

COLLADODATE PROPONENT GROUP

PROPONENT GROUP NEWSLETTER \$20

DECEMBER 2018

SHOW LINE-UP FOCUSES ON JUNIORS AND SALES GROWTH

Our upcoming PGA Show program begins Tuesday, January 22, in Room W109B at the Orange County Convention Center with our second annual Junior Day, co-hosted with College Golf Connect. It will focus on the most current available information for teaching and coaching junior golfers. The lineup includes eight sessions running 8:30am-3:00pm: **Kris Hart** on What You Need to Know About High School Golf; **Bernie Najjar** on The Ground and the Junior Golfer; **Mark Oskarson** with What You Need to Know About the AJGA; **Ryan Dailey and Matt Reagan** on What Operation 36 Can Teach us About Growing the Game; **Preston Combs** on Teaching Putting to Junior Golfers; **Ping Clubfitting Experts** on What We Learned about Junior Club Fitting; **Mike Bury** on 0 to 1 million Views, My Social Media Journey and **Dr. Joe Baker** with The Science of Greatness, What We Learned from the Best Players.

Tuesday Junior Day is \$75 for Proponent Group members. To register, contact Brendan Ryan at brendan@bmrpgolfmanagement.com.

On Wednesday, January 23 our focus will be on sales techniques in sessions conducted by Proponent Director **Andy Hilts**, who has extensive experience in training golf instructors in effective selling. These two high-impact workshops will hone your sales skills and are based on Andy's popular Summit presentation. They run from 9am-noon and from 1-4pm. Each session will cover the same content and there will be a nominal fee of \$75 to attend. Register today on the members' website by clicking on the Show Registration link in the left-hand menu.

On Thursday this year we once again will co-sponsor the day's program with Golf Biomechanics. Highlights will include PGA National Teacher of the Year **Jim McLean**, who will discuss his approach to Mentoring Teaching Professionals. McLean will then join an expert panel on Mentoring Young Professionals that also will include **Rick Hartmann, Chris Toulson and Sam Wiley**. Additional speakers include **Joey Wurtemberger** with his thoughts on Building a Tour Player. **Dr. Robert Neal** will present Developmental Swing Mechanics: A Journey Through the Ages. **Debbie Doniger** will speak about women in teaching and her experience in the golf media. Mental-game expert **Paul Dewland** will cover The Principled Approach: Is it the same for the Elite Junior, Club Golfer and Tour Player?

Check out our full PGA Show Week schedule, with additional speakers and all presentation times, in upcoming member emails.

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MEMBER MILESTONES: New Members plus PGA 2018 Section Award Winners

2019 PGA SHOW: FULL PROPONENT GROUP PRESENTATION LINEUP

Proponent Group's meeting room W109B will be busy for three full days during the 2019 PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando. The full schedule is below:

Tuesday Jan 22

Junior Development Forum Presented in conjunction with College Golf Connect. Presenting Sponsor: K-Motion.

- 8:30-9:15am **Kris Hart** – What You Need to Know about High School Golf
 9:15-10:00 **John Dunigan** – Fundamental Motion - A Quick-Start Guide to Building a Swing Right from the Start
 10:15-11:00 **Mark Oskarson** – What You Need to Know about the AJGA
 11:00-11:45 **Ryan Dailey and Matt Reagan** – What OP36 Can Teach Us about Growing the Game
 11:45-12:30pm **Preston Combs** – Teaching Putting to Junior Golfers
 1:00-1:30 **Ping Clubfitters** – What We Learned about Fitting Juniors
 1:30-2:15 **Mike Bury** – 0 to 1 Million Views: My Social Media Journey
 2:15-3:00 pm **Dr. Joe Baker** – The Science of Greatness: What We Learned from the Best Players

All-day pass for Tuesday's Junior lineup below is \$75 for Proponent members. Non-member fee is \$99. To register contact: brendan@bmrpgolfmanagement.com

Wednesday, January 23 Sales Training Workshops

- 9:00-Noon **Andy Hilts** – Sales Training for Golf Instructors
 1:00-4:00pm **Andy Hilts** – Sales Training for Golf Instructors

Each session will cover the same content and there will be a nominal fee of \$75 to attend. Register today on the members' website by clicking on the Show Registration link in the left-hand menu.

Thursday January 24 Presented in Conjunction with Golf BioDynamics

- 9:00-9:50am **Paul Dewland** – The Principled Approach: Is it the Same for the Elite Junior, Club Golfer and Tour Player?
 10:00-10:50 **Joey Wuertemberger** – Building a Tour Player
 11:00-11:50 **Debbie Doniger** – Women In Golf: My Journey
 1:00-1:50pm **Dr Rob Neal** – Developmental Swing Mechanics: A Journey Through the Ages
 2:00-2:50 **Jim McLean** – My Approach to Mentoring Teaching Professionals
 3:00-3:50 **Jim McLean, Rick Hartmann, Chris Toulson and Sam Wiley** – Panel Discussion on Mentoring Young Professionals



Jim McLean

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 November, these were the 10 most-watched videos:

- 1) **Don Hurter** – Introduction to DECADE
- 2) **Dr. Rob Neal and Layne Savoie** - Wedge Craft: Friction, Spin and Launch
- 3) **Trent Wearnor** – Golf Scrimmages
- 4) **Tyler Ferrell** – A Good Release: The Shoulder or the Wrist?
- 5) **Mike Bender, Martin Hall, David Leadbetter, Lynn Marriott, Cameron McCormick and Pia Nilsson** – Summit Super Panel
- 6) **Dr. Rob Neal** – Biomechanics in Action
- 7) **David Grecic** – Self-Efficacy
- 8) **Mike Duhamel and Brad Faxon**– Short Game: The Science of Timing and Tempo
- 9) **Dr. David Wright** – Maximizing the Application of Force
- 10) **Henry Brunton** – Managing the Expectations of Parents

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TURNING YOUR SIGHTS UPWARD



By Andy Hilts, *Director*

Traveling home from last month's Summit, I thought about the broad range of topics it covered. This was my 11th time attending, but my first time as Director. As you'd expect, the job that I do now covers a range of duties and responsibilities. That being said, the absolute constant for me is going to be the Top Line.

And by that I mean the *top-line revenue* each Proponent member brings in.

There's a mismatch between the value our members provide in the marketplace and the financial rewards they receive in return. That mismatch gets corrected by an increase in top-line revenue. You can trim your costs to try and improve the bottom line, but it won't get you far. If you turn your sights upward, toward that line at the top, you'll be spending your energy much more productively.

Here's something that may help, from the Investopedia website: "On an income statement, 'sales' are usually referred to as the 'top line,' since the term 'sales' is often used interchangeably with 'revenue.'"

Hmm, two words with equivalent meaning—revenue and sales. I haven't come across any instructors who are uncomfortable with that first word, revenue. In fact I've never met anyone, in any field, who gets antsy about it. But the other word is tricky—especially when you realize that focusing on "sales" could turn you into someone who's out there "selling." Certainly we'd all rather be "coaching."

