

COLLABORATE

Proponent Group

The Premier Network of Golf Instructors

PROONENT GROUP NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2016

PGA SHOW LINEUP TO COVER WIDE SPECTRUM OF TOPICS

Proponent Group is once again very pleased to host a broad array of educational sessions during the PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando—on Wednesday, January 25 and Thursday, January 26 in Room W109B, our annual home during the show. And, best of all, attendance is free for all Proponent Group members. Last year, more than 300 Proponent members came to at least one of the sessions.

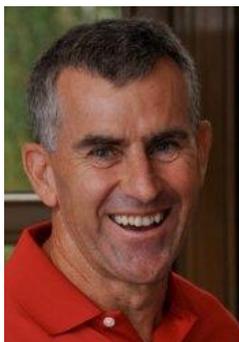
For the third year in a row, Thursday's sessions are being produced in cooperation with Golf Biodynamic's **Dr. Rob Neal** and **Karen Harrison**.

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

Another Wednesday highlight is our annual Associate Member Meet-up, led by Proponent Group President **Lorin Anderson**. This 90-minute open discussion will explore a wide range of career-building topics.

On Thursday, presenters will include instructor **Ted Sheftic** and his son **Mark Sheftic**, who will be making their first-ever presentations at a Proponent Group event. Ted will be explaining how he gets the most from using technology in his teaching while Mark will zero in on his keys to teaching with Boditrak.

The full lineup and schedule is included on page 2 of this newsletter. We'll look forward to seeing you at the Show. **PG**



(From top to bottom) Dr. Robert Neal, Mike Malaska and Ted Sheftic

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NEWS

FULL PGA SHOW LINEUP

Proponent Group 2017 PGA Show Presentation and Meeting Schedule

All sessions will be in Room W109B on the lower level of the Orange County Convention Center. All sessions are free for Proponent Group members. PGA and LPGA Continuing Education credits will be awarded for each session you attend and sign in.

Wednesday, January 25

- 9am **The Invisible Swing** – Mike Malaska
- 10am **Setting the Standard: The Future of Golf and Your Coaching Business** – Matt Reagan and Ryan Dailey
- 11am **The SwingTRU Motion Study - How Big Data is Improving Golf Instruction** – Nick Clearwater
- 1pm **The 5 Hurdles to Overcome When Transitioning Your Business from Hourly Coaching to the Results-Based Coaching Model** – Will Robins
- 2pm **Turning Your Knowledge into Digital Income** – Jim Shalhoup
- 3-4:30pm **Associate Members Career Growth Meeting** hosted by Lorin Anderson

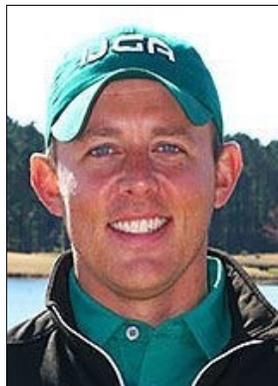
Thursday, January 26

- 9am **Incorporating Mental Game Techniques in Practice for Your Students** – Iain Highfield
- 10am **How to Structure Effective Practice** – Brendan Ryan
- 11am **Short Game: What the Experts Do** – Dr. Robert Neal and Layne Savoie
- 1pm **To Be Announced**
- 2pm **My 4 Fundamentals for Working with Technology** – Ted Sheftic
- 3pm **Teaching with Boditrack** – Mark Sheftic

Reminder: All sessions are in Room W109B in the Orange County Convention Center.



Will Robins



Iain Highfield

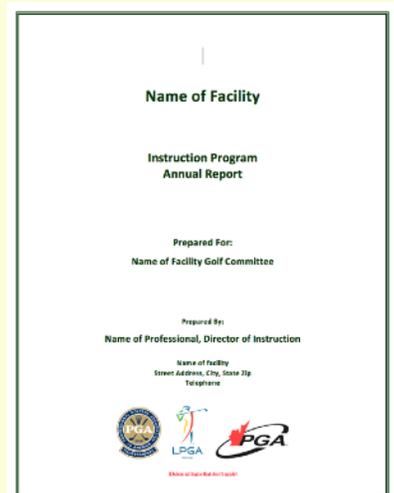


Brendan Ryan

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN

DOWNLOAD OUR YEAR-END REPORTING TEMPLATE FOR YOUR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Another year is winding down and for many of our members it's time for performance reviews, budget reviews and programming and personnel decisions for the upcoming year. A great way to show your leadership and make a case for



your suggested improvements for the new year is to complete our Annual Reporting Template for your management team.

The template helps you clearly document your instruction program successes from this year along with your suggestions on how to improve the instruction product in 2017.

Sections include: Men's, Women's, Juniors, Beginner and Private Lesson programming along with Clubfitting and Equipment Sales, Corporate Outings and Special Events. Continued Education and Staff Training that was undertaken during the year is also broken out.

You can download the template in the **Business Templates** section of the member website.

BIOGRAPHY WRITING GUIDE ADDED TO MEMBERS' WEBSITE

Every instructor should have a professional bio for their personal website, facility website, speaking engagements, media appearances and more. In fact, you may even need two versions of your bio if you do a lot of speaking and media engagements. A couple of months ago we tackled this topic in the newsletter and since then we've gone back and added a variety of samples of professional bios (both long and short form) from some of our members who have taken the time to put together a



professionally written and edited biography.

We realize that it can be intimidating any time you have to sit down and write – especially about yourself – but there are some very specific keys to

pulling together just the right bio for your promotional needs and your specific career background.

To access this guide, log in to the members' website and go to **Business Guides**. Look for **Golf Instructor's Guide to Writing a Professional Biography**.

In Memoriam: Peggy Kirk Bell

I have many fond memories of Proponent Group member Peggy Kirk Bell, a pioneer player, teacher and facility owner, who passed away on November 23 at the age of 95. Most vividly I remember when I was master of ceremonies for her induction into the World Golf Teachers Hall of Fame. What I remember most about that night was how hard people were laughing during her speech. I saw dozens of people wiping tears from their eyes they were laughing so hysterically. She was a funny woman. And gracious...and smart...and caring, just to name the traits most obvious to those who spent any time around her.

