

# COLLADODATE PROPONENT GROUP

PROPONENT GROUP NEWSLETTER \$20

NOVEMBER 2018

## PGA SHOW LINEUP INCLUDES JUNIORS, SALES AND MORE

Our upcoming PGA Show program begins on Tuesday, January 22nd 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.

This year's line up runs from 8:30am-3:00pm and includes **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** 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.

The Tuesday Junior Day is \$75 for Proponent Group members. To register contact Brendan Ryan at [brendan@bmrkgolfmanagement.com](mailto:brendan@bmrkgolfmanagement.com).

We'll host a day of Sales Training on Wednesday, January 23rd conducted by Proponent Director **Andy Hilts**. These high-impact workshops will hone your sales skills and are based on Andy's popular Summit presentation. They will 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.

Thursday's line up will again be co-sponsored with Golf Biomechanics and 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. Additional speakers include **Dr. Robert Neal** who 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 expert, **Paul Dewland** will cover The Principled Approach: Is it the same for the Elite Junior, Club Golfer and Tour Player?

Watch for our full PGA Show week schedule with additional speakers and all presentation times in upcoming member emails.



Jim McLean

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**MEMBER MILESTONES:** New Members and Golf Digest's Best Young Teachers in America

## NEW MEMBER BENEFIT: VISITING TEACHER PROGRAM

Proponent Group gets a lot of calls asking if we know of locations that will allow a teacher to bring in a group for instruction and/or play. We have formalized this request in our new Visiting Teacher Program page on the members' website. On it you will find 14 locations across the United States, Bermuda and even Argentina that will be happy to have you and your students use their facilities. Costs, available amenities, technologies that can be rented and additional details can be downloaded and reviewed to find the best option for your needs.

Contact Lori Bombka for a survey link to add your facility to the list. The document will be updated on a regular basis.



Grand Cypress in Orlando

## LPGA AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The LPGA's 2018 National award winners include Teacher of the Year, **Tina Tombs** and Professional of the Year **Kelley Brooke**.

Tombs is Director of Instruction at Arizona Biltmore G.C. in Phoenix. She has been with the facility since 2003. Brooke operates the five-course mega-complex at Bethpage State Park in Farmingdale, NY. She recently took over a 20-year lease to operate the facility. Brooke is also a Golf Channel Academy Lead Instructor and operates her GCA teaching facility out of Bethpage.

The LPGA also announced its annual section awards. Among Proponent Group members earning accolades are **Maria Palozola** as Midwest Section Teacher of the Year and Western Section Teacher of the Year **Alison Curdt**. Tombs was also awarded the Central Section Teacher of the Year and Brooke the Northeast Section Professional of the Year.



Tina Tombs

## MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

*Recent Hirings include:*

**Michael Bulger** has accepted a winter Teaching Professional position at Grey Oaks CC in Naples, FL

*Recent Job Postings include:*

**Southern Hills C.C.** in Tulsa, OK is hiring its first Director of Instruction

*For complete details visit the Job Board on the members' website. Please let us know if you have a position to post. There is no fee to post a job.*



Michael Bulger

## 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 October, these were the 10 most-watched videos:*

1) **Dr. Rob Neal and Layne Savoie** - Wedge Craft: Friction, Spin and Launch

2) **Tyler Ferrell** – A Good Release: The Shoulder or the Wrist?

3) **Mike Bender, Martin Hall, David Leadbetter, Lynn Marriott, Cameron McCormick and Pia Nilsson** – Summit Super Panel

4) **Dr. Rob Neal and Layne Savoie** – Short Game: What the Experts Do

5) **Trent Wearer** – Golf Scrimmages

6) **Don Hurter** – Introduction to DECADE

7) **Kevin Sprecher** – Using Technology in Coaching

8) **Martin Hall** – My 4 Keys to Being an Effective Coach

9) **Tony Morgan and Trillium Sellers** – Using Feel to Accelerate Player Development

10) **Mike Duhamel and Brad Faxon**– Short Game: The Science of Timing and Tempo

# Drive Your **Business** Further

Coming Fall 2018



# **Thriv** *Sports*

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# LOOKING BACK ON 2018? LOOK CLOSELY AT YOUR BUSINESS PERFORMANCE



By Andy Hilts, *Director*

Interacting with students and helping them improve is stimulating and rewarding. That's why skilled golf instructors love what they do. But let's circle back to the word "rewarding." Does it truly describe the financial side of what you do, not just the emotional side?

Think about the curiosity that drives you to diagnose a student's technique and performance issues. That same investigative energy should be applied to your business, on a reasonably regular basis.

For example, we're aware of mechanical flaws in a student's swing which create the path/face combination that produces their weak slice, right? The same could well be true of a golf instructor's way of doing business—the result being weakened revenue and profits.

The end of the calendar year is an ideal time to turn your curiosity to the details and nuances of your performance as a business person. Some people will do this in a fairly harsh way, channeling their inner drill-sergeant.

Other people go a little easier on themselves, yet they still conduct a close scrutiny, looking intently for profit-building duties or tasks they've made excuses for not doing.

Either way, most of us would emerge from the process with a half-dozen or so initiatives to tackle in the new year. The idea is to carry them out dutifully until there's clear evidence of the degree to which each of them helps improve business results. At that point they either become routine or they give way to some other endeavor that shows potential for helping the bottom line.

Here's a few categories to get you started.