Well, here's a weird thing about Proponent Group members: While they generally aren't very comfortable with sales, they seem to love sales training.

At least that's how it's turned out, as I've made my first presentations to groups and done my first on-site work at

member-owned golf academies. It was awesome to work with Bobby Clampett's team at Impact Zone Golf right after the Summit. It was also gratifying to receive this note afterward:

"Thanks Andy, for sharing your wisdom and insight and helping me and my team gain a clearer understanding of how to best meet our student's needs, as well as create a better business model for our instruction business. — Bobby."

I'm not trying to pump my own tires by sharing that comment, just making a point. Actually three points:

- Well-designed sales training takes a deceptively complex process and explains it, by breaking it down into its component parts. Good sales training makes sense and clears up misunderstandings. Proponent members are wired to appreciate this. They like learning.
- The more sales training any person gets, the more they let go of their old discomfort with "selling." They see that it's all about helping people, solving problems and creating high-quality experiences.
- Sales training helps a skilled instructor move farther along toward the true "coaching" mode, in which long-term performance goals are set, a plan is created and valuable motor skills are acquired.

The amateur golfer out there hasn't read Dr. Rick Jensen's books. He doesn't come to you thinking about "motor skill acquisition" and how it is best achieved via "the coaching model." People need you to explain all of that to them. Most if not all members could do it more efficiently, in more cases, in a more authoritative way, i.e., as the expert.

Presenting the plan you're so talented at creating, and getting your students to commit to it, requires you and your team to have a sales process. Members I've worked with so far seem to find it liberating to get past their old antipathy to selling and see it as a favor to the student.

My goal is to have members embrace their training so fully that when they hear the word "sales" only one thought comes to mind: It's a synonym for "revenue"! **PG**

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HOW ARE YOU CONNECTING NEW GOLFERS TO THE GAME?

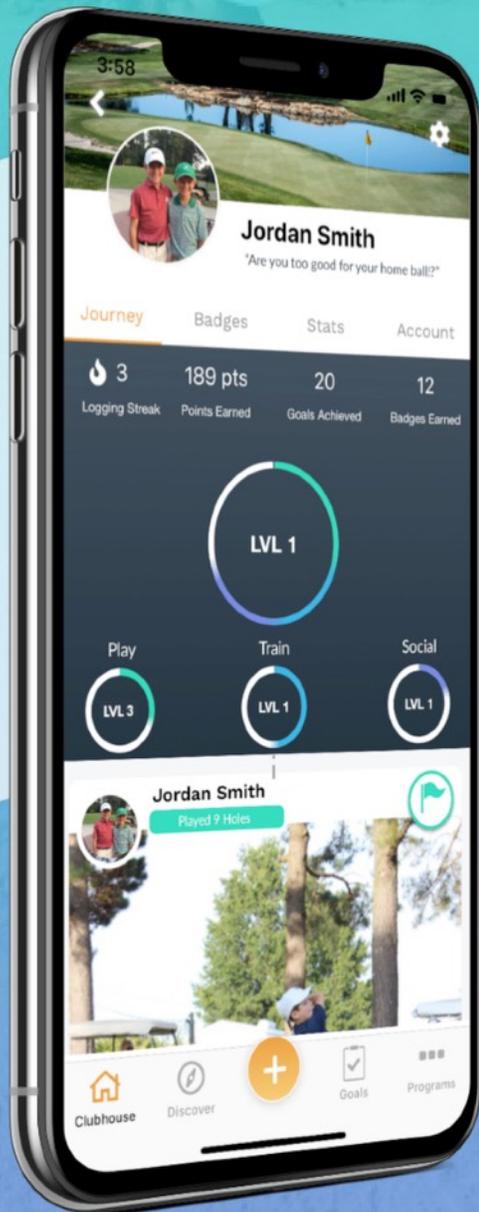


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JUST PUBLISHED: INSIDE STORY OF CHICAGO ELITE GOLFERS

EXCERPTS FROM 'DEVELOPING GOLFERS INTO PLAYERS' BY JOHN PERNA

By David Gould, Staff Editor

An instruction book of striking originality has just been published: "Developing Golfers into Players," by Proponent Group member John Perna. The author is founder and president of the Player Service, an elite junior academy in suburban Chicago that is becoming well-known for its uncanny record of golfer success.

In keeping with his penchant for unconventional approaches, Perna came up with a format for the book that proves both fresh and compelling: His students, along with two affiliated coaches, tell the story of the academy, topic by topic, in a dozen-plus separate chapters.

John himself is the voice of one chapter, which opens things up and sets the stage. From there each student or coach tells their personal story, meanwhile explaining one element of the academy's multi-faceted system of training. It's a book for coaches, because it explains the how-to of coaching as this academy practices it. It's also a book for coaches because the personalities and human experiences of the juniors-turned-collegians come through in such poignant fashion.

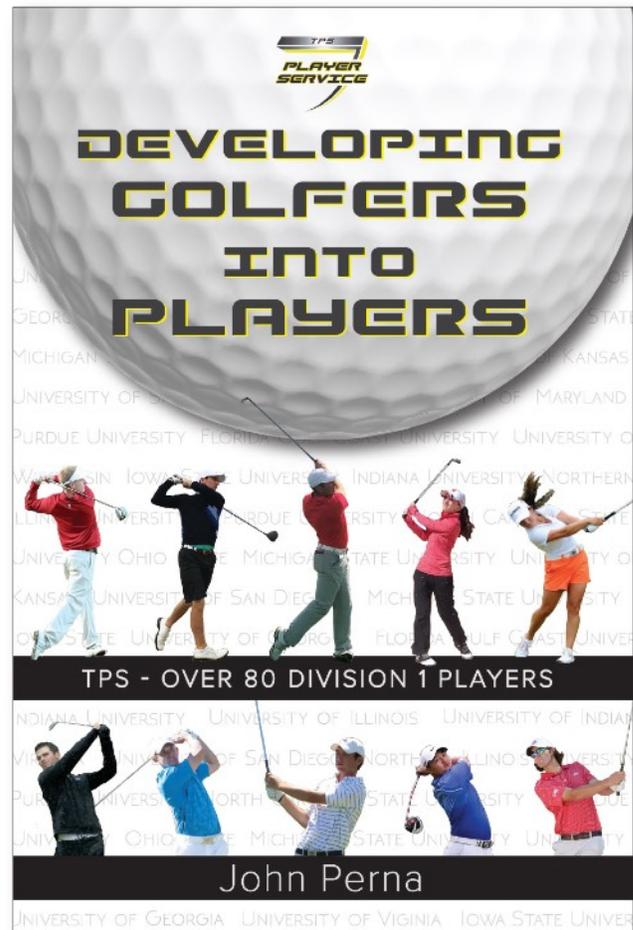
This selection of passages from "Developing Golfers into Players" carries the name of the speaker prominently in a sub-heading at the top of each passage—keep in mind as you read along that it's a series of different narrators, not one voice. Again, it leads off with John Perna, and some explanation for why and how he built the program as he did.