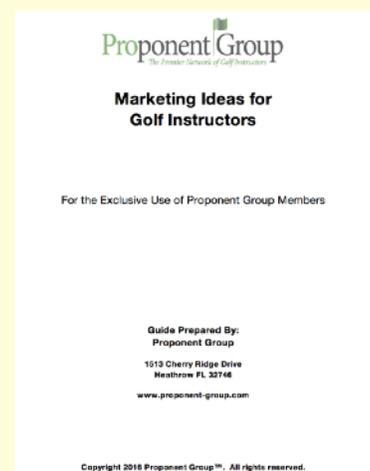


My wife, Cheryl, played an LPGA event at her courses in Southern Pines, NC and I remember Peggy, in her early 80s at the time, buzzing around the property all week. And what I recall most from that week was when she just happened to join my wife and me in the grill room at Pine Needles after the tournament ended. She was walking through the room and saw us, walked over and said "How are the hamburgers today?" Then she looked at my wife and said, "Did you have fun this week?" Cheryl said something to the effect of "I couldn't have had a better time," to which Peggy responded: "Well, that is the most important thing, isn't it?" We'll miss you Peggy. -- Lorin Anderson

WE'VE BEEFED UP OUR INSTRUCTION MARKETING IDEAS

**DOWNLOAD OUR NEW
MARKETING GUIDE FILLED
WITH ALL OF OUR WEEKLY
'RUNDOWN' IDEAS**

Members often ask our staff or their fellow members on our Facebook and Edufii groups for some fresh marketing ideas they can use to generate new interest in their instruction programs.



We listened and at the beginning of this year we began adding a marketing "tip" to each of our Weekly Rundown emails to the membership. We've now accumulated nearly 40 of these marketing ideas and we've loaded them into one document that you can download at any time and review. We'll add more as we produce them.

Some are very specific to instruction, some are general marketing ideas that can easily be adapted. To access these Marketing Ideas, log in to the members' website and go to **Business Guides** then scroll down to the **Instruction Marketing Guide**.

Tell Me Something I Don't Know

JACKIE BECK HELPS TEACHERS READ THE MARKET

By **David Gould**, Staff Editor

A noted expert on golf marketing and media, Jackie Beck has successfully operated her own media-relations firm, Beck Communications, since 2002. She began her golf career as an assistant professional, serving four years on the staff at Florida's 54-hole Innisbrook Resort, then crossed over into marketing at Spalding, where she advanced through several positions before hanging out her own shingle.

Since 2015, Beck has also served as head women's golf coach at Central Connecticut University. She was a fine college player herself, competing all four years on the golf team at Illinois State and eventually earning induction into the school's Sports Hall of Fame.

At the 2015 Proponent Group Summit in Dallas, Jackie gave a well-received presentation titled "Secret Shopper: Customer-Service Mistakes Coaches Make, and How to Fix Them." Beck's summit presentation was based on her exclusive Secret Shopper study of customer-service issues at 50 Proponent members' teaching operations. Her report had summit attendees interactively involved in the content, even studying their own websites on smartphones, real-time, as she went through actual examples of what she saw working and not working.

In a recent interview that touched on the secret-shop question, Beck added additional nuances. One point she made involved sub-dividing your evaluation process into specific areas or particular questions. "Is the golf shop delivering messages to you, with accurate information about people who have called asking about instruction? If you suspect that's not happening, have a few people you know and trust call in, asking about golf lessons," says Beck. "Prioritize the things you want to check on, and take them one or two at a time."

Your success as a teacher is based, she believes, on the answer to one question: *Who are you?* "That answer is the basis for your personal brand and what in marketing is called your 'brand promise,'" Beck says. For example, Dave Pelz became known as a short-game expert, and has spent most of his career fulfilling the promise that entails. "It doesn't mean Pelz couldn't charge money to help a student improve their distance and accuracy with the driver," she says, "it just means that he wouldn't overtly market himself as someone who's equipped to do that. I don't know if Dave was ever offered a big paycheck to write a book about driving, but if he were my guess is he would turn it down, because of the



Jackie Beck speaking at Summit '15

problems it would create around who he is and what his brand promise is."

On that basis, a golf coach who is rising in their career and becomes highly skilled in the teaching of green-reading and putting could continue to teach other skills, but in their branding Beck would advise an increasing emphasis on putting instruction. "Take what you're passionate about and then build a brand strategy around that," she says. "People will get it that you're sincere about the talents and skills you've built your brand on."

Of all marketing tactics in use today, the loyalty program may be most emphasized. According to Beck, loyalty programs build off your brand promise—

they could never be a substitute for delivering on that promise. "Value, in the customer's eyes, equals price minus experience—that's your equation," she says. "So, if it's a \$100 lesson and the experience was worth \$150 they will almost automatically come back." You've more than delivered on your promise, in such cases. When student satisfaction is very high, she suggests, you may want to hand out your loyalty rewards more for referrals than for their direct patronage.

"Change or die" is a mantra Beck has been trying to live by, the longer she's been in the business. The greater your longevity, in her view, the bolder you ought to be with new initiatives and tools, as you deal with a changing audience.

"When my generation broke into this industry, golf was dictating to the customer—that's over," she believes. "If you're serious about serving Millennials, who are one-fourth of the total U.S. population, you have to go deep into their world of social media, and above all you need them to know you are asking what they want, not dictating." Lately Beck has been wondering about a "flashmob" approach to something like a golf clinic. "Who is going to be the first coach," she wonders, "to get 30 Millennials into an intro-to-golf clinic by posting a flashmob announcement and letting them all just show up spontaneously?"

On a similar note, it's often said that women highly value the socializing aspect of their involvement with golf. Beck heartily agrees, and she would urge greater emphasis on the social angle. "Some directors of instruction will schedule a Chips and Sips clinic and be overly concerned about whether whether chipping can be taught properly in this type of setting," she says. "I say, 'Who cares?' The women are happy. Some nights they'll be fine with skipping the golf part altogether—let them!"

If you have reservations, ask the participants. "Ask and listen," Beck repeats. "We have to get over the idea that we know better than the customer." **PG**



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STRONGER THAN EVER AFTER 10 YEARS



By Lorin Anderson, President

Ask my wife if I'm big on anniversaries and she'll roll her eyes. But I have to admit I was a bit shocked, excited and amazed when I realized that next month begins Proponent Group's 10th anniversary year. For those of you who know me well, you know that this is a labor of love. I have a lifelong

passion for the game, a huge respect for your professional talents and a thirst for understanding the world of business. So, as you might guess, Proponent Group is pretty much my dream job.

Looking back it has been a very interesting ride from the very beginning when I launched this venture as AMF Golf Management's Instructor Division. After a partnership change we became Golf Business Network in year four and in year five I bought out my partners and settled on Proponent Group as our brand identifier. By the way, synonyms for "proponent" are "advocate," "champion," "promoter," and "cheerleader." All of us at Proponent Group will happily stand behind any and all of these descriptions of what we do.

