

# What I've Learned: Cameron McCormick

## Brook Hollow G.C., Dallas, TX

Interview by Paul Ramee, Jr.



Based nowadays at Brook Hollow Golf Club in Dallas, Cameron McCormick first came to the U.S. from Melbourne, Australia in the 1990s. His pursuit of a golf career began at a junior college in Wichita, Kansas and continued as McCormick gained a scholarship to play golf for Texas Tech. Experienced as a professional player but attracted to coaching and teaching early on, he has distinguished himself on the lesson tee. From 2010 through 2013, the Proponent Group member was named to the Golf Digest Top 40 under 40 list. In 2007 McCormick was Teacher of the Year in the North Texas PGA. He has also been a US Kids Golf Top 50 instructor.

It's a familiar story with golf professionals who are motivated to excel as teachers—they make pilgrimages to study the top practitioners. For Cameron McCormick, that meant traveling the country to observe and ask questions of Butch Harmon, Chuck Cook, Rick Martino, Mark Wood, Craig Shankland, Hank Johnson and Cameron Doan, among others. During an earlier developmental stage, he soaked up the wisdom of Steve Bann at the Victorian Institute of Sport.

Among his notable students are the PGA Tour tournament winner Nathan Green, Jason Enloe—who has won twice on the Nationwide Tour, LPGA Tour member Mina Harigae, former Pres. George W. Bush and young Jordan Spieth, U.S. Junior champion in 2009 and 2011. McCormick recently had a birthday that knocks him off that Golf Digest under-40 list, so it seemed like a fitting juncture to put him through a Paul Ramee interview. Excerpts of Cameron's conversation with Paul start now.

**It seems every accomplished teacher or coach develops a unique approach to game-improvement. Could you describe yours?**

My coaching philosophy is all about creating a plan that aligns with the student's goals and their commitment level. Under my program, when everything comes