "badges" on their homepage. Interestingly, a lot of the younger teachers turn out to have more of these emblems on display than do instructors with decades of experience. Does this "badge mania" lull some of our members into a false sense of security that they have acquired more knowledge and/or actually know how to dispense that knowledge in an expert way to their students.

I believe that while the "10,000 hours" theory has been somewhat disproven as an ultimate benchmark for developing professional expertise, there is no shortcut to teaching greatness and golf instructors must hone their craft over an extended period of time. They must work on their skills with hundreds and hundreds of different students before reaching a notably high level of competence.

If you visit the Proponent website and open the Certifications menu you will see more than two dozen opportunities for our members to gain new insights from these programs. A few years ago it was probably less than 10. Let me be clear: I'm not saying don't pursue any and all of these opportunities, but also understand that going to one- or two- or three-day events does not make you an expert in anything. These programs are really just a starting point toward developing expertise.

As I often do, I will use my wife Cheryl as a case study. She has been trained and mentored by Mike Bender for more than 20 years and uses that very deep knowledge base as the framework for her teaching. She goes to two or three certification programs each year to fill in areas where she would like more information. Every now and then she'll find a certification program that adds significantly to her understanding of a specific issue and she'll follow up by attending additional sessions of that program. She also likes to audit certification programs that are getting "buzz" in the media. That way she will grasp their fundamentals and be able to speak intelligently about them should a student ask her opinion.

Having a mentor relationship with someone like Mike Bender is the ultimate "certification program" and if you look at most of the game's superstar teachers, you'll find in most cases they spent many years working under a top-tier teacher (or teachers) to acquire much of their knowledge base. There really is no shortcut.

Make sure you are developing a deep grounding in a well-developed methodology and that you have a consistent sounding board for your questions – like Cheryl has in Mike – so that you are able to build a consistent framework for analyzing and building golf swings. Don't get tricked into thinking you know more than you really do just because you've spent some money and time on the "certification circuit." PG

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# WHAT I'VE LEARNED: ANN MARIE GILDERSLEEVE

**DIRECTOR OF INSTRUCTION, AUSTIN COUNTRY CLUB, TX**

**INTERVIEW BY PAUL RAMEE, JR**

When fresh-faced young golf professionals show up for their first job interviews, virtually all say they have embarked on this career out of a deep love for the game—further, they're dead certain nothing will cause their devotion to waver. Hearing such assertions, veterans of this challenging business sometimes wonder in silence if things will indeed work out that way.

Proponent Group member Ann Marie Gildersleeve is the living embodiment of the young golf instructor who threw herself into the job with unbridled passion and never lost her spark. A dual PGA and LPGA member, she is director of instruction at the venerable Austin Country Club. She was honored in 2014 as Teacher of the Year in the Southern Texas PGA, an accolade to go with her four Teacher of the Year selections in that section's Western Chapter. She is a three-time U.S. Kids Top 50 Teacher (2005, 2006, 2007) and in 2008 received the US Kids Master Kids Teacher Award. Known as

an expert clubfitter, she also serves on the Leadership Advisory Staff of Titleist. Formerly a senior instructor at the Harvey Penick Golf Academy, she is the founder and executive director of the Harvey Penick Foundation. Ann Marie is the co-author of the Harvey Penick Teaching Manual for Instructors, and contributing writer for numerous publications within the industry. On pages 4-5 of this newsletter you can read about her PGA Show presentation to fellow Proponent members. Below you'll find a lengthy look at Ann Marie's career and her many discoveries, through Paul Ramee's recent one-on-one talk with her.



Gildersleeve gets to work with many top juniors at her home base at Austin Country Club. The pennants in the hitting bay attest to their continued success at the next level.





Gildersleeve has spent nearly 20 years at Austin Country Club, home of one of her mentors, Harvey Penick of "Little Red Book" fame.

### **How did you get introduced to the game?**

I lost my dad to cancer when I was nine and my grandfather stepped in and spent a lot of time with me and my siblings. He loved the game of golf and would frequently take me with him to the course. I'm sure a lot of his friends thought he was babysitting me, but his love for golf was passed along to me. Plus, he taught me so much about the game.

As a kid I played sports like hockey and softball. I had three brothers who were all athletes and we played any sport that was in season. Playing with the boys taught me to be tough and wipe away the tears.

### **But you ended up specializing in golf.**

I progressed along as a player and eventually knew that I would rather help others enjoy this great game than pursue the playing side. I joined the LPGA first, which provided me great insights, then I became a member of the PGA. Having dual membership in the two associations provides me with great relationships and insights that I don't think you get when you are a member of just one association.