While the name hasn't changed (and, trust me, I have no intention of ever changing it again) we did partner up with Golf Channel Academy a little over two years ago and that new partnership has helped us better manage our costs so that we will be able to keep our Full Member dues at the same rate now as when we started a decade ago! How's that for fiscal responsibility? The Golf Channel alignment will also provide an opportunity in 2017 to provide our members with some new business tools that could provide a nice turbo charge to your current teaching business. I can't wait to tell you more as the new year unfolds.

In the meantime, I took a look back at where we've already been and when you lump it all together it is pretty gratifying to those of us who chip away as your advocates one day at a time. Some of the highlights include more than 1,400 member requests for business consulting or information each year.

Members also access a treasure trove of business insights behind the wall on our members-only website. In a typical year the videos in our vast library of presentations are watched nearly 5,000 times. We also have more than two dozen business guides and business templates that are downloaded more than 500 times annually.

The Job Search portion of the website is one of the most popular and includes loads of information on cover letters, resumes and preparing for interviews. In the past year we also posted more than 50 open teaching positions, some exclusively found only on our job board.

The annual comp survey gets more valuable each year and we create personalized comp reviews more than 40 times a year for members to use when negotiating their contracts.

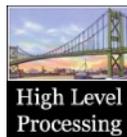
Simply put, there is no other repository like this for golf teachers and I hope you will use these resources more than ever in the coming year.

Over the past decade we've steadily grown from 119 members at the end of our first year to today's combined total of 678 Full, Associate and International members thanks to your unwavering support and referrals.

While anniversaries are just a number, I can tell you that your Proponent team of Lori Bombka, David Gould and myself are as fired up as ever to deliver to you the most valuable business and career-building tools for your teaching business that have ever been assembled for golf instructors.

Thank you for putting your faith in us. We plan to continue to earn your trust every day so that we can celebrate many more anniversaries with you in the years ahead. **PG**

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TAKE IT FROM 'GOOD TO GREAT' IN 2017

By **Ian James**,
RetailTribe CEO

It's been a fast 15 years since publication of the standout business book, "Good to Great," by Jim Collins. The theme Collins hit on remains evergreen, of course—anything in our business operation that's done adequately could potentially be done at a high level. One example would be your online marketing and communication efforts. Let's take a close look at that by posing a few pertinent questions.

1. What percentage of your communication offers value on its own?

In other words, the communication, article or post wasn't a sales blast. It was content the golfer could read and use the next time they're at the range, on the course, in the gym. Generally speaking this category of content includes swing tips, drills, game management advice, technical thoughts, relevant fitness exercises and so forth.

Over a third of the online content you publish in your web, email and social spaces should be valuable to the reader on its own. Achieving that target supports the proposition that you're there to help the golfer to fulfill his or her dream of playing better golf.

Given all the how-to content I've seen from Proponent and Golf Channel instructors I have two pieces of advice for how to tweak it: Ask more questions while giving fewer answers, and link each question to a performance challenge or improvement. Asking a question of the golfer makes them psychologically respond to the video as part of a one-on-one conversation between you and them. That is much more powerful than the perception of a "blast" communication (one-to-many) from the professional.

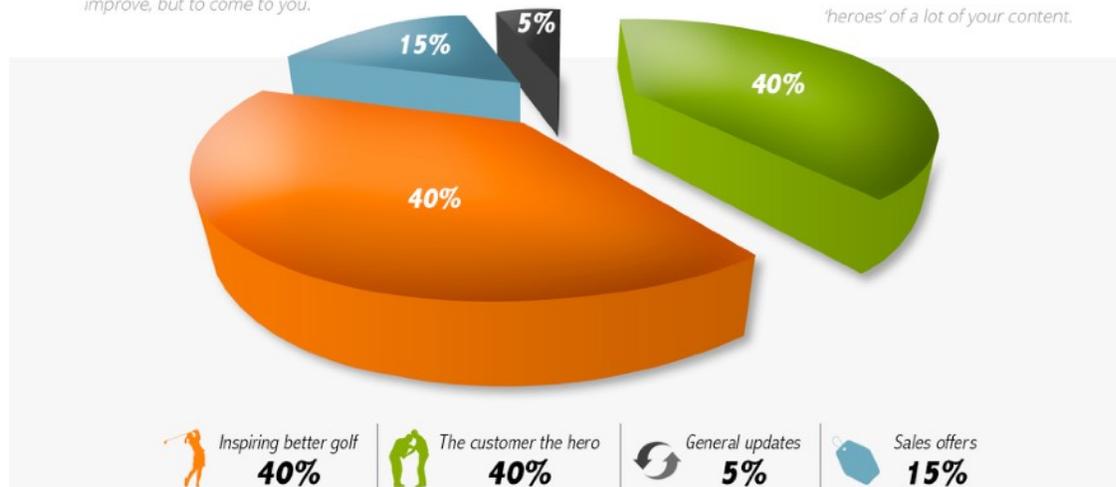
Crime shows and mystery novels highlight their plots with "cliffhangers" to hook the viewer or reader

Inspiring Better Golf

Tips, drills, advice, etc all designed to inspire the golfer not just to want to improve, but to come to you.

Hero Customer

If you're in the business of improving golfers, then they should be the 'heroes' of a lot of your content.



The split of content published by category for a golf coach ought to be something close to the breakdown above.

Note how the amount of content that includes a specific offer is between 10 and 15%.

All of your other content should of course include the opportunity to contact you if assistance or further clarification is required.

and heighten their interest. You can do that in a golf-tip video. Think about demonstrating a sound takeaway and top-of-backswing position then freezing things right there as you pose a question. The obvious one would be: "So, having gotten to this position, how do you start back? Which part of your body initiates the downswing?" That will engage the viewer and draw them in—ideally they will get up off the couch and make some swing motions, checking for how they initiate the move down. *(Continued on next page)*



And that is what you want. You don't want them thinking about you at this point. You want them thinking about *themselves*, their golf swing, their performance. Those are all thoughts much more likely to inspire action. And you'll further inspire your video-viewing golfer by relating your question to a performance metric that contains a challenge: "Nearly 75 percent of golfers who lose the ball to the right, especially with longer clubs and off the tee, don't start the downswing correctly."

Don't, in this video, tell them what their first movement should be. Leave them with a cliffhanger. Can you see how this would prompt a golfer to take action, i.e. to speak to you directly?