Think about any worthwhile activity that is difficult to master. Clearly, there are various ways you could attempt to become good at it. You could devote yourself to learning it on your own. You could find a fellow learner and the two of you could help each other along. You could find an expert and hire that person to teach you.

Or, you could combine the benefits of all those approaches and immerse yourself in a community of skill-learners, training as a group under the guidance of someone with relevant expertise.

The Player Service is a

It's only fitting that the story of a golf academy built on communal learning and self-discovery be told, poignantly, in the voices of the players, themselves.



company, but I think of it more as a community. In fact, if TPS weren't designed as a community, and were not organized to bring students and coaches together in a personal way, I doubt it would succeed as a company.

One of the reasons it wouldn't succeed is that I wouldn't be very motivated to manage it. I'm not much interested in golf skill-development that's organized around the traditional one-on-one format. My strong preference is to develop talented junior golfers in a communal environment, because that type of environment encourages self-discovery. As I see it, self-discovery is the essential ingredient to accelerated learning.

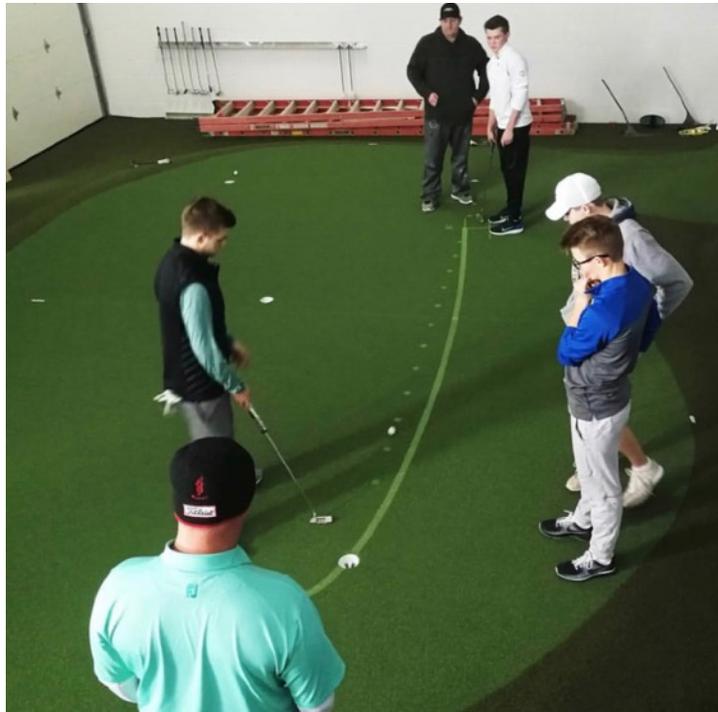
Golf isn't thought of as a team sport, since at the professional level 99 percent of all competitions are individual. But that doesn't mean we can't introduce a powerful element of community and togetherness into the golf-improvement experience. You can do it very successfully with juniors and you can do it just as effectively with adults.

This concept really hit home with me as I was studying—of all things—the evolution of the American motorcycle business. Most people don't realize that for decades Harley-Davidson ranked No. 2 in U.S. manufacturing to the leading brand, which was Indian. Even as Harley managed to build bikes that were just as fast or faster than Indian-built bikes, they still couldn't compete with the brand equity Indian had built.

Then the company hit upon a strategy, to establish motorcycle clubs open only to Harley purchasers. The idea was to bring together like-minded riders who would share their common passion. These clubs became more critical to business-building than the bikes, themselves, because they created something much bigger—*community!* This concept is what TPS was built on and continues to be the building block that makes us grow and succeed.

Because we have turned out 80-plus Division 1 NCAA golfers, we get a fair number of golf coaches coming to visit us and observe our training system. Not long ago a visiting college golf coach saw me working with a player, eventually giving him a drill to practice. When that session was over, the player made dramatic progress and the visiting coach wanted to ask about the drill—how it was designed, and so forth. His assumption was that the drill, or the language I used to describe it, is what led the student to his quick improvement.

That's natural enough, but I feel it misses the point. Every competent golf coach has effective drills they give their students. At TPS we call these “tools in



“Students buy into the system because they see their own results and they also see fellow students achieving success. As a result, the community becomes the system.” – John Perna

your toolbox.” And although the tools (drills) have merit, we believe the learning environment supersedes any drill or training tool and thus is the fundamental cause of efficient learning.

We've built a training system and a training environment, and our players come to know each of these things very well. Our training system is what separates TPS from other golf academies. One aspect of the system involves correct hierarchy or sequencing in the use of technology, for example Trackman. In order to become a TPS student in the first place, one must attain a grade of 90 or above on a certification test and write a five-page essay, all about the system.

Although students are all different, the sequence and systematic interpretation of the data is the same for all. This allows our players to get into their fix—their adjustment—quickly and easily. So, TPS players are constantly seeing that sequence being followed. They study each other's process. The students buy in because they not only see their own results, they also observe all their fellow students achieving tremendous success. As a result, the community becomes the system. — John Perna

Kyle Kochevar, TPS Player: The Advantage of Neutralization

Among all of us in TPS I go back the farthest with John—as he says, I was his first student. I was also the first player he coached using the technique he calls “neutralization.” If someone asks what neutralization means, here's the simplest way to explain it: “The ball flight creates the mechanics of the swing, instead of the other way around.”

Golf instruction is supposed to work best when it teaches a student to understand his or her swing well enough that they can coach themselves, when necessary. The usual example is a player competing in a tournament and not hitting the ball solidly. They'll

head straight to the range and try to come up with a new swing thought to fix the problem.

In that process, they are bound to think about mechanics. John understood how easily these experiments with mechanics can lead to even bigger problems, especially during competition. In my case that was all the more possible, due to my lack of interest in mechanics. I believe John devised his concept of neutralization with me because I simply don't relate to the mechanical facets of the swing, or to the terminology that goes with all that. Possibly that's because I'm the son of a golf instructor, and my dad taught me my swing so gradually that mechanical verbiage wasn't needed. I'm also left-handed, and I play left-handed. That is associated with being right-brain dominant, which I do feel I am. Working with John and learning the technique of neutralization taught me to fix ball-flight problems by going to the range and creating other ball flights. "Use one shot to fix another," is a phrase we use, which is another way to summarize the process. Neutralization has freed me up mentally and kept me away from paralysis by analysis.

We train in TPS using "periodization," which is the science of identifying ideal time periods to train your technical skills and ideal periods to train more by feel. We're also taught in TPS that working on mechanics will always pull you out of the "flow state." If you're on the range using mechanical thoughts, you may feel like you're fixing things, but I find it's nearly impossible to achieve peak performance if I'm being mechanical.