### **Sounds like you had good antenna for valuable learning experiences, all along.**

I would say that's true. It certainly applies to my connection with my second mentor, the legendary instructor, Harvey Penick. Harvey's "Little Red Book" challenged me to develop my eyes. At that time VHS was the only video available and I felt more "zoomed in" when I used video, felt that I could see things better. There was an opportunity to interview for the

Teaching Professional position at Austin Country Club and during my interview Dale Morgan offered me the chance to come out and teach twice a week. I wrestled with accepting a part-time position. Dale, who turned out to be my third mentor, then called me back the next day and offered me a full-time position. I said yes right away and I've been at Austin CC for 18 years.

### **How would you describe the club, and the experience of working there?**

We have a pretty extensive waiting list and people don't drop off it—they're willing to wait for their chance to join. I attribute the wait list to the success of the club and the environment we've been able to create. It is certainly a family club, where everyone is welcome. Dale is only the third head professional the club has employed, going back to 1899, so the stability of the head-pro position and the quality of the people who've held it has been key to our success.

### **You're known for working with juniors, but would you say you teach the full gamut of players?**

I would, for sure. I could be teaching a beginner one lesson and a tour player the next, so that variety really keeps it exciting. I remember working with Tom Kite in 2008. Tom will take a lot of lessons and get different viewpoints, which is great. So, in 2008 we were working together and I told him just to stay on point. I told him, "If you do that, you will win again." We discussed a timeframe of three months for that goal, to get him where he



Harvey Penick's son Tinsley told Gildersleeve to carry on his father Harvey's legacy, but to also "create her own."

needed to be. As it turns out, on the 90th day he won—the 2008 Boeing Classic.

**In a case like Tom Kite's, where he is taking in all that information, what happens if he decides it won't work? How does he "unravel" where he is?** He does it himself. Tom has amazing confidence and the ability to "self-fix" and sort through what he thinks is working. That's a skill golfers need to learn. Even my juniors are given that chance, or you could say, that responsibility. I let them start the conversation and direct what we're going to do—unless they're lost and need me to get them grounded again.

#### How active are you on Social Media?

My social media extends to the person in front of me. I will text my players to stay in touch, but I focus on the person in front of me, and that relationship.

#### Austin Country Club recently hosted a WGC event. That must have been memorable.

It was eye-opening. The tour, the players and the local fans got to see what Austin CC was all about—what an amazing place it is. As a staff, we gave up the learning center for the week to the caddies. But, we were on the range and got to really zoom in on the tour players' swings and interact with them.

#### Following a legend in Harvey Penick must have been a daunting task—how did you accomplish it?

Coming from the Harvey Penick Golf Academy and moving to Austin Country Club, I was excited and felt prepared to carry on Harvey's legacy right there at his home club. I never lost sight of his insights and how he shared those insights with his students. His son Tinsley told me to carry on his legacy, but also told me: "Create your own."

#### Any favorite passages from Harvey's books?

There are so many, but my favorite is "Take Dead Aim." No matter what you do, it applies. "Take Dead Aim" means so much more than just hitting a ball to your target. He left the books behind to help others, it is great to be the one that meshes the old—meaning, his writing—with the new, and by that I mean all our technology for coaching.

I read the books daily. They provide me emotional support. With my younger students, it's nice to see his books come alive through our work together. It is my goal to keep his books alive, and you'll see a customized logo made up of a silhouette of Harvey and the words "Take Dead Aim" on every piece of golf apparel I own.

#### As you are "meshing" the old and the new, what are your thoughts on technology?

I often ask, "What Would Harvey Do?" I believe he would embrace it as a tool and use it when necessary. He would definitely assess whether it would help the player. His use of video was a matter

Gildersleeve focuses on building long-term relationships with her students and doing whatever it takes to create an environment that allows the student to succeed in reaching their goals.



of watching his players on TV and then picking up the phone and calling them.

#### If I were to take a lesson from you, how would it be structured?

Typically, we would spend some time in the beginning getting to know each other. I don't have a pre-lesson questionnaire—that's not a tool I've ever really used. I want to know what I can do to help them, by getting to know them. I'll write on a white board as we talk, then they take a photo with their phone that they can take with them. I encourage them to interview me and see if they want to create a relationship. Then I am there to help them with the action plan and create an environment to succeed. I love teaching kids. I am just a big kid at heart. Kids can barely sit still and I was that way, myself.