2. How much of your published content made a hero of a golfer or golfers?

The typical purpose of any specific marketing communication is to support the understanding of your 'proposition' or to inspire golfers to take an action. If your proposition is: "*No one knows more about the golf swing than I do,*" then go ahead and create marketing content that is all about you, showcasing your knowledge of the golf swing.

WISH I HAD AN IMAGE

I follow over a hundred PGA Professionals on Facebook. I have looked back over November and cannot find a single post that makes a hero of a golfer. How shocking is that!

But if your proposition is more like: "*We want to help more golfers get more out of their golf game and more enjoyment on the course,*" then you need to 'hero' the golfers who have achieved those goals by working with you.

Your website needs to scream it, so that anyone visiting your site sees this immediately. Your emails should tell great stories about golfers and their improvements. Your social posts should be filled with pictures of golfers enjoying themselves in practice pods, clinics, coaching sessions. Your videos can even be before-and-after comparisons, highlighting delivery of your proposition. If you care about individuals, then show your care.

individuals, then show your care.

3. Was the content you sent to your audience part of a Campaign Plan?

Do you divide your calendar year into a series of marketing campaigns with specific marketing, engagement and sales objectives? Do you then have a Content Plan that supports those campaigns?

If you want to sell short-game coaching programs in March, it follows that in January and February you should be publishing content to inspire your readers and
(Continued on next page)

The Purpose of Video Instruction

Traditionally, golf instructors will plan and execute a video explaining how to perform a particular shot. In the video, they provide us with their expertise and technique advice, probably expecting us to try it on the range and thereby improve our shotmaking. Teachers have given us everything from "how to hit a knockdown 6-iron with a soft draw" to "how to take the spin off an 8-iron approach." Derek Hooper, Director of Instruction at Royal Oaks in Houston and a Proponent Group member, is as good as I've seen at creating this sort of content.

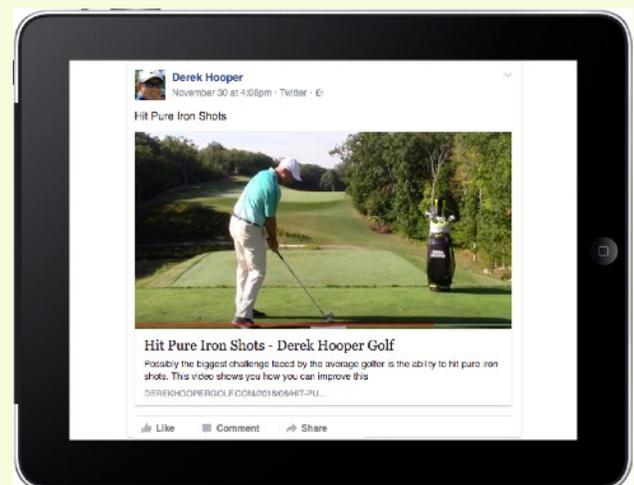
Of course you want to have this style of content but, if you're trying to impact a broad

range of golfers, remember that your video needs to showcase more than your technical knowledge of the golf swing. It also needs to:

- a) Show how simple you can make instruction
- b) Highlight your ability to communicate in a way the golfer understands
- c) Convince the golfer that you'd be able to improve their golf game if they came to you for coaching
- d) And, most importantly, the video needs to increase the

chances of the viewer starting a conversation with you.

When planning your video script always consider those four aspects.



followers to want to improve their short games.

Some of this content should be designed to encourage the golfer to get out on the course or range and test particular short-game skills against a benchmark. You should also publish content that asks the golfer to think about a specific moment in their execution of a golf shot (for example, “which direction is the leading edge of your sand wedge pointing, on the follow through?”). Publish content that inspires golfers to track their short-game performance on the course. Don’t forget to include a before-and-after video of one of your previous customers.

When you then make your short-game coaching sales offer, all the content published in January and February will have warmed up your audience. It will have focused their thoughts on their short-game performance, technique and ability. They will be much more likely to respond to your sales offer.

Planning your Content Publication



4. Did you integrate your online marketing with physical engagement?

Along with publishing short-game content in January and February, you should be scheduling real-world physical engagement at your facility toward the end of February and early in March. Skills Challenges, Active Marketing events, Practice sessions, short clinics, accompanied

play with a short-game focus... all these offer you the chance to exploit the online content you're publishing and thereby get golfers into free-flowing engagement with you.

In a face-to-face engagement, especially one that assesses their skills and performance, it is far,
(Continued on next page)

Marketing on Steroids

On the Proponent Facebook Group page, Steve Whidden asked a question about the value of playing with golfers at the club. So, here's a recommendation continuing the theme of selling short-game coaching programs in March.

Throughout February, play nine holes with three different golfers twice a week. That's 6 golfers a week, 24 golfers in the month.

From among your three playing partners, choose one of

them—preferably a high-80s to low-90s shooter. As you play your nine holes with these three golfers don't tee off. Play off your partner's position once they get within 120 yards of the hole, dropping your ball next to theirs and inheriting their score on that hole to that point. Now play out using your own short-game skills. Compare your score to that golfer's own score. After nine holes, you'll usually find yourself around 5 shots better than your 'partner.'

Your three playing partners now have a very visible demonstration of the importance of a better short game. Post a photo of them and comment on Facebook, tagging all three golfers—that's a message reaching their entire network. Over the month that means you'll reach the full network of each of 12 golfers. And of course, each week it makes a great story in your email or in your blog.

far easier to sell a golfer on an improvement program.

If you think some of the suggestions here take things too far, especially if put into action all at once, I would advise this: Make your resolution for 2017 to “Make heroes out of my golfers” by posting to Facebook (and tagging them)—at least three golfers per week, including encouragement and applause for their improvement.