- **Marketing:** What is your ROI on each of the marketing mediums you utilized in 2018?
  - **Teaching quality:** Any lessons you whiffed on this year? Any students you weren't able to help?
  - **Total lessons taught:** Are you nearing capacity in terms of the hours you can spend on the lesson tee?
  - **Total revenue:** Is it maxed out? Golf instruction is a top-line business...it must grow.
  - **Total expenses:** Most of us have cut every expense possible and the only way to make more is to grow the top line.
  - **Player success:** Are your students getting better? How many shot career-low rounds this year?
  - **Sales skills:** What is your average order value?
  - **Renewals:** How many of your students are buying another lesson pack when they run out of lessons? (Note: 40 percent is a good benchmark.)
  - **Managerial skills:** Are you building a team? How much turnover did you have this year?
  - **Business development:** – Are you turning prospects and meetings into actual bookings? Great marketing alone doesn't secure you a new student.
  - **Referrals:** How many did you have? Do you have a referral program in place?
  - **Programming:** Is it time to have more group lessons and fewer individual?
  - **Pricing:** How do you stand compared to your competition? More expensive is okay if you deliver a better product.
  - **Facility improvements:** What upgrades are needed to keep things fresh, modern and confidence-inspiring?
  - **Staff improvement:** What additional training can you provide them? (Hint: It could be sales training.)
- Rank yourself in each category. Assess your skills, successes, failures and areas to improve. A scale of 1 to 10 should do fine, but be sure to deeply reflect on each area. Hopefully you're using some metrics to define your success. It's much easier to have an unbiased assessment of your performance with some hard data. Do the best you can to be honest. A score sheet of all 10s isn't going to help you in 2019.
- What categories need the most improvement? What are your goals? What metrics would you track in 2019 to get an accurate view of your performance?
- Most of us rank ourselves high in teaching skills but on the business side we find significant opportunities to improve. If you're having a hard time finding exactly where you should focus your efforts to improve, maybe it's time to enlist others. Have you looked into hiring an executive coach? Maybe it's best to broaden your review to a 360-degree review with your team, or even review your performance with your students. Have you surveyed them to get details on how they view your instruction?
- Make an appointment in your schedule book to start this process. Your natural curiosity about how things work and where to find greater success will help you along. The result of a thorough self-review will be a solid plan to improve yourself and derive more value and wealth from your business. **PG**

## Buying power and serious savings for your business

Controlling costs is as essential to growing your business as a great playing surface and sound marketing. In that pursuit, one of the simplest and most effective tools in your arsenal can be the Ride group purchasing program from GolfNow.

Ride taps into the wide-ranging buying power of Comcast, corporate parent of NBC and Golf Channel. Comcast's supplier network includes broadline food distributor US Foods, a number of independent produce companies, agronomy and technology resource SynaTek Solutions, communications giant Verizon, business supply outlet Office Depot and many others. Virtually everything you need to run your business, sourced from industry-leading suppliers at group-buying discounts.

It's like found money. How much money? On average, partners buying through Ride are saving 17 percent on their regular business expenses, with courses reporting anywhere from 6 to 35 percent savings on the necessities that make their operations and yours hum.

Plus, there are no fees involved in starting your savings today, and signing up is easy.



### Ride



Business partners currently utilizing Ride are **saving 6-35%** on everyday purchases.

### What can Ride offer your business?

#### Unbeatable selection

Ride includes savings opportunities in agronomy, office supplies, environmental services and much more.

#### Purchasing power

The buying power of Comcast makes savings on a wide range of products possible.

#### Significant savings

Lower pricing results in significant savings for Ride clients, and rebates further reduce overhead.

#### Simple start

Sign a letter of participation and we'll get you set up in just a few weeks. You'll see savings as early as your first order.



To learn more or to sign up for Ride email: [ride@golfchannel.com](mailto:ride@golfchannel.com) or check out: [business.golfnow.com/services/ride/learn-more-about-ride/](http://business.golfnow.com/services/ride/learn-more-about-ride/)

## 2018 SUMMIT IN WORDS AND PICTURES

# SUMMIT SUCCESS FORMULA: YOUR STUDENTS IMPROVE, YOUR COACHING BUSINESS GROWS

By David Gould, Staff Editor

There are multiple learning opportunities for golf instructors these days, which begs the question of how to design one so it delivers optimal value. The 11th Proponent Group Summit turned out to have a rare symmetry to it, achieving what seemed an ideal mix of how-to-coach and how-to-make-money-coaching.

At this edition of the annual event—held in Dallas at Cowboys Golf Club—even the presentations devoted to teaching skills were also about programming and business development. It's taken some time, but instruction at the highest level now seems to include pragmatic, profit-and-loss considerations no matter how deep into game-improvement a particular speaker may dive. It's a case of business success and student improvement becoming two sides of one coin.

On Monday morning there was a truly deep plunge into the science and art of putting, featuring an all-star panel of Kevin Weeks, Todd Sones and Colin Swatton. The discussion opened with a video loop created by Kevin, showing in dramatic fashion the importance of face angle versus path.

From there the discussion worked its way through a dozen or more sub-categories of the topic. Swatton, who has coached tour star Jason Day for most of Day's golfing life, said his prize student delegates all metrics-gathering to the coach and in fact doesn't want to be told about his numbers. All the more reason why one of Swatton's favorite strategies—gathering benchmark data across all facets of performance, and gathering it while the golfer is playing his or her best—makes so much sense.

Sones, a Golf Channel Academy coach based on Chicago's North Side, approaches putting in a way that players like Jason Day would appreciate, moving the student at all times toward a process in which they think less and less over the ball and



Andy Hilts took the Summit helm for the first time

through the stroke. Meanwhile, the issue of putter length continually came up, beginning with the strange but true fact that 35 inches as a standard length was settled on by manufacturers basically to accommodate the standard height of a golf bag—34 and one-half inches.