There are all sorts of problems that arise from the mechanical approach. It causes a golfer to operate in the left hemisphere of the brain and activates their pre-frontal cortex. You can't achieve your athletic potential that way. When a player achieves peak performance, or gets into the zone, they are in the right brain—more specifically in the cerebellum. This is where the game feels effortless. You are living the present moment one shot at a time, one moment at a time.

When a player is mechanical or position-oriented it causes them to be analytical and as a result forces



“Here’s the simplest way to explain ‘neutralization’: “The ball flight creates the mechanics of the swing, instead of the other way around.” – Kyle Kochevar

them to think with words instead of pictures. John’s two favorite phrases are “Think with pictures, not words” and “Pictures are the bridge from the conscious mind to the sub-conscious.” Training with the neutralization concept allowed me to think with pictures and as a result my game went to a whole new level.

From the beginning I was coached by John to hit shallow cuts and fades, especially in practice. That was our way to control and offset my very pronounced draw and steep angle of attack. He and I began working together in 2009, when I was in 10th grade and looking ahead to my first season of AJGA events. My dad, who had been my teacher up to then, was pulling back from that role, as he had always planned to do. He wanted to hand me over to John because he and John have different coaching styles and John’s system would get me to the next level. Going forward it would be all about shooting a score, getting mentally tough for competition

and learning to handle myself in tournament play, including the preparation. Sometimes your own father—even if he’s an excellent swing instructor—isn’t the right person for that job.

As the winter concluded I became more and more immersed in neutralization. My dad would comment on how great my swing looked, noting that positions he and I had worked endlessly on were now so much sharper and more consistent. This blew my mind as I had not experienced a single conscious thought about positions.

Any time I was stuck on my swing or was having difficulty learning a new shot, John would just hit a shot and tell me to copy it. That makes it all the easier for a right-brained, left-handed golfer to pick up what they need by watching the coach “in the mirror.” A phrase he often said was “See it... and do it.” Never would he coach me so that I would see it, *think about it*, then *try* to do it.

When spring came I was in a good place—happy and confident. John told me we had achieved our goal. “You have all the shots now, Kyle,” he told me. “You can work the ball either direction, and control the

trajectory. You have the tools to play championship courses, but, more importantly your training has engaged your right brain.”

My first event in the spring was the AJGA event at Innisbrook in central Florida. John walked the cart paths watching me all the way. It was a 54-hole event with a cut after 36 and the field seemed stacked with talented players. To this point in my career this was the biggest event I had ever played in. We agreed that I would play tee to green with a methodical feeling of targeting a zone and hitting to it—a positioning-type approach.

He and I also used music to help me get into a relaxed, confident zone—a state of mind where I was serious about winning the tournament but still expecting to have fun in the process. He taught me that listening to music was a right-brain activity and as a result would also help me to get into the zone. I remember spending hours with him getting the playlist just right. John’s attention to detail was amazing. At the time I didn’t realize how many things he taught me just by example. I find myself now, as an adult, very organized and detail-oriented.

Even par on the Copperhead course at Innisbrook is 71, which is what I shot on my final round. I finished in fifth place, losing to the likes of Daniel Berger and Patrick Rodgers. It was certainly my best round ever in a big, nationally ranked tournament. I had no three-putts and no double-bogeys all week. The most important shot of the week came in the final round—it was a 6-iron from 175 yards to a tucked pin on a difficult par-4. The ball was a little below my feet in a fade lie, and that’s what the shot called for. I executed the shot so well, I holed it—and remember, five months earlier I could hardly hit a cut or a fade if you gave me 10 chances. I walked up to the green to find my ball in the cup, for eagle.

What made me so proud of this moment was that I had a bunch of college coaches standing right behind me and I had to hit a shot that was not natural to me. To pull it off the way I did really set the tone for me the rest of the year. — *Kyle Kochevar*



“Visualizing the goalpost uprights as a space my shot should pass through was not called ‘aiming’ by John, nor was I to feel that I was, indeed, ‘aiming.’” – Brian Bullington

Brian Bullington, TPS Player: The Target Is My *Intention*, Not My *Goal*

John and I developed a systematic mental approach broken into three steps—setting up the shot, creating my intention and then executing the intention. Two elements of this—first, where I placed my focus in creating my intention, and then second, the execution phase, proved to be most valuable. John and I built a unique visual element to help me free up. Our shorthand for it was, “Make a field goal.” He gave a football analogy that I really keyed into. What was particularly creative and unusual about using the uprights of a football goalpost as my visualization for golf shots is that I was allowed to “widen the distance between the two uprights” as much as I wanted.

Even more creative and unusual about the system was this: Visualizing the two goalpost uprights as a space my shot should pass through was not called “aiming” by John, nor was I to think or feel

that I was, indeed, “aiming” at the space between the uprights. By doing this, we took out any conscious or active wishing or wanting from the process of setting up to the shot and striking the shot.

How does that work? It’s simple: John would ask me: “Brian, do you *want* to hit the fairway?” “Do you *want* to hit the green?” “Do you *want* to make that putt?” Naturally my response would always be ‘Yes.’ John would then say, “In that case, you don’t have to *try*!”

He would ask me: “Do you think great athletes trust their instincts when they’re competing?” I would nod my head, and his next question would be along the lines of, “Do you think quarterbacks consciously aim before they throw the football?” “Do hockey players consciously aim when they shoot the puck? No, of course, they don’t. They simply allow their instincts to take over and do the aiming for them.” This concept blew my mind and once I just got out of the way and allowed my instincts to take over my alignment became automatic. As a result I felt at peace over the ball. — *Brian Bullington*

Charlie Netzel, TPS Player: Real-Time Visualization

To hit a great shot, you must have a crystal-clear intention. To get that type of clarity, you needed to develop a skill called real-time visualization. John told us this was essential to what he called “full engagement,” or getting the clear, entire picture of the swing, the stroke and the shot in full flight.

The first step was to go through our pre-shot routine, many times over, speaking out loud what we normally kept as silent thoughts, and do this to a constant metronome beat with John and all the other players listening.

Up until that day I had never done such a thing—I would never have thought to state my intention out loud. I’m sure none of us had. Once the session got going, and players were audibly stating the steps to their pre-shot routine, I found the experience to be strange. A non-golfer may not understand this, but to speak your inner thoughts as you’re getting ready to hit a shot takes something that’s very private and really puts it out there. The longer we did this, however, the less I found it to be weird and the more I found it enjoyable.

The key to the exercise was the application of the metronome. John would always say that the purpose of the pre-shot routine was to quiet your mind and create the rhythm that you needed to execute your best swing. And the beat of the metronome was a big support for that process.

There was another activity John gave to us, similar in nature. It took something we kept private and brought it into the open, and this served to bring us together as a group, at the same time that it provided a lot of insights. Through this activity we learned that one player in the group routinely shut their eyes for two seconds to get calm, and that someone else pulled on the brim of their cap as a sign to themselves that they had committed to the shot. Everyone’s thoughts and quirks would trigger the next person to reveal what they did. To me this form of sharing was one more great thing about being part of TPS.