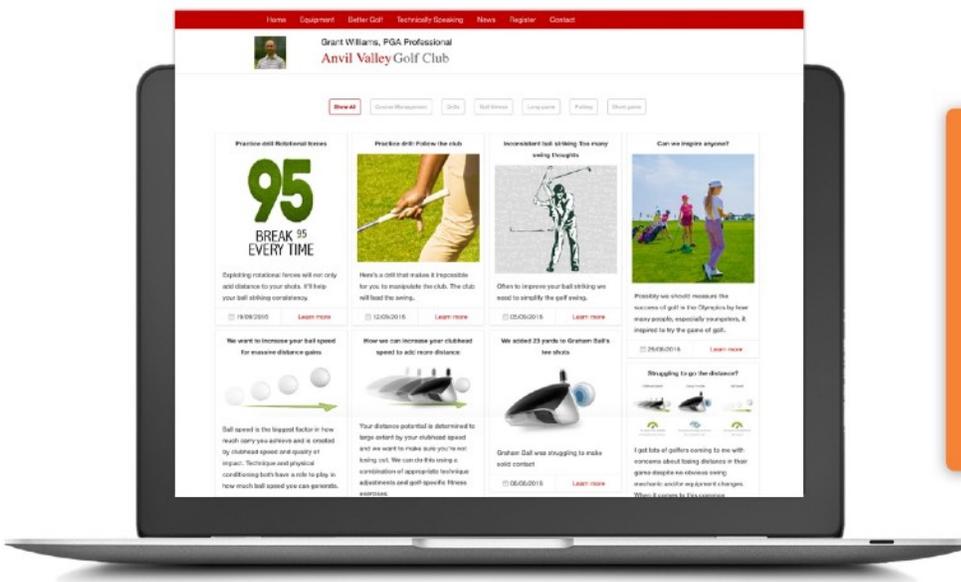
You’re in the business of changing lives on a golf course, so showcase that, if nothing else. It’s your brand in action. And that’s powerful. **PG**

Integrated Marketing – the biggest ROI



Build a plan that connects inspiring content, engagement and activity at the facility, and your offer will create many more customers and a much bigger return.

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

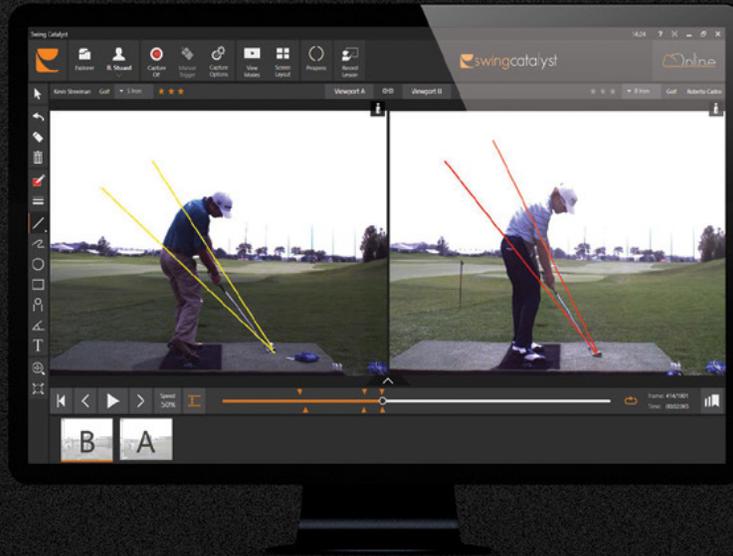



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No Home-on-the-Range Required?

THE SWIFT AND COMPELLING RISE OF THE INDOOR ACADEMY

By David Gould, Staff Editor

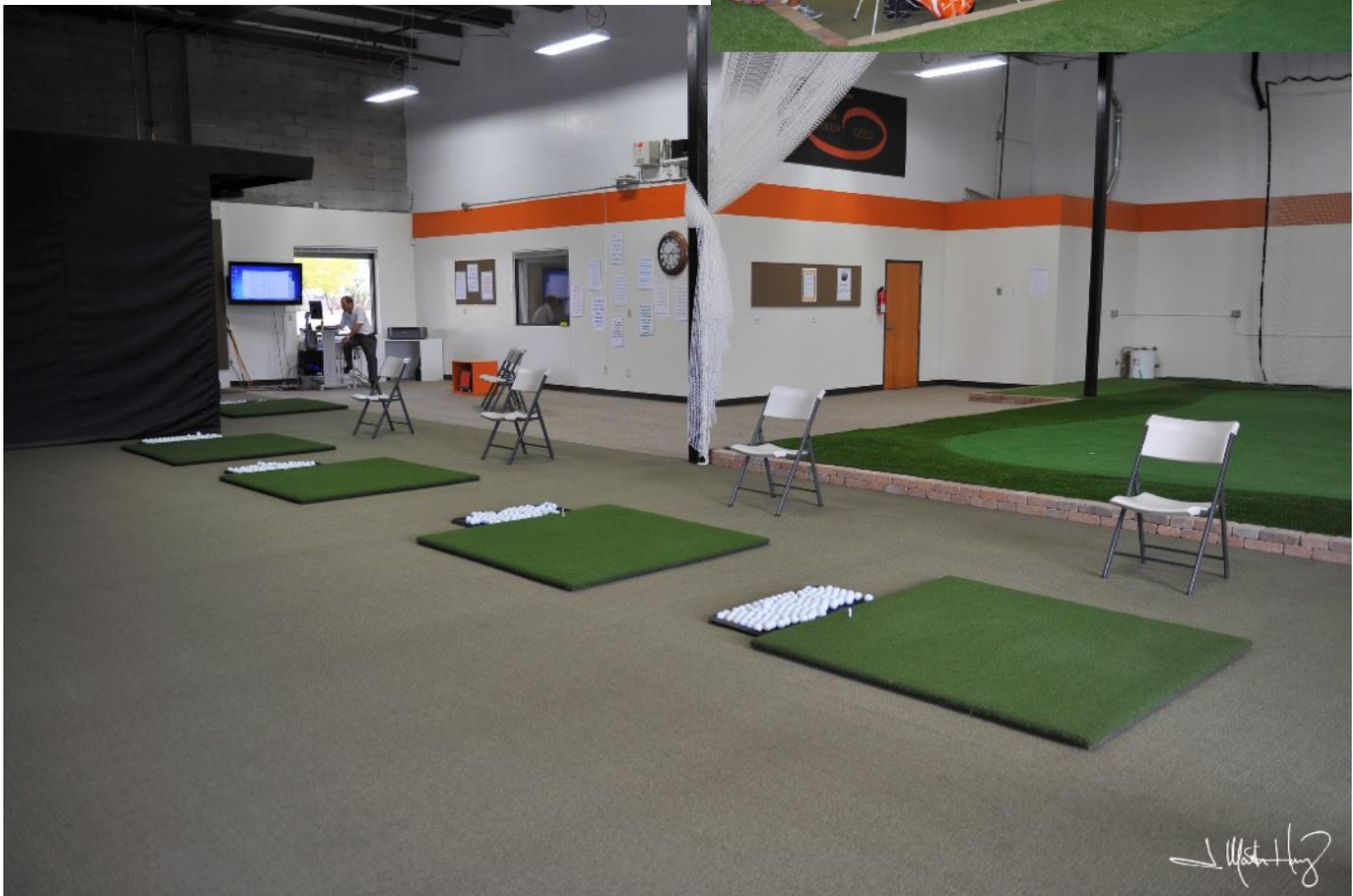
Depressed over rainy weekends and bitter about his property-tax assessment, the course owner watches as student after student arrives for lessons with his lead golf instructor, an independent contractor who pays rent and a percentage of his revenues to the course. In the sky over the far end of the range, dark clouds gather.