Moderating the discussion, Proponent Group Director Andy Hilts brought up the general resistance by weekend golfers to having any of their lessons be putting lessons. "You give people what they want until you've truly earned their trust," Sones responded, "then you give them what they need, including putting lessons." He and Weeks said categorically that success in teaching putting, as word gets around, will bring students out of the woodwork asking you to help them with the flatstick.

Standing in front of fellow Proponent Group members for the first time as a Summit presenter, Hilts gave a talk that brought heavy-duty analytics to the question of how a teaching business is built, grown and eventually customized to suit the preferences of



Golf Channel's Todd Lewis (right) shared his insights into the PGA Tour.

the coach. What helped make Andy an ideal messenger on this subject is the fact that, as a young professional, he “hated selling and just wanted to teach.” And, as happens when someone like that eventually embraces their sales training, it’s because they realized that it’s also the best thing to do for the person on the other side of the transaction.

“You’ve spent a decade acquiring diagnostic tools for the golf swing and learning how to use them,” Hilts told his audience. “Now it’s time to get yourself a set of diagnostic tools that show you how well or not-so-well your business is performing.” He started with inbound inquiries from interested golfers and the rate at which those inquiries converted to actual booked and active students. Calling them “at bats,” he urged his fellow teachers to make sure never to waste one, and to shoot for a conversion rate of 50 to 70 percent, depending on how the lead came in.

A four-speaker panel with varied forms of expertise in construction and operation of a first-class teaching building kicked off day two of this year’s Summit. You truly cannot stage a presentation of this type without Tim Cutshall, a Dallas-based consultant and longtime friend of Proponent Group, up there offering insights. Joining him was David La Pour, who recently navigated the entire concept-to-finished-product process at 36-hole Colleton River Plantation in Bluffton, S.C. Also on stage were Jeff Isler and Dennis Sales, Proponent members who do their work in teaching buildings that don’t have golf courses adjacent.

Cutshall led off, bringing a quick set of dos and don’ts from his most recent round of projects. “Conduit is cheap,” said Tim, “so when you’ve got access to the wiring spaces, set them up for every possible technology you might ever add.” He said the state of the art these days demands a 500-square-foot bay, about 20 feet wide and 25 feet deep, with 14-foot ceilings. Standard height of 10 feet for a building of this type is considerably less expensive than going up another four, but your opening gets too small for a higher-handicap player to feel comfortable hitting through it, especially if you’ve got that player deeper in the bay to align with cameras or some other technology.

Other rules of thumb from the Cutshall playbook included two-bay design as ideal for most situations, west-facing bays only if you can’t avoid it, 15,000 lumens of lighting on the golfer, fans but not A/C units



Colin Swatton spoke in depth on coaching

—the condensation problems cause misery—and storage beyond what you might think is necessary. “You golf coaches have more stuff than anybody I’ve ever worked with,” Tim said, only half-joking. “Overbuild your storage, and you’ll use it all.”

La Pour, finally having logged a full year with his Colleton building acting as a game-changer for the golf program, walked the group through his design-fundraise-build-operate sequence, with instruction revenue gains that he was pleased to share. “Teaching revenue was up 50 percent and clubfitting revenues rose by 70 percent,” La Pour told attendees. “Coming to work is different than it used to be —there’s just a new sense of what we’re able to do for our members.”

Of all the fairly amazing positives that came out of the project, the real eyebrow-raiser involved residential real estate within this gated community—“Home prices have gone up, now that we’ve got this amenity,” La Pour said matter-of-factly.

Jeff Isler and Dennis Sales, both Dallas-based, gave Summit-goers a look at the world of full-time indoor teaching—nearly full-time, as each has course-access arrangements for getting their students into game-like training. Isler made the interesting point that an indoor academy is “a very straightforward business, with very consistent fixed costs.” He has moved and expanded since he started up 13 years ago, and had advice about that. “You probably need to get uncomfortable and be



Trent Wearer showing how to use games to speed improvement



**Scott Fawcett took a deep dive into statistical analysis**

busting out at the seams for a while, before you can finally move.” That’s due in Jeff’s case to a wish—and the ability—to fund a lot of growth out of operating profits.

Sales explained to attendees that he is ensconced in 1,800 square feet of space with no sign out front and very little room in the lesson book for new students. “We get a crazy amount of traffic, 90 percent of it competitive youth players, all coming to us via word of mouth,” said Dennis. Of all Proponent members who have ever presented at a Summit, Sales spoke the most plainly and explicitly about work-life balance. His income at the off-course center he’s established is strong and steady, but it could be much more if he weren’t taking so much time every week to be with his three-year-old son. “Teaching indoors, I can make tons of money,” said Dennis, “but not now.”

If an alien spaceship had trained a tractor-beam on Cowboys Golf Club and carried away the entire clubhouse, this planet would suddenly be without most of its expertise on golf instruction for humans age 3 to 7. Nicole Weller and Kate Tempesta, working out of Savannah, Ga., and New York City, respectively, are golf professionals who double as child development experts, or vice versa. Weller took the stage on Monday to explain her work and bang home the message that golf needs—and should sincerely want—more coaches working the demographic that starts with just-out-

of-diapers and goes up to about first grade.