In these exercises, you could recognize where another player was getting into specific detail but also where they were fuzzy in their attention, or totally skipped over something important. Then, when it was your turn again, you saw exactly what your own technique for the pre-shot lacked. You could see the parts that were consistent and the parts that weren’t.

For example, I might say, while standing behind the ball, “It’s 170 yards and I’ve got 7-iron.” But I haven’t mentioned the target. So, I might try it again and say, “It’s 165 yards to clear the left bunker and I’ve got 7-

iron.” To this day I use this technique, in a slightly modified way. I refer to it as I “say the shot, then hit the shot.” — *Charlie Netzel*

Dan Hudson, TPS Player: The Advantage of Periodization

My freshman year at Kansas was a difficult period for me. In the summer before heading off to school my game was in excellent shape. I competed in the U.S. Amateur at Atlanta Athletic Club, striking the ball very well and missing match play by a single stroke. A few weeks later I was at KU and wondering what had happened to my golf game. The coaches set up a six-round team qualifier and out of 12 Kansas players I finished dead last, by 10 shots. Needless to say I didn’t compete in our first tournament. I did get into the next two tournaments but didn’t play well. After that I went through the rest of the fall not playing in our tournaments.

When the semester was over John and I sat down with the attitude of let’s-figure-this-out. One of John’s trademark sayings is “Be solution-oriented, not problem-driven.” He told me we should start with statistics. We needed to look at my play and my scoring very objectively, based on the numbers. What stood out from the score analysis was how poorly I had scored on par-5 holes. We isolated the problem of way below-average driving accuracy. I was putting myself in a position where I couldn’t attack. From where my drives were ending up the idea of making birdie, much less eagle, wasn’t even a consideration.

So, we had something we could work with, something “measurable,” to use a word you’ll hear a lot in TPS training.

Since we were heading into the competition portion of our periodization training, and we were not going to be able to focus on mechanics, John decided an equipment change was needed. We went to his club builder and had him make me up a driver with a cut tendency and 3-wood with fairly similar loft but with a face angle that

set up a draw tendency. “We’re going to build your bag off the par-5s,” is how John put it. He made me vow never to use the driver on a hole that demanded a right-to-left shot off the tee and never to use the 3-wood on a hole that demanded left-to-right trajectory off the tee. I was also to use the 3-wood off a tee only, never off the deck.

We worked with these clubs until I had confidence in the new plan, meanwhile we did some other skill-based short-game training. Then it was time for me to head back down to Kansas for second semester. The results were good. I went from only hitting 44 percent of the fairways and playing the par 5s over par to

“John’s pre-shot exercise took something we kept private and brought it into the open. It taught us a lot, and was another way that we came together as a group.” – Charlie Netzel

hitting 72 percent of the fairways and playing the par 5s at almost a half-shot under par. That spring I played in every one of our team tournaments and I was never outside the top 25—with a couple of top-10 finishes in there as well. From being a complete bust in the fall season I had become one of the top players on our team in spring tournaments.

In hindsight I understand what happened to me at the beginning of freshman year. In my time at TPS we had built a training system where if I executed the plan it was inevitable that I would play well. Then I left home, left TPS and I was in a different system, one that used a different schedule and different techniques. I was having trouble getting with the program. I would be participating in team practices thinking, “Why don’t I have the option to do my TPS system?” I got frustrated mentally. It was a bit of immaturity on my part. The plain fact is, when you enter a system you have to adapt to it. That’s just reality. I got home at Christmas break and regrouped. John and I talked things over, we built me those new clubs, he gave me a couple of drills and we agreed that whatever the results, good or bad, I would stick with our new streamlined plan. And as I said, things got a lot better. — *Dan Hudson*

Dana Gattone, TPS Player: The Benefits of Benchmarking

John knew from the beginning what a very big motivator it was for me to feel like I was on the same track as Brian, David and Tee-K and all the boys in TPS that I looked up to. After I’d reach a certain plateau in a skill area he would introduce new segments to my program. As he was doing it he would say something like, “This is what the guys are working on,” or “I work on this exercise with David.”

I would be thrilled to hear that and more eager than ever to start on the new drill. Usually he said this in a casual way, but not always. I recall a few times him saying, in a serious tone, “You’ve moved along far enough to be able to work on what the guys are working on, Dana.” I could tell he was proud of me and was making a point of saying it. Again, it was powerful motivation.

The component of the TPS system that has made the biggest difference for me is group practice—that’s a constant within the Player Service. Everyone has rivalries with each other and we all try to beat each other in our little competitions, but we’re always rooting for one another, too. John has instilled in all of us the desire to win and compete at the best of our ability. At the same time, if we

happen to lose we want it to be to another TPS player. One day we played a chipping game and I was up against one of the older boys. I chipped in twice, beating him at the game, and the other guys loved seeing that. The boy I beat knew he’d hear about losing to this little girl for a long time. For weeks after that whenever I saw him he was practicing his chip shots.

John keeps reminding us that what we’re doing is about golf but it’s also about much more. The longer you’re in the system the more places you go to compete and the more TPS-logo golf bags you see when you get there. When you see that logo you automatically think, well, here’s someone who speaks our language and shares our TPS attitude. You also think, here is a player who will probably be up on the leaderboard once the tournament starts. And it really does seem to work out that way.

Whenever I would go to our college tournaments I was fired up about our team playing great and putting up our best possible scores, but once I’m was on the range and saw another TPS player I’d go over and set up in the next station. Within a few minutes the two of us would be doing our TPS thing—isolating different skills, setting up little combines and competitive games, keeping each other’s numbers... just like a thousand times at home. When my fellow TPS player Brooke Kochevar was playing for the University of Maryland and we were at the same tournament we would always practice together on the range and putting green, doing our competitions. People would scratch their heads, but eventually you could feel they were envious—it was like, wow we want to do that, too.

When I went away to college as a freshman and joined the Illini women’s team, I realized I was spoiled by the high level of training I’d received in the Player Service. You get a lot of structure in TPS, but from the very beginning you’re taught to internalize that structure so you can organize your practice time in a disciplined way and get the most out of it. You’re expected to discover things on your own, and you get the tools to do it. College is different from high school in that you get a lot of unstructured time. I would see college players trying to practice their golf efficiently but to me it looked like they were

kind of wandering around. I never doubted that I would be able to use my time well—in sports as well as in academics, which are both major priorities. I’ve been a Scholastic All-American and an All-Big Ten Scholar, and good time management has been a big part of that. — *Dana Gattone* PG

“You get a lot of structure in TPS, but you’re taught to internalize that structure. You’re expected to discover things on your own.” — Dana Gattone



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WHAT I'VE LEARNED: NICOLE WELLER

THE LANDINGS CLUB, SAVANNAH, GA

INTERVIEW BY PAUL RAMEE, JR

The enviable professional bio of Proponent Group member Nicole Weller can be read in full at her website, nicoleweller.com. To try and summarize it in the space available here is challenging. The temptation is to cut to the important stuff and testify to her personal warmth and quiet charm. Proponent is known for attracting people of fine character, nonetheless this generous and altruistic individual stands out.