“Eventually,” says Tucson-based Proponent member Mark Polich, “that owner or his GM will tell you, ‘You’re leaching off this golf facility and making a pile of money while we get stuck with all the problems.’ What comes next, according to Mark, is either a demand for a higher revenue percentage or a memo saying don’t come back next season—if you aren’t booted sooner. “That’s the stuff no serious coach should have to put up with,” Polich

says, “but it seems to happen eventually, no matter what you do.”

Not if you run your own teaching business indoors—with no wind, no rain, no extreme heat or cold, no glare

(Continued on next page)



Mark Polich flipped the teaching model on its head by taking his lessons indoors year-round even though he works in a nearly rain-free, warm climate in Tucson, AZ. He notes that being unaffiliated with a golf course has given him complete freedom to teach who and what he

on the computer screen, no turf problems, no fixation on ball flight by the student, no questioning glances when you use unorthodox methods and no resentment from the poor schlubs over in the shop, who have to run a golf operation in the post-Boom era of slack demand and heavy green-fee discounting.

“If I want to launch a new program, I launch it—I don’t ask anyone to approve it,” says Polich. “If I want to raise rates or lower rates or do a little of both, there’s no discussion. The freedom you have in a situation like mine is awesome.”

Jeff Isler agrees, saying in no uncertain terms he “would never go back outdoors,” after 10 years running his Isler Performance Golf Academy in Southlake, Tex. But what jumps out from Jeff’s explanation of the indoor advantage is his belief about the teaching process working better inside four walls.

“The driving range can be a good place to practice, in some instances,” Isler says, “but in my view it’s a poor place to teach. Great coaches have done great work on the range through the years—I’m not taking anything away from their accomplishments—however I would much rather

use our technology in an indoor setting to get accurate, precise data so the student can work efficiently—without distractions—on mechanics. When that phase is accomplished I’ll send the player straight to the golf course.”

Jeff’s indoor training center functions as a controlled setting—a “lab” for full-swing analysis and study. “If you can’t hit the ball well in the lab,” he asks, “why add the wind and other variables you get at the range?” asks Isler. “Our very good players don’t want to hit balls on the range anymore. They want to train indoors then go play. The poor
(Continued on next page)



The Golf Room in Dublin, OH is the brainchild of Kyle Morris, who outfitted his 4,000 square foot space with the top technologies and a plethora of fitness equipment. In the first year of operation the facility generated more than \$350,000 in revenue.

players are the holdouts for outdoor practice.”

For Corey Badger, a Proponent Group member in Salt Lake City, the complications of dealing with a greengrass golf complex are rather unique. “Most of the public golf around us is municipally owned,” says Badger. “We do six figures in clubfitting revenues annually—it really does pay the bills—and no muni is going to let a concessionaire get away with earning that type of revenue for very long.”

Badger’s 11-year-old Golf Lab, also known as the Salt Lake City Indoor Golf Training Center, has an agreement with Mountain Dell Golf Club that allows for playing-lesson privileges and use of the short game area. Are there golfers who won’t patronize his climate-controlled learning center because they insist on outdoor coaching? Yes, and there is even a small proportion of people who have some type of phobia about swinging indoors and can’t even take the club back. But, according to Corey, there are more and more golfers who have “made the transition” and would strongly prefer not to go outside for training.

“At a certain point,” says Badger, “I make the suggestion that it’s time to go outside, so I can see them play the course and see their short game.

But today there is five inches of new snow on the ground, so we’re indoors and we’re happy.” Of course, you’re best off inside if you try to at least simulate the outdoor environment, rather than give people something that “seems like a cave,” as Badger puts it. That means bright lighting in the teaching bays along with a tall and wide screen a good distance away. (A screen is better than netting, many say, because the “whump” sound provides helpful feedback.)

What really matters to him is the fact that “people get better faster,” as Corey simply puts it. Whether that’s because they don’t get distracted by their missed shots, or because the TrackMan, KVest and Swing Catalyst readings become more

(Continued on next page)



Urban Golf Performance in Los Angeles possesses significant expertise in biomechanics, exercise science, connective tissue therapy and neuroscience, plus the quality of its facilities attracts L.A. fitness freaks who come in as non-golfers then start learning the game.

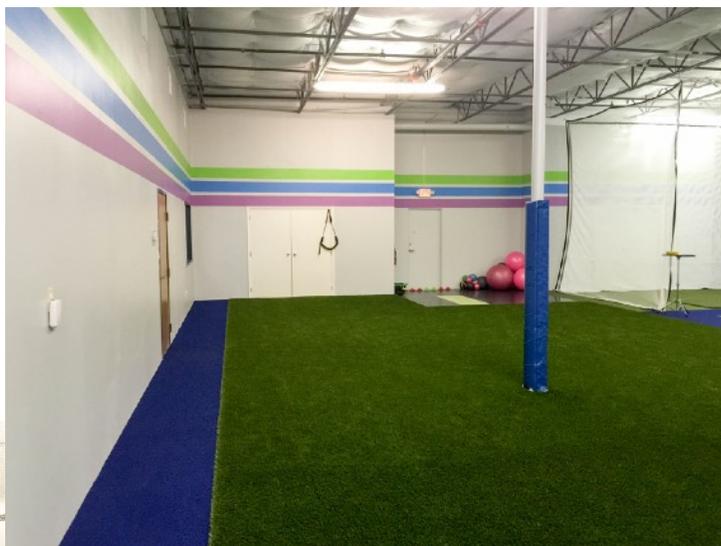
prominent in their minds, is difficult to say. His fellow indoor coaches all agree that things happen quicker inside.

Proponent Group member Kyle Morris even has an “indoorsy” name for his wintertime teaching sanctuary, The Golf Room. Highly successful for such a newly fledged instructor (Morris only quit his professional playing career in 2015) he is happy to be out on the range of The Golf Club of Dublin during the warm Ohio summers, yet his brand seems more directly based on what The Golf Room offers and provides.