Attendees gathered around the putting green to hear Nicole’s brief explanation of how you start and build such a program—it was impressive, but nothing compared to the demonstration that came next. Four golfers who still ride in car seats munching dry Cheerios were put through a session that only the highly trained could have imagined conducting. And yet, as the 4- to 5-year-olds proceeded through their activities, it became clear that if you’re taught how to communicate with them you can “get them in a receiving state,” to use an early-learning term of art, and turn their instinct for play into orderly movement through a series of skill stations.

Tempesta’s presentation the following day included teacher-student interactions, this time presented via videos from her Urban Golf Academy on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. The period from age 3 to 6 is “foundational,” in Tempesta’s words, meaning it takes a very solid and fundamentally correct style of interaction, but also meaning that things acquired at that point in life stick around a long time. “Golf facilities from one end of this country to another need someone who can run a 3-to-6 program,” she says. “If you make any kind of commitment to it you have \$20,000 in new revenue waiting for you.” Over a lengthy period of trial and error, Tempesta has built her business to annual gross revenue of \$565,000—she owns the demographic in her market, and there are hundreds more markets out there waiting to reward someone who specializes in it.

Someone with appendicitis gets taken to a hospital and operated on, at which point they recuperate then go back to their normal routine. Trent Wearer, famed for his “Golf Scrimmages” writings and website, wouldn’t object to that. But he does take issue with the unquestioned tradition of “taking golfers out of their real-game environment, ‘fixing them’ and sending them back into the fray.”

If you’ve spent time with the award-winning Colorado-based professional, you may have heard him refer to golf as the “worst-practiced sport in the world.” He hit on that point in his Summit presentation, showing photos from other sports to drive it home. An image on-screen of a prizefighter working the speed bag came with the question, “What happens when this boxer spends all his training time in this one activity?” Next image was a knockout punch crunching into the fighter’s head. A dramatic analogy for sure, but it had heads in the audience nodding.



**Kate Tempesta brought her unique perspective on teaching youngsters.**

Another slide the award-winning coach put up showed a cluster of nouns and adjectives that together represent the competitive golf experience to a good degree—words like “pressure,” “test,” “imaginative,” “difficult,” “frustrated,” “inspired” and many more were all ganged together. Once Summit attendees had a chance to absorb the connotations, Wearner said simply: “To be valuable to the player, practice sessions have to contain all these characteristics.”



The Summit kicked off with a bonus session about mastering the job search

Wearner’s presentation—and this format tends to be used at least once every Summit—was divided between an indoor, lecture-style session and an outdoor, practical demonstration of how he creates his “scrimmage” experience so that students are challenged, keep score, work off baselines, go through progressions and otherwise tie their skill-building to some part of the actual on-course requirements of someone seeking high finishes and victories in tournaments.

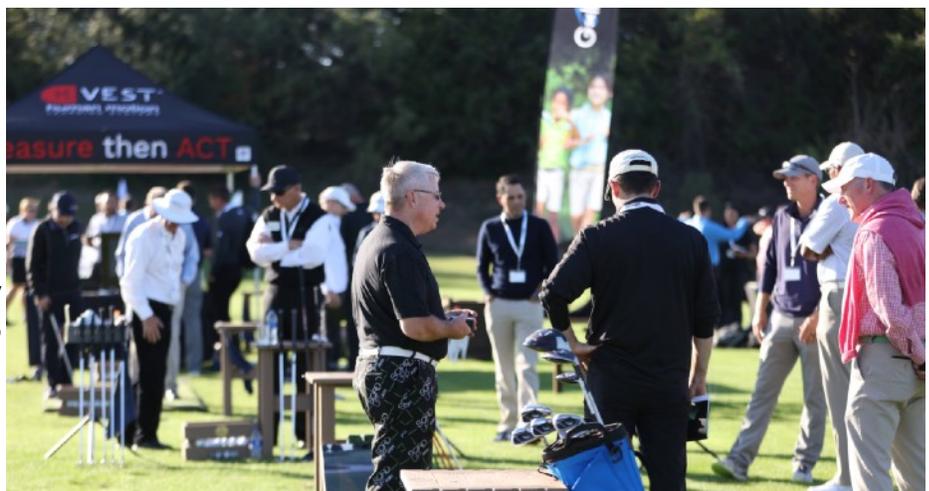
Like past presentations from the likes of Cameron McCormick, who described his work with Jordan Spieth, and Mike Bender, explaining how he coaches Zach Johnson, the Australian instructor Colin Swatton organized his talk in Dallas around the long and ongoing relationship he has with Jason Day.

Swatton began his solo talk with an “aha” moment that involved a football practice he happened to watch. “The football coach stood in front of the team and ran through his program for that practice,” Swatton recalls. “He said they would start with 20 minutes of warm-up, followed by 15 minutes of a particular drill, then 25 minutes of something else—he told the athletes what they would do, when, and for how long. I realized my own approach had to become much more like that.”

It was an attempt to “change the culture” of a golfer-golf coach relationship, and for Swatton it’s been successful. His division of practice sessions into time blocks matches his strict assessment program and its many “buckets.” There is even a skill category called “par-5 wedges” that gets its due share of measurement-assessment-teaching-practice-reassessment.

Scott Fawcett and his DECADE system of golf strategizing for optimal scoring receives plenty of press attention, but until you see him present in person you’ll probably struggle to understand the significance of it. Fawcett is a highly persuasive and entertaining speaker whose basic premise may well be that the world’s best players aren’t as good at hitting their targets as people think. “Golfers, even the best, are playing with shotguns, not rifles,” is how Scott began. From there he went on a long tour of golf holes and showed where (per ShotLink data) shots struck by tour pros ended up. Dispersion pattern was the key concept, and living within your dispersion patterns, especially relative to hazards, not the pin—is everything. Which player has lived by this philosophy more than anyone? Tiger Woods, it turns out.