#### Tell me about your students.

They are great, they teach me every day, I am so lucky to have had 100 players go on to play at NCAA schools. I'm fortunate to be able to say my students have gone on to play the PGA Tour, Champions Tour, Adams Tour, and become collegiate players—men and women both, in NCAA Division 1, 2 and 3. Players I've coached have qualified and competed in all the USGA competitions. I genuinely care for my players as people, they know they can show me their tears

as well as share in the happiness and rewards when they play well. I love having them around me. Everyone calls me the "pied piper" because I am rarely in a one-on-one environment with students. My players watch me teach other players. Lessons with me are open and inviting, and I enjoy the chaos.

#### Other than the Penick books, which do you consider valuable?

I typically gravitate to older books. I probably have 250 or more books in my library. But the best books are the people in front of me on the lesson tee.

#### How do you deal with players who are lacking in self-belief?

I am not really a sports psychologist but I do try to get them to believe that their identity is not golf. Sometimes you have to take a look at the parent-child relationship. The parents can really take the wind out of the kid's sails. You know they love their kids and you have to get the helicopter out of them.

I tend to ask the kid, "How much involvement do you want here from your parents?" A meeting with the coach, the player and the parents can be beneficial, to help the player navigate along with his or her "team." The player will learn to manage their team rather than be managed by it. That's a great lesson that will help them throughout their life. **PG**



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## MEMBER MILESTONES

FEBRUARY 2018

## WELCOME PROONENT GROUP'S NEW MEMBERS FOR JANUARY

**TY BEASLEY**, Conaway Golf Instruction, Sarasota, FL – Associate Member

**DAVE BRITTON**, Dataw Island Club, St. Helena, SC – Full Member

**PHILIPPE BONFANTI**, Isle of Purbeck Golf Club, Swanage, UK – International Member

**SEAN CAIN**, The Legends Golf Club at Chateau Elan, Braselton, GA – Associate Member

**STEFANIE FERGUSON**, Experience Golf at Common Ground Golf Course, Aurora, CO – Associate Member

**KATE GRANAHAN**, Saddlebrook Golf Academy, Wesley Chapel, FL – Associate Member

**WALLACE HAMMERTON**, Belfair Plantation, Bluffton, SC – Associate Member

**JASON HYATT**, St. Louis Golf Lessons at Big Bend Golf Center, Valley Park, MO – Associate Member

**BLAKE JIRGES**, Henry Brunton Golf at Strawberry Farms, Irvine, CA – Associate Member

**RUSSEL JOHNSON**, Boccieri Golf Research & Performance Center, Scottsdale, AZ – Full Member

**NICHOLAS KEEFER**, Lakewood Country Club, Rockville, MD – Associate Member

**ERIC KEELER**, Gulph Hills Golf Club, King of Prussia, PA – Associate Member

**JOHN KIM**, The Legend at Arrowhead Golf Club, Glendale, AZ – Full Member

**BRAD KIRKMAN**, Golf Academy of America, Myrtle Beach, SC – Full Member

**MARK KORNIVES**, Keith Hills Golf Club, Buies Creek, NC – Associate Member

**MARISSA KULIG CROW**, Lyman Orchards, Meddlefieeld, CT – Associate Member

**MARIA POLOZOLA**, St. Louis Golf Lessons at Beg Bend Golf Center, Valley Park, MO – Full Member

**BRYAN PATE**, Martis Camp, Truckee, CA – Associate Member

**MARC ROSA**, Wanakah Country Club, Hamburg, NY – Full Member

**DAN WHITTAKER**, Dan Whittaker Golf, Cheshire, UK – International Member

## INTERNATIONAL AWARD WINNERS

**Paul Horton**, the PGA of Canada's 2011 National Teacher of the Year has now earned the "double" being named the 2017 National Coach of the Year. He received his award during the PGA of Canada night at the recent PGA Show in Orlando.



Paul Horton

The Professional Golfers Association of Great Britain announces that **Dylan Ross** is now approved as an Advanced Fellow Professional of the PGA. The association's board acknowledged Ross's career achievements in his ongoing role in the development of golf in Mexico where he is based.



Dylan Ross

Congratulations to both long-time Proponent members.

# PROONENT GROUP

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**Andy Hilts** Director

**David Gould** Staff Editor

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## THE PREMIER NETWORK OF GOLF INSTRUCTORS

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7580 Golf Channel Drive, Orlando, Florida 32819 • (407) 878-1235