“It’s been unreal,” is how Morris describes customer acceptance of The Golf Room and its 4,000 square feet of skill-improvement capabilities. “We’re open 65 hours a week and on average there are clients in here 60 of those hours, multiple clients much of the time, going through one phase or another of what we offer.” That includes two TrackMan bays, K-Vest 3D and K-Vest 6D, custom clubfitting, the BodiTrak Golf

System mat to record balance distribution information and “center of pressure” during the swing, a neuro-feedback device for brain activity monitoring, plus HeartMap for a glimpse into cardio and central nervous system patterns. With all of this data to consider, it’s just as well there’s no ball flight to get hung up on.

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Jeff Isler's recent move to an all indoor setting in Las Colinas, TX near Dallas has seen tremendous business growth. He has had to quickly add more instructors to keep up with the demand which is now grossing nearly \$1 million annually.

One thing about the roof-and-four-walls approach, it makes a big spend on technology an absolute necessity. Morris jumped right in with a \$150,000 investment in the tech tools, but says that with the help of these assets he will beat his first-year pro forma revenue number of \$350,000. Is it all potentially intimidating? To some prospective clients, yes, but that can be turned around quickly, say those with experience. “The whole ‘I’m not a good enough golfer’ thing will happen at times,” says Morris. “I’ll explain to them how far off the desired club path and clubface angles they are, and how quickly we can fix that if we just rely on the technology and stay focused.”

One of the most impressive indoor golf centers in the U.S. is plunk in the middle of Los Angeles, the four-year-old Urban Golf Performance center founded by former college golfer and Bill Eschenbrenner protege Mac Todd. On staff there as director of coaching is Proponent Group member Neil Hunter-Smith, a Scottish-bred professional who oversees a staff of five and whose resume includes a stint at the world’s largest golf resort, Mission Hills in China. According to Hunter-Smith, the degree of expertise UGP now possesses in biomechanics, exercise science, connective tissue therapy and neuroscience, plus the quality of its facilities, even attracts L.A. fitness freaks who come in as non-golfers then start learning the game.

“UGP is proving that the golf training environment can satisfy even a very sophisticated fitness market like Los Angeles, if you do it correctly,” says founder Mac Todd. At the same time, Todd is deeply committed to creating and maintaining a deep, nuanced golf culture within his facility and as part of its brand. “With all the digital devices, I don’t want our young coaches not understanding the genius of Harvey Penick and what he achieved with his students,” says Todd. “We can do the sophisticated coaching science at a high level and still continue the great traditions of golf by maintaining that passion for the game that we all grew up with.”

The values Todd refers to are intrinsic to what Proponent Group tries to help spread, but so is professionalization of the teaching-coaching profession—and the indoor academies seem



Paul Ramee, Jr., while focused on his GM role at Bulls Bridge Golf Club in Kent, CT in the summertime, has his own indoor facility in town for cold New England winters.

particularly tuned in to that business imperative. “We did almost \$1 million in revenue this year,” says Jeff Isler of his 2016 business performance. “We’re profitable. We had our best year since we started a decade ago.” In the early days, Isler was a teaching pro who “taught an hour and got paid for an hour,” but he always pursued the goal of breaking out of that rut. Having the control an indoor facility provides allowed for more diversity and creativity in the programming and pricing, which served Jeff’s goals mightily.

“We’re something different now, from when I started,” he says, with a mix of relief and satisfaction. “We’re not one teacher with a lesson book, or two teachers with their lesson books, we’re a sports training organization. We’re a true, functioning, sustainable business.” **PG**

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JOHN PERNA

THE PLAYERS SERVICE, OAK BROOK, IL

INTERVIEW BY PAUL RAMEE, JR.

Any junior golfer or parent of a junior golfer who lives anywhere near Chicago and entertains high ambitions regarding NCAA competition knows—or certainly should know—John Perna. The various ways in which this Proponent Group member has taught, trained, educated and mentored young people with college-golf talent is almost beyond understanding. The Players Service is the unique and fast-growing organization Perna founded seven years ago, with the intention of reinventing player development in the junior ranks. TPS has been the breeding ground for juniors with golf talent that in some cases is obvious and in other cases has turned out to be visible to John alone.

One notable characteristic of the juniors who've come through Perna's system is their camaraderie with each other and their reliance on the group for mutual support—even as they pursue the normal rivalries and competitive jockeying one would expect. That capacity for friendships to form among the players flows from the top and is owing to Perna's own insistence on bringing humanity and warmth to the training of elite junior athletes, as a means of helping them attain maturity as people, not just as golfers. John spoke recently with Paul Ramee about his training concepts and how they were developed.

Here's our standard leadoff question, John—how did you get into the golf instruction business?

I played college golf at Florida Gulf Coast University for Doc Suttie. After I graduated I tried to play professionally for five years and it didn't work out, so I went to work for Doc for a year and got to watch him interact with PGA Tour players. As a result I had the opportunity to observe and coach on the PGA tour. It was great, because I got a front row seat watching all these instructors working with the top players. I went back to Chicago in 2010 and started The Players Service. Currently, I train our elite players, which is made up of 24 juniors: 12 boys and 12 girls. I have been fortunate to have 58 juniors come through TPS and go on to play Division I college golf since 2010. I also teach a handful of professionals, and Dan Kochevar and Kyle Slectha train our pre-elite players.

How early are you getting juniors into your program?

No younger than sixth or seventh grade. Our program is based on group training and it's very competitive. With this type of approach you cannot include the very young kids. We group our players by skill level and unless a junior is very special, if they are in fifth or fourth grade they won't be able to keep up with an older kid.

We have partners who work with juniors who are younger than sixth grade. If those juniors attain a certain skill level, they will be handed over to us. Admittance into our Elite program is currently by invitation only.

How big are the groups you train in?

We are training in groups of three, six or 12, inside in the winters in Chicago and outside in the summers. During the winter we will work on biomechanics and on adding clubhead speed. All mechanical work is done in the winter. We work according to "periodization," focusing on certain aspects from November to March and other aspects of performance from April to October.

Does that get you get any pushback from parents?

We had some "healthy debates" early on about how we set up the program, but those debates have quieted down.

So a student comes to you, presumably in sixth grade, and you have to decide if they are right for TPS. What does your initial assessment look like?