As it turned out, the last two people in the meeting hall other than Proponent staff were Swatton and Fawcett, whose individual presentations had been stellar but whose lengthy one-on-one discussion after the place emptied out had a noticeable “mind-meld” energy to it. You join Proponent Group to network, collaborate and learn from your peers—that much we already knew. Apparently, you appear at a Summit and present to the group for similar reasons. **PG**



The Summit’s annual demo day featured more than a dozen companies showing new product



**K COACH™**

## WHAT'S NEW?

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



**CHUCK COOK**

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

## BOOK DEMO

# WHAT I'VE LEARNED: BRIAN JACOBS

**BRIAN JACOBS GOLF, ROCHESTER, NY**

INTERVIEW BY PAUL RAMEE, JR



**T**ell a person they show talent for something they've never pursued and they'll tell you that in their "next life" they'll attempt it. In the case of Brian Jacobs, there won't be any those things left. Golf coach, academy owner, tour caddie, inner-city schoolteacher, standup comedian, podcaster.... the list goes on. It appears that Jacobs flows from one activity to the next in such seamless fashion because in every case he's got the same goal—make a human connection that will develop into some type of meaningful relationship.

Base of operations for the longtime Proponent Group member is Ridgemont Country Club in his native city of Rochester, where Brian Jacobs Golf hums along year in and year out, always in search of great programming ideas, one more creative than the next. A Hank Haney Certified Instructor, Brian has been teaching professionally for 15 years.

Prior to opening his own academy, Brian taught at some of the top facilities in greater Rochester, including Locust Hill C.C. and The Country Club of Rochester. Brian's students have qualified for the U.S. Amateur, earned college golf scholarships and won multiple club championships and junior titles, including the New York State Junior Amateur.

**Jacobs has taken a road less traveled to get to his current status as one of the premier golf instructors in the game. He spent 30 years in a parallel career teaching in the Rochester city school system.**

In this look-back with fellow Proponent Group member Paul Ramee, Jacobs touches on his time as Lead Instructor for ESPN Golf Schools, where he trained under Haney, and on the irony of his 30-year "parallel" career as a teacher in the city school system. Here's a redacted version of that interview.

**Your story about becoming a golf professional is far different from the standard narrative. I guess I'm wondering why that is.**

Well, I just never played golf as a young person. My dad worked at the power company and he had five kids—four boys and a girl—so for him there wasn't much time for activities like golf. We grew up here in Rochester and my mom was a waitress at two local country clubs. We were allowed to use their swimming pools and I recall the head pros at both clubs coming around to say hello. One of them, John Calabria, did that fairly often. He would say: "When are the Jacobs boys going start playing some golf?" I would always think to myself, "Sorry, but I'm never playing golf—that's for weird people."





Jacobs has spent significant time volunteering to support various golf events that benefit the armed forces.

### What did you do instead?

My brothers and I played football, baseball and soccer. I wasn't a good student but I was a star athlete. I was pretty heavily recruited for both baseball and football. During high school my older brothers worked at one of the clubs where our mom waitressed, Ridgemont Country Club. They were on the grounds crew every summer. I worked in the Ridgemont kitchen, as a dishwasher. So we were around the game of golf all the time, but none of us got into it. After high school I went off to play linebacker at Texas Lutheran.

### How did that pan out?

Not so well. My freshman year I got injured, so I came back to Rochester. I transferred to a local school, Cortland State College, and stayed there for a year. At that point I had no particular direction in life. Kind of spun out of control for a couple of years. I took a job at Kodak and worked there for a while. I did other odd jobs. Eventually I recovered from my injury and was able to go back to school and football. I played a couple of years at the state university at Brockport, N.Y. Then finally college was over. I was 26 and had a bachelor's degree in education. I took a job in the inner city, teaching health.

### Just to confirm: You reached age 26 and you still hadn't stuck a tee in the ground?

Teaching health education to inner-city kids, of all things, managed to get me into golf. A guy I knew at the school happened to have a friend who worked at a club nearby, Midvale Country Club. Midvale had been trying to start a caddie program and needed someone to run it. They figured the city kids would be interested and would probably form the core of the

program. I knew nothing about golf, much less about caddying, but I was already working with these kids so I did what I could to learn about country clubs and whatever it is a caddie does. I went to Midvale and we started the program and all of a sudden there I was, in my little corner of the golf industry.

### Meaning, you had a chance to finally play?

Correct. And the game I'd said was so weird didn't turn out to be weird at all. I fell in love with it immediately. I also became a good player basically right off the bat. My first year playing I was an 8- or 9-handicap.

### It's actually pretty challenging to start a caddie program and make it work—did your program at Midvale gain traction?

Yes, it came along very well. To the point that I got an offer from one of the top clubs around, Locust Hill, to become their caddie master. Locust Hill was host site for an LPGA Tour event every year, so it was a good opportunity for me. I went there and started playing more, trying to really develop my game. I would play with the staff pros at Locust Hill and at times I was beating them.

### If you could beat them, you could also join them, right?

That's just how I was thinking. One day in 2000 I asked our head professional how you even go about it. He told me about the education part and also about the Playing Ability Test. I signed up to take it and passed my PAT with a 71-67. I came off the green after 36 holes and one of the officials asked me, "Who exactly are you?" I told him, "I'm just a schoolteacher." And that's true, I really was just a schoolteacher. but I

Like many northern-tier teachers, Jacobs has access to top-of-the-line indoor facilities to keep the lesson book busy 12 months a year, even in a city known for very long winters.



had established a pattern in my life where I approached everything I set out to do just like it was football.