In 2013 Weller—based at The Landings Club on Georgia's scenic Skidaway Island— became the first person to receive National Junior Golf Leader honors from both the PGA and the LPGA in the same year. She is a U.S. Kids Master Kids Teacher and is certified with U.S. Kids Golf as well as Spirit of Golf. That same year, 2013, she was listed on the 2017 LPGA / Women's Golf Journal Inaugural LPGA Top 50 Teachers List.

In 2016 she and Dr. Patricia Donnelly completed a two-year development project unveiling a turnkey certification program to help golf professionals introduce youngsters ages 2-5 into the golf culture. If you've seen Nicole work with that cohort, you're aware that it's possible to do—and do well. The Weller-Donnelly online certification program

In 2013, Weller—who is based at The Landings Club on Georgia's scenic Skidaway Island— became the first person to receive National Junior Golf Leader honors from both the PGA and the LPGA in the same year.



provides a complete yet adaptable curriculum and optional equipment kits as needed.

Nicole is a co-author of the LPGA Girls Golf Playbook and enjoys a longstanding partnership with both Little Linksters and The Littlest Golfer. She's done her bit on the committee side, as well, serving on the LPGA-USGA Girls Golf of Savannah Board, and likewise serving two terms on the PGA National Youth Player Development Committee, the LPGA Education Committee and the PGA Special Awards Committee. She has piled up some documented intellectual property, too, building a business called Weller Sports Ventures, LLC and another known as Little Golf T.R.A.I.N.

Nicole published her children's golf book, "Stick to Sports: Let's Play Golf," in 2011 and a flashcard memory game, Match Play Golf, in 2014. She and her husband and fellow PGA member Ty Weller, have been in Savannah since 2005.

Her fellow Proponent member Paul Ramee took a stab at covering all these achievements—and more—while seeking Nicole's thoughts on a range of coaching-related issues—in the interview that produced this transcript.





In 2016 Weller and Dr. Patricia Donnelly completed a two-year development project unveiling a turnkey certification program to help golf professionals introduce youngsters ages 2-5 into the golf culture.

You got started early in golf and apparently you've never slowed down. How did it all begin?

Right around age 4, when my father decided to become a golfer. My parents, both of whom are immigrants, settled in Lakeville, Mass., a town between Boston and Cape Cod. They built a home on the 10th hole of a course called Heritage Hill Country Club. Dad would take me out there—he played his round and I would pull his cart, wandering off to catch butterflies and bullfrogs. I got my first set of clubs before I was in kindergarten. We still have some 16mm film of my first swings. By age 8 or 9 I was playing local junior events. That turned into bigger state-wide tournaments, and then regional and national events. I played on the boys team in high school, making co-captain my senior year.

And then on to Wake Forest, after graduation.

Yes, on a golf scholarship. I finished my bachelors and then pursued a masters degree in sports psychology at the University of Tennessee. I remember asking myself whether I should go into sports psychology with a golf background or specialize in golf with a psych background.

Were you feeling the golf part move more into the spotlight?

Well, during my time at the University of Tennessee I ended up working at Cherokee Country Club. I started out doing carts, working on the range, covering the shop when needed. I then slid into an assistant role and as I was finishing my masters I could see golf instruction was taking up more of my time. At that point I realized I needed to get a better background with respect to teaching. I moved over to Fairway and Greens Golf Center in Knoxville, which

is a wonderful learning center. At that point I also applied for LPGA and PGA membership.

Talk a little about your formal psychology training and what you do in your work day to day.

I distinguish between the mental and emotional game. People know that I work with those aspects and that I'm not just a technique teacher. I don't want to be just a technique teacher. To me it's more interesting for all involved to get out on the course and talk about strategies and options.

Have you been able to win your students over to that sort of mindset?

I think a lot has to do with the clientele—their desires and their learning styles. Some people will come in and say “fix me” and that makes my heart cringe. If we are going to have that type of lesson then I yes, I can provide what they're asking for, knowing that they aren't open to the bigger picture. We'll have discussions about how it isn't a permanent “fix” but we can manage the situation. I will still try and give them an intro to motor skill learning and if they don't become open to it, I'll spend a lot of time on how to practice, opening their eyes to different ways to improve.

Who are some of the valuable mentors you've had along the way?

I've learned a lot from good people whom I consider really good friends, people I've met in the LPGA and in Proponent Group. Carol Preisinger, Nancy Quarcelino, for example. I've always enjoyed spending time with them and watching how they run their operations. I love anything Rick Jensen does and anything Lynn and Pia do, over at Vision54.

Weller is heading into her 14th year at The Landings Club in Savannah, GA.



What about earlier on?

My first coach, Bob Day, was a PGA professional—he is now retired. I still use some of the things Bob taught me, from the time I started with him at age nine. Then there's my dad. Interestingly, he was really game-based. The two of us would enjoy all these little challenges we would come up with. We had a wintertime contest up in New England, for example, where we would try and hit low shots over a frozen pond. The goal was to only let it bounce twice before it got to the other side. If it bounced more than that you got a penalty stroke. We also had an after-dinner putting contest in our basement one year that went on and on. When it was over we had each made a couple thousand putts and Dad was "one-up" for the winter.

At this point how long does it take you to complete an article or complete your prep for a speaking engagement?

I would say that for me to complete an article—when the mood hits me—it would take 20 minutes. And then usually I would continue on and put together two or three of them, because my mind is engaged in that topic. For a speaking engagement it really depends on what is involved. For the live teaching demonstration I just did at the Proponent Summit, I had to scout around to find some junior golfers to help me with the presentation. Obviously there is a time factor in making those connections and securing the equipment I need, on the road. But for a typical PowerPoint presentation, it takes me several hours to get ready.

How do you share with your players this philosophy concerning time off and getting away from the game?

I'd say you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink, so as much as I try to provide guidance, I still see kids and parents pushing. I encourage kids to play different sports and not just train one side. That's why I love the Speed Sticks, because you train both sides. I want them to have a social life, so when I structure their practice, I have them do something for 10 or 15 minutes, then switch. I don't want them hitting balls for an hour straight. I'll tell them to go do something else, then come back and see if they remembered what it was they were doing. I do still see some parents who just keep feeding them golf balls and have them block-practicing all the time.

Tell me about your team and the staff you have around you.

We have around 14 pros on the island and four golf shops, with one head pro and at least two assistants per shop. I'm working with pros who also have shop duty. We have one pro who does club repair and teaches, so I can rely on him to help teach. So, we don't have a full-time staff, we have many pros who do teach, just not full-time. It would be great to have a youth golf leader in the future. We have about 15 kids in the academy, and another eight or so who are competing regionally or nationally. This year we had a fun qualifier based on the Drive, Chip & Putt model.