We run them through a battery of tests which includes short game, a TrackMan combine and a physical assessment. There are three pathways that a student can then be placed into. The first would be our "Player Service" group which is entry-level. The next would be our "Pre-Elite" group. The top tier is our "Elite" group. I built the curriculum for all three programs, but only the Elite players have personal access to me.

We have probably turned away more juniors than we have accepted. The track record is that 100 percent of our Elite juniors go on to play college golf and 90 percent will play Division I.





The Players Service provides year-round training in Chicagoland with its new state-of-the-art indoor facility.

Sounds like your students are in a pretty selective environment.

We have been fortunate to have some amazing kids walk in our door, and as a result we have probably turned away more juniors than we have accepted in our Elite program. So far, 100 percent of our Elite players have had the opportunity to play college golf and about 90 percent have gone on to play Division I.

What is a typical week like with your students?

It varies from winter to summer. During the winter we get a lot of Division I coaches stopping by. I estimate that we will get 10 to 15 D-1 coaches to visit this winter. The Elite program is constantly changing, as we are always looking at analytics and trends in the game to try and give our players a competitive edge. But currently our elite players will train two times a week. In Addition, the students have a “self-discovery,” session where they practice on their own.

In the summer, because of their tournament schedules, I tend not to see them as much as in the winter, but the work we do in the summer tends to be more on the golf course, along with some summer maintenance.

How many tournaments do you attend each season?

Early on I went to a lot of AJGA events, but now I am attending just a few tournaments, including the U.S. Amateur, the U.S. Junior and the NCAA Championships. I also visit some web.com and PGA Tour events.

Would you say that you have created a niche business?

Yes. I guess it stems from my failed playing career, and all the one-hour lessons I took that didn't help. At one point during my career at FGCU I was ranked in the top 30 collegiately. Five years later, after turning professional and seeking out many different instructors, I couldn't break 80. So I took \$30,000 and went out to travel on tour and learn from the best players in the world and it was obvious to me that they were training differently. My observations from those experiences are what The Player Service is built on.

Why would most other coaches fail if they tried to build what you have built?

I am unsure why others have failed, but I can tell you I sought out many instructors and people in the golf business while I was putting together my plan and my model, and the vast majority, told me I would fail. Three people disagreed—Rick Jensen, Lorin Anderson, and Dan Kochevar. They told me I had a business. So I think its important to surround yourself with a quality support system that can look outside the box.



Perna's coaching program is a powerhouse on National Signing Day each year.

Is Rick Jensen a mentor?

Very much so. Rick took me into his class when I didn't meet the criteria to gain entrance to it. He gave me some of the best advice I ever received, which was, "Don't take the quick money. Only train the type of students you want to train in the future."

Do many of your students come from out of state?

Some do. I have an out-of-state version of the program. I have had students from Ohio, Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin and Indiana. It takes a special type of parent and junior to drive in weekly.

Obviously, your program has evolved to a place where you can charge what you need to make it work, but I would imagine it wasn't always that way. Can you comment on the rates that TPS charges?

During my first year I generated less than \$30,000 of total revenue, and I bought a TrackMan, so I broke even in year one. That's how it started. In order to pay the bills I also had to sell insurance on the side. By my second year I was spending less time selling insurance. My first six juniors all went on to play at major BCS Division I Schools, with two of them becoming AJGA All-Americans. So the program took off and I went to the parents and met with them. My message was: "Your kids are not getting everything they need to reach their full potential." I told them I needed to set my fees at a certain level to address that. By my third year I wasn't selling Insurance and I had to turn away business.

What percent of your students play other sports?

About five percent play other sports. I can tell you, its very difficult to develop enough skill to play Division I golf playing the game part-time. In my opinion, once junior golfers reach sophomore year in high school, they should begin to specialize in one sport.

If a young player is working with you, that means they've got the highest competitive ambitions, right?

What is great about The Players Service, in my view, is that we are not just building golfers. Chip Brewer, CEO of Callaway, is a friend and he's someone who understands TPS and what we do. Chip said to me: "You are helping build the future leaders of this country." These kids are high achievers in golf and life and while most of them will never play the PGA Tour or the LPGA Tour, they all have the discipline and focus to go on to great things.

I see that you have many certifications, when will you create your own?

I really don't know. My first book is set to come out in 2017, "Developing Golfers Into Players" and I believe it will shed more insight into what we do. But your question makes think back to when I was still coaching tour players and trying to play professionally. My mother and father, who have been valuable advisers to me all along, sat me down and said, "find something that both helps others and that makes you happy." I can honestly tell you one of the greatest joys I have experienced was when my first student signed his letter of intent to play college golf. It makes me feel like I've made a difference in somebody's life. When moments like that come along, that is the real joy for me. **PG**

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LEE ELLIOTT, Michael International Golf Academy, Shanghai, China, *Associate Member*

RYAN SMITH, Rick Murphy Golf Academy, High Point, NC, - *Associate Member*

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SUE WIEGER, Sue Wieger Golf, Scottsdale, AZ, *Full Member*

ADAM YOUNG, The Studio at Twin Lakes/Don Parsons Golf Instruction, Santa Barbara, CA, *Associate Member*

MEGAN YOUNKMAN, Temple Terrace Golf & Country Club, Temple Terrace, FL, *Full Member*

LPGA T&CP ELECTS SECTION OFFICERS FOR 2017-18

Proponent Group members **Tina Tombs** and **Sandy LaBauve** were elected President and Vice President, respectively, for the Central Section. Tombs is based at Arizona Biltmore G.C. in Phoenix. LaBauve teaches at Westin Kierland Resort and Spa in Scottsdale, AZ.



Sandy LaBauve

LPGA T&CP HALL OF FAME ADDS TWO PROPONENT MEMBERS

The LPGA Teaching and Club Professional Hall of Fame is the highest honor given to teaching and club-professional members for extraordinary membership service and leadership while contributing to the game of golf and the golf industry.

The class of 2016 includes **Gloria Armstrong**, **Lynn Marriott** and **Dana Rader**. The latter two are longtime Proponent Group members.

Lynn Marriott of Vision54 has dedicated her career to discovering more about how people learn and spreading that information to others. She has always had a love for teaching the game and with her Vision54 partner, **Pia Nilsson**, has been at the forefront of redefining how the sport of golf is coached.

Dana Rader has become one of the top golf academy operators in the country with her long run at the Dana Rader Golf School at Ballantyne Resort in Charlotte, NC, which has served more than 17,000 students since 1987. She was the President of the LPGA's T&CP for six years and has been included on every major publication's list of top teachers in the game today.



Lynn Marriott



Dana Rader

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