**You mean, full-bore, single-minded—that kind of thing?**

Right. I went all in for it. With golf, I watched as much film as I could watch. I taught myself how to play. I had one grip lesson, from a guy named John Hoecker. He showed me how to grip the club a little less neutral than what I'd been doing. I went and watched him teach and then watched other people teach.

**I guess if your entry into the golf profession went that smoothly—even having started so late—it was meant to be.**

That's pretty much how it was. Once I passed the PAT I did my PGA Business School and got the whole thing done in a year—all three of the units. Then I got more involved in the golf operation, doing normal club-pro duties such as running tournaments. Then I got an opportunity to go a different path when I was hired by the Country Club of Rochester. The job there was to basically play and teach. My total shop time was 10 hours a week. This was absolutely the greatest gig I'd ever had. Part of my job description was to sit with Sam Urzetta, a Rochester golf legend, and friends of Sam's who would drop by. They had a little cluster of porch chairs they'd settle into, to hear Sam spin his yarns. He would tell us about playing in the British Open or playing the Masters, winning the U.S. Amateur, other big events as well. But he had been head pro at the C.C. of Rochester and a good teacher, so I always wanted to know about his teaching technique. He was glad to oblige and we ended up out on the golf course quite a bit, with Sam showing me how to hit different shots.

**Sounds like a good mentor.**

Sam spent a lot of time with me. Then one day he sat me down and asked me what I was planning to do with my life. I said I was still committed to teaching school in the city, which I had never stopped doing, even with all the golf work. I also mentioned that I could maybe work toward becoming a head professional. He said Brian, you're not a head pro, you're a teacher.

**After C.C. of Rochester, what was your next career move?**

I went back to work for Paul Saunders, who had given me my start in the business setting up that caddie program at Midvale. Paul was at Ravenwood Country Club, where he had a golf academy. I was there for five years and then left and went out on my own, to a facility called Mill Creek, running my own academy. But again, still teaching school. And finally I came full circle, back to Ridgmont.

**The place where your mom and your brothers and you had all worked?**

That's right. It had become privately owned by that point, by a man named Jim Cucinelli. So Jim and I made an agreement whereby I would work rent-free but the facility would get a percentage of my academy's revenue. I went ahead on that basis and it's been a great fit ever since. We have a full program indoors and outside. I ended up building this fabulous business even as I kept up my first career, teaching school in the inner city. I did 30 years teaching and I just retired in June. At our section meeting not long ago I did a presentation and talked about that. Only two or three people there actually knew I was a schoolteacher and had been, all along.



Jacobs (left) got off the teaching tee for a few days this fall to lead his team to victory in the inaugural Golf Channel Academy Pro-am.

### Seriously, how did you do it?

I would wake up at 4 a.m. and go to the gym then go to school and teach. From there I would head off and give golf lessons. The baby would cry at night and I would say, lord, if I could only get two hours of sleep. I told the hiring committee at Locust Hill that I was coming there each day from extreme poverty to extreme affluence. And then I would hear some member complain that there were no peanuts at the bar. Meanwhile these poor kids that I'm working with are living in Upstate New York and they don't even have heat.

### So, as you say, one foot in two different worlds.

The golf environment was a parallel universe. The caddie program was really cool because, as planned, we mainly used inner-city kids. Having them around taught the club people a little bit about the different life the kids lived. A Locust Hill member who worked on the committee overseeing the caddie program came up to me recently and he had tears in his eyes. I asked him what was wrong and he brought up the name of a caddie we'd awarded a scholarship to. He said that this former caddie had stopped by his office the other day. With his scholarship to the University of Buffalo he'd earned a bachelor's degree then gone on to law school. He passed the bar and now he was a practicing attorney. The reason for the visit was just to express his gratitude. We helped a lot of kids in that caddie program—in some cases we were helping pay their rent. It was a good time and I'm always glad when people remember that.

### You had a stint with ESPN that had you working alongside Hank Haney. What was that like?

I was able to spend a lot of time with Hank at his facility outside Dallas. Any chance I had to go there I would take it. Hank heavily influenced me. It was an experience to see the way he would move students through positions, and how good he was at reading ball flight. In my six years with the ESPN program I probably did 600 schools. I got so I could tell what was wrong just by hearing impact. I knew I was making an impression when I got taken off putting and moved up to chipping, and then up to full swing. Eventually they put me in as lead instructor.

### Other influences?

I would say John Jacobs and Jim Hardy, although that was through things I've read, not direct experience. A teacher outside Philadelphia who is pretty well known, Lou Guzzi, is really worth spending time with. I love how Lou goes about his work—he spreads such a positive message and is extremely open. Michael Breed is that way, too. I spend some time nowadays with Michael. I tend to stay with super-positive people who are very clear about their messages.

### You've said in the past that even your students need to bring positive attitudes.

That's right. I made a decision that I was going to build a positive culture in my lessons, and I've stuck to it. So if you came and saw me coach you would notice the students are all positive. We interview them really hard for their commitment and for their positivity. And that's the way I choose them. But I think they kind of get that aura, that it's not about us making money, it's about them having a positive experience. They are more apt to take trips with me and take an interest in my family. They'll always ask, how's your family doing?