Talk about being a being a dual member of the LPGA and the PGA.

It certainly is an honor to be a member of both. There are different feels to each. The LPGA has a really cool sorority feel and it feels like a sisterhood—a bunch of girls getting together who love to teach and play golf. The PGA has a different feel. It's been working to get more



Weller's knowledge of key techniques for teaching juniors and successfully bringing them into the game at a young age has led to many speaking opportunities.

women involved. I would definitely say the PGA is more business-oriented. I love the LPGA style of teacher training, where you have to teach in front of an evaluator for two or three lessons. I get it that this is difficult to do at a much larger scale. The PGA has 28,000 members, the LPGA has 1500, so it might not be practical to be able to get everyone evaluated this way in the PGA.

What was your feeling as you got ready to attend this year's Proponent Summit?

I was on the agenda with my interactive session involving kids from age 2 to age 5, so I certainly focused on that. The idea was to show fellow Proponent Members who don't work with kids that young how much fun it can be. I was looking forward to catching up with some friends, as well. Meanwhile the Landings Club is currently considering a teaching facility and the Summit offered me a great chance to ask some questions of fellow members who have them already.

We always like to ask about technology: What are you using currently?

I have a Surface Pro4 and I use Coaches Eye, Live View Golf and Tour Tempo. I have an ES 14 that gives me enough numbers that I can use with my students. A lot of EyeLine Golf, not technology, but great feedback. We have a FlightScope at one of the clubs, we typically use that for clubfitting. With the new facility, we're looking at TrackMan and K-Vest. Swing Catalyst and BodiTrak are also under consideration.

Describe a typical working day for you.

During the busy season I'm up between 5 and 6 a.m. I like to get ready early, get caught up on emails and

then prep for the day. I'll teach about 8 or 9 hours of lessons on a busy day. I make a habit of checking on the members on the range. If there is a tournament or event at the club I might be involved with that, as well. A busy day is typically 12 or 13 hours. After I finish teaching, I spend an hour or more on wrap-up. I used to bring that work home, but not so much anymore.

What kind of follow-up can a student expect after a lesson?

I just got into Edufii, which is now CoachNow. I wish I would have caught on earlier. I use it during the lesson and send the notes and comments to the student immediately.

If I came and took a lesson from you what would our time together be like?

For a first-time lesson I would arrange an assessment of one hour on the course. I'd conduct an interview as you were getting warmed up, using a standard list of questions I ask. I'd watch you play a few holes and talk about the highlights. Afterward I would follow up with an email with the bullet points and the options to correct and ask for your feedback. This approach allows me to "share the road map."

You have a long season, and could presumably teach as much as you want. How do you stay refreshed and not run yourself down?

That is always a challenge. Sometimes I leave the summits we attend a little overwhelmed with all the things that need to be done. I unplug at the end of the day, and I silent my cell phone ringer at night. I will check in at certain times, but I do try to separate, in order to recharge the batteries. **PG**

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THE FUTURE OF INSTRUCTION, INSIDE THE GATES

DO PLANNED COMMUNITIES HOLD NEW POTENTIAL FOR GOLF COACHES?

By David Gould, *Staff Editor*

Back in the day you could make a tidy fortune building gated golf communities, but not anymore. Golf real estate developments have faced financial woes and some are already defunct. For entrepreneurial golf coaches, the troubles in real-estate golf may provide opportunity. That's due to a growing trend toward partial course closures and other schemes that repurpose golf holes. When red ink swamps a property, doing nothing isn't an option, so people get inventive.

In some instances the remedy is extreme—every last acre of fairway in a community gets plowed up for more homes. At that point there's no need for instruction programming. But many of these bailouts and workarounds come with a strong incentive to retain some green space and at least some version of golf recreation. That's where instruction—and its capacity to perform well in smaller spaces—comes in.

Proponent Group member Ben Blalock understands the business model for instructors at communities, having worked six years at the prestigious Long Cove Club on Hilton Head Island. As he watched even a property like Long Cove get pressured into marketing homes and memberships more aggressively, Blalock went job-searching. He is now happily relocated to a family-oriented club in booming Raleigh, N.C., the 36-hole Northridge C.C., which has housing around it but is a standalone business. During his search, Blalock investigated an opening at a club in Charlottesville, VA, one that had undergone the kind of repurposing any golf coach would love to see.

"That facility, Farmington C.C., took a regulation third nine and had Coore and Crenshaw redo it as a 'practice campus,' which includes a Performance Center with five indoor bays," says Ben. "It's got 10 short holes, and what they did with the rest of that land is off the charts, from a teaching perspective."

In no way would Blalock put Long Cove in the troubled-community category—he and his wife departed

Hilton Head seeking to raise their kids in a diverse and stimulating environment such as the Research Triangle, where they ended up. But he gets it that the golf amenity within a real estate development can fall into financial trouble relatively easily, and that real estate covenants make it difficult to redevelop the entire thing.

One expert on this topic, Whitney Crouse of Mosaic Clubs & Resorts, spoke recently about the challenge of shutdowns. "In a lot of ways it's pretty hard to make a golf course go dark," comments Crouse, "People have many reasons for wanting to avoid that, or reverse it if it happens." That strong sentiment helps fuel the new



Red Ledges in Utah, home to a new "Golf Park," hosts a Jim McLean Golf School facility.

ripple of energy and creativity on the part of people who think some type of retrofit would bring about compromise and at the same time produce profits.

In the Chicago suburb of Highland Park, entrepreneurs recently asked the city to reconsider its plan to convert a struggling municipal course to a nature preserve with walking trails. Their alternative concept, according to news reports, was "an entertainment center named The Golf Mecca." The project would have six regulation holes, "a putting course featuring peaks and valleys, a practice area for children 10 and younger, a cafe and an indoor facility with golf simulators and a virtual putting green."

The group behind this idea included a course architect and a well-know venture capitalist. They even sketched out something called “The Angry Nine,” a series of short holes with “treacherous bunkers and extensive humps, bumps and hollows.” That’s actually a compelling idea: Don’t bother building a torture-track golf course, just devote a few acres to penally difficult features,



A course in a planned community, gone to seed and ripe for a “practice campus.”

especially at your greensites, and let people indulge their masochism for half an hour. Coaches could use an area like this to attempt attitude breakthroughs, on the part of students who’ve developed skills but not much confidence.

Gated communities that are doing well have jumped ahead of this curve, bringing new ideas to their golf component so they can continue to prosper. Red Ledges, the development in Utah that’s home to a Jim McLean Golf School, is a prime example, having commissioned Jack Nicklaus to build his first-ever 12-hole Signature Golf Park. Southern Hills Plantation, in Brooksville, Fla., has done something similar, likewise the Teton Springs community in Victor, Idaho.

Over the long haul you want to be on the correct side of as many business trends as possible. Right now in the world of master-planned developments, critics have dusted off a 20-year-old report that predicted great difficulties for golf real estate projects.