**Do you find it ironic that you've only had one golf lesson and then you built such a standout teaching business?**

I guess my approach was fake it until you make it. But by nature I really do want to be the best at what I do. I need to know why you do this with your hand and why the ball goes that way or this other way. Or how do I get people to strike it on the center of the clubface.

Everybody I have talked to has helped me. I knew as I was getting going that my learning curve had to be very short. I sought out Hank in particular. Not only because he was teaching Tiger but because I could relate to him. I relate to Cameron McCormick very well also. He used technology not to teach but to confirm. He says here is what I'm saying, now I'm going to confirm it.

**You've talked some about your team. Can you go into more detail?**

The team we have is a mental coach, conditioning coach, strength coach, and we're adding massage and physical therapy. They are all friends I've met over the years and worked with personally. I also have a dedicated clubfitter. We feel we offer one-stop shopping. If the student has an injury or strength or conditioning issue we have somebody for them.

Several years ago I was contacted by a guy who worked with sharpshooters in the military. He would teach them how to meditate and breathe. But he's also worked with hockey players, golfers, other athletes. He teaches at a college and we use him with our golfers. He goes out on the course with our players. He's not for everybody but I thought, hey, if he could sell meditation and breathing to the military he could probably do it with golfers. So he's been a great resource.

**Any new programs coming along?**

We're starting something called Golf University, which will be classes on a regular schedule. I will offer 20 different selections but they only have to choose 12. This way they have control and can choose what they want. Each class has a different topic. We're asking them to "earn their Ph.D in golf." It's \$210 a month and 20-25 students. I expect it to get it very big.

**Any advice on what golf coaches should be working on when they go inside during the winter?**

We do a lot of heavy stuff on speed training and functionality within our instruction. Those are breakdown periods for us. Meaning, we saw something during the year that we wouldn't really talk about during the season because the golfers are out playing, but now we can break it down. Then we have the students that are just "fix it" players who only want

to come in briefly. They control how many times they come in a month. They pay a fee to join the club and pay a discounted rate every time they come in. My hourly is \$200 so they pay \$75 and then \$125. So if they only come in one time I still get my hourly rate. But it's a 12-month commitment. Other people will come in three or four times a month. If they just wanted to play then we will oblige that request—so, we'll kind of clean up their swing motion and just cover the mental side.

**You've put a lot of energy into contributing to the profession and the coaching ranks. Where does that come from?**

I go back to the first time Lorin called me. I remember thinking the annual dues for this organization he was running was a big spend and how am I going to afford that. I was a little more tight-fisted than I am now. But I kept hearing good things so I called him and said I'm in. Since I'm an all-in kind of guy I asked what can I do and how can I help? We've developed a friendship over time.

**What about other decisions where you had to step up to be a better coach?**

The only time I hyperventilated and had diarrhea at the same time was when I bought my TrackMan unit. And I bought it on my own so I was like: How do I swallow this nut?

**Many coaches know that feeling, being anxious about the TrackMan investment. How did it work out for you?**

I paid it off in a year.

**Talk to me about how Proponent Group or GCA has helped your business**

I trusted Lorin and I saw some of the names getting involved so I told myself if I want to be at their level I need to join. And I knew that if people were in this group then they would be open to talking and sharing ideas—that was the concept. Names like Mike Bender, Martin Hall, Michael Breed, David Leadbetter—all of these people I was inspired to be like, so it was a no-brainer to get in. And it's been great. I like to think I've added value to the organization. I talk to a lot of young teachers about the business. And Lorin has been phenomenal. He has been such a positive influence on my life. He is either providing the right answer or he's asking the right question. I never hesitate to call him or email him a question. You can just see it month by month, how it's getting better. But it's because I'm a relationship person. I never looked at Proponent Group or GCA like I'm going to get more business from it. This stuff is going to help me as I go. **PG**



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# ADD FITNESS TO YOUR PROGRAMMING



**By Lorin Anderson, Founder**

I'm now eligible to play on the Champions Tour. Well, at least by chronological age. Certainly not by golf skill. And that is a bit of a shocker for me. I don't feel like I'm in my 50s. In fact I generally feel about the same as I did in my 30s but I do wake up some days with a stiff shoulder or a tight hamstring and I

can feel the changes coming where clubbed speed decreases and general aches increase.

The reason I bring this up is because when I was managing the instruction pages each month in GOLF Magazine I couldn't get very excited about adding a lot of fitness-focused articles. They just didn't seem that relevant to my personal bias of being a younger golfer who never really dealt with pain or injuries in any significant way. Now that I'm approaching the average age of the readership and viewership of most golf media outlets, which is also the average age of lesson-takers – somewhere around 58 years old – I'm realizing there is a huge opportunity to marry golf instruction with golf fitness.

I'm not just talking about using the TPI assessment tests at the beginning of a lesson to check for impairments. I'm talking about realigning your instruction programming to include workouts conducted by a professional trainer. What could be better for golfers than working on both their swings and golf fitness at the same time? Most of our members have access to indoor facilities and most already have a trainer whom they provide referrals to for students who are in significant need for their expertise. So why not

create programming that directly ties the two pieces together for a single price?

It makes sense on a lot of levels. The industry would prevent more golf-related injuries which currently cost the game millions of rounds played every year and cost facilities and instructors, in the form of lost revenues.

Tying swing instruction and fitness training can also make the game seem more athletic to juniors and young professionals who like to hang out at the gym. We're seeing a lot of "speed training" programs these days that incorporate fitness drills aimed at increasing clubhead speed.

It also taps into the American psyche that general fitness is a lifelong pursuit and it would better position golf as a conduit to improve general health for its participants.

My thinking is that you create a couple of programs to test your local market. One geared toward younger fitness-conscious golfers who see better conditioning as a pathway to better golf scores, i.e. with a focus on hitting the ball farther. And another geared toward eliminating golf-related injuries and increasing range of motion for older golfers who are feeling the effects of life's wear and tear on the body.

These programs would package both time to work on the swing with you and time in the gym with a trainer for a single price. Students who are generally healthier will only improve your lesson results. Meanwhile, a close relationship with a quality fitness trainer will likely grow both of your businesses, as you can make referrals to each other beyond the shared programs.

A generally healthier golfing population will keep more golfers playing the game more often. And we all have a duty to find ways to make the game healthier, too. **PG**

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## CASE STUDIES OF TEACHER - STUDENT COLLABORATION

## AT A 'PLAYER'S CLUB,' LOCKHART GETS SWING FREAKS TO FOCUS ON SCORE

By David Gould, Staff Editor

Any coach settles into a new facility thinking about ripple effect. Get that first batch of students to show clear improvement and go from unknown quantity to local hero. Proponent Group member Dan Lockhart understood this when he signed on at Fiddlesticks Country Club, a 36-hole community in Fort Myers, Fla. that attracts many a skilled and serious-minded golfer.

"We've got over 100 single-digit or better players here," says Dan. "I'm not introducing them to the game and I'm not taking them from semi-golfers to legit players. They already know how to play."

The club has a busy tournament schedule, anchored by a weekly "Dogfight" event that is all about cash and good-natured trash talk. Indirectly, Dan makes money off these competitions—he trains his students to sharpen the duller edges of their golf games so they'll shoot lower scores when the money is on the line.

"That makes me look good as a teacher and coach, which is good for business," he says matter-of-factly.

In that case, what to do with devoted student Wayne Daniel? He's a 5-handicapper who can shoot par or shoot 85 on a given day and brings a swing-freak mentality to Dan's lesson tee. Aesthetics are part of it, but not the top priority. "Wayne is into his swing to make it as technically sound as possible so that he can hit pure shots," says Lockhart. "He wouldn't mind looking like Jason Day, but that shouldn't be top priority."

Veteran instructors know that students like this are more likely than most to seek information from far and wide. Another swing maven Dan teaches will routinely take lessons from other instructors he hears about, but Daniel doesn't. "Wayne looks at a lot of teaching content online," Lockhart confirms, "but he's loyal to me and to his pro up North. If something he heard elsewhere interests him he'll run it past me."

Here's the problem: Wayne Daniel, technique junkie though he may be, is a hot-blooded competitor whose swing actually gets looser under pressure even as he scrapes his way around to good positions—from which



Dan Lockhart (left) with his student Wayne Daniel.

he can will the ball into the hole for low scores, high finishes and healthy shares of the Dogfight purses. His Achilles heel has nothing to do with the full swing. Instead it's a funky recurring case of the chip yips. On days when he is blading the ball over flagsticks from tight greenside lies, the purse money goes to someone else and Coach Dan loses his chance for reflected glory.

"It's not a pressure thing, and it doesn't seem neurological—like his muscles are in spasm or anything," observes Lockhart. "It's basically that his arms accelerate excessively in relation to his body and he really fights that."

The two have serious talks in which the value of time spent practicing short game is fully agreed upon. That said, if there's a gap between Wayne's most recent chip-yip snafu in competition and his next lesson, "he'll arrive talking about position at the top and his first move down," Lockhart says. The full-swing fascination will be top of mind once again and the important homework from inside 30 yards will not have been done.

As you may have already guessed, the psychology Lockhart would prefer to use to address this matter comes down to translating the beauty factor and "pure technique" motivation that Wayne equates with full swing down to the partial swing used in chipping. And some of that does come into the conversation. However, this player's issue with chipping is extreme enough that over-compensations are actually the best medicine, at least during the current training phase.

"He's gone several months with out chip-yipping, thanks to our work on that problem," says Lockhart. "He's got a very set routine on these shots, and a feeling of just letting the club fall onto the back of the golf ball. The other extreme of skulling chip shots is scooping them—I've told him that even scooping is better, and to build that feel into his execution."

The Fiddlesticks environment is reminiscent of a talented baseball team with a roster full of grizzled veterans. Any new manager hired to run such a ballclub has to guide it with a light touch and avoid taking things apart. Wayne Daniels wants to win competitions, and Dan Lockhart wants to help him do that. "If you really look at it," says Dan, "my work with Wayne is about picking the right times for him to get hot." **PG**



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## DIGEST ANNOUNCES “BEST YOUNG” TEACHERS FOR 2018-19

The new Golf Digest Best Young Teachers in America list for 2018-2019 includes 61 Proponent Group members. Congratulations to all of our members listed below who earned this very nice accolade. This is the highest number of Proponent Group members ever included on the list.

This is the 6th time Golf Digest has published this ranking of the game's best teachers who are currently under 40 years old. Well done everyone!



### *Northeast*

**Jason Barry**, West Windsor, NJ; **Jason Birnbaum**, West Nyack, NY; **Sara Dickson**, Brookline, MA; **Justin Foster**, Danbury, CT; **Steve Keogh**, New York, NY; **Anders Mattson**, Saratoga Springs, NY; **Joe Ostrowski**, New York, NY; **Megan Padua**, East Hampton, NY; **Bill Schmedes III**, Monroe Township, NJ; **Jason Sedan**, New Durham, NH; **Stefanie Shaw**, Southampton, NY; **Mark Walder**, New Hope, PA

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