Written by the New Urbanist developer Bob Turner, it’s titled “Sustainability Through Design” and it “pointed out that low-density developments spread too many amenities over too few homeowners, creating an unsustainable burden,” according to one commentator. “Instead of an expensive golf course, New Urbanism provides parks, playgrounds, and schools that serve people of all ages,” the commentator adds. For reference, New Urbanism (a.k.a. Traditional Neighborhood Design) is a discipline within the planning community that touts mixed-use, human-scale projects limiting the need for transportation by automobile.

This school of thought makes excellent sense and has produced remarkable results, but its backers aren’t aware that golf can be packaged in compact acreage as long as what’s designed fits with the “practice campus” concept and there’s a high-energy coaching and learning component. New Urbanist thinking actually hints at this,

as this quote indicates: “For decommissioned courses that are located [in or near] existing suburbs, I’m wondering if we can’t have it both ways: Why not use part of the land for ecological and/or recreational purposes, but part for moderately dense infill development, with a mixture of types and price points for new housing?”

Apply this thinking to the golf community

model and you start to see a market for golf instruction and alternate forms of play, serving the residents of the development, but also drawing on those outside it. Maintaining the right to teach non-residents has been pivotal for Proponent members like Mike Malizia, who holds the director of instruction title at Harbour Ridge Yacht and Country Club in Stuart, Fla., a private 36-hole enclave. Malizia arrived at Harbour Ridge six years ago under an agreement that allowed his large following to follow him in.

“My students included a lot of wealthy people who were candidates to buy property or memberships or both,” says Malizia. Seeing that, Harbour Ridge decision-makers waived their policy of insiders-only for instruction. “It’s the only way you can set things up in a place like this,” says Mike. “When you first arrive the demand from residents is very strong, but over time it fades, in part because people just grow old.”

Reaching out to Proponent Group members for comments on this topic was somewhat tricky, given how few have chosen the gated community as a place to hang their shingle.

“The way to make this work is to come in selling your name and promoting the value of your existing clientele,” says Malizia. “And you really have to educate the people you’re negotiating with, because they’re coming from real estate, or some corporate background, not from a golf background.”

The 1990s-era concept of golf and real estate is no longer current, that much we know. It’s also apparent that dedicated teaching professionals who wish to maximize their value have been choosing other facility types over golf communities, especially private ones. But this corner of the golf market is changing—partly due to financial stress—and the potential for great teaching and coaching to become part of its new landscape is something worth thinking about. **PG**



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CASE STUDIES OF TEACHER - STUDENT COLLABORATION

YOU'RE ONLY 'GOLF READY' WHEN YOU LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND SEE A GOLFER

By David Gould, Staff Editor

The early years of Get Golf Ready brought positive feedback from teachers. The program's design seemed sound and it proved popular with would-be golfers and returnees. One problem did come to light—what to do with GGR participants “post-graduation. This case study of Proponent Group member Noah Horstman and a student of his, Leslie Levine, helps reveal what the post-GGR challenge is really about—creating self-identification as a golfer.

A newbie could learn enough technique to scrape it down the fairway and absorb enough etiquette so they wouldn't fear looking foolish, and seemingly the player-development mission would be accomplished. One would figure the person was ready to tee it up regularly or, all the better, begin a program of lessons and practice. Horstman, director of instruction at Beechmont Country Club in Cleveland, sees additional ladder rungs.

He feels it is up to the coach, through intuition and experience, to figure a way to imprint the game onto a student's personality—to the point where they say, reflexively: “I am a golfer.” It's a project requiring a high level of attunement to what makes each person tick, and, at the recent Proponent Summit, Horstman learned more about this from a coach who's respected worldwide.

“I listened to Colin Swatton talk about his work with Jason Day and other players,” recalls Noah, “and I realized that if you're doing this job right you might actually devise a new vocabulary, or a new way of conducting the conversation, customized to the person in front of you.” Horstman could see that he had instinctively tried this with Leslie without putting a name to it. Swatton's presentation did that for him. Whenever a clinic group Leslie was part of had finished, Horstman would ride with her back to the clubhouse and field a stream of questions. Terms like “thin” or “in the neck” sparked her curiosity, and he'd explain their meaning, encouraged that she wanted to learn the lingo.



Noah Horstman

She exhibited a fairly rare combination—competitive by nature but with no background in sports, and at the same time enthusiastic about working out and keeping fit. When it comes to athletics there are many breeds of cat we can easily spot, but an adult woman who was never a jock yet is zealous about exercise? That's one variety it may be difficult for a male coach to lock onto.

“I couldn't talk to her about the way a pitcher shifts weight to follow through,” he says. “That wasn't available. But she certainly was in shape. She was surprisingly strong for a woman only five feet tall.”

Leslie came to Horstman with a built-in golf buddy—her friend, Dana. Even that advantage had a hitch, however: Dana had played golf in the past and—from the first day the pair showed up for lessons—could get it airborne very consistently. The comparison between her topped grounders and Dana's ball in flight was a lot for Leslie to bear, an issue Noah countered by telling her, many a time, “*This is your first sport.*”

One day a few months into their work, Noah told her: “Now that we know you're a golfer, I want another perspective on your body motion.” By that he meant he wanted a colleague on the fitness-training side to do some work with her. It was a turning point. For starters, he had

used the magic phrase, “we know you're a golfer.” Meanwhile, the interweaving of fitness and golf was giving her ownership of both. “I work out” and “I'm a golfer” became a paired notion in her mind.

The golf-improvement plan soon had some fitness goals woven into it, further adding to Leslie's comfort. When winter came, Horstman took aim at a lingering problem related to the lack of sports background. “She really had no way to get to her left side,” he says. “That kept her strength from showing up in ball flight.”

He devised a K-Vest parameter in which the training biofeedback was completely pegged to weight transfer and shoulder turn. At this point the physical conditioning, swing coaching and now a digital tool you can work with indoors proved a powerful combination. “Leslie started really hitting it square,” Horstman reports. Through self-images already in place, she had identified as a golfer, and now she was becoming a ball-striker. **PG**



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INDUSTRY TALKING POINTS YOU SHOULD KNOW...

While you have heard that golf is a stagnant industry and rounds played have been slipping for the past 15 years or so, the industry is still substantial in overall size. For example:

- Golf is a nearly \$70 billion industry.
- Golf impacts approximately 2 million jobs with \$55.6 billion in wage income.
- Approximately 143,000 charity events are held at golf courses each year raising \$3.9 billion with 12 million participants involved.
- 75 percent of golf facilities are daily fee or municipal and are open to the public.
- There are approximately 15,000 golf facilities across the United States.

PGA OF AMERICA NAMES 2018 SECTION AWARD WINNERS

Nearly a dozen Proponent Group members were honored in 2018 as PGA Section award winners, including seven section Teachers of the Year. Congratulations to all on these hefty accomplishments that signal your dedication to helping your students and peers grow in the game. Well done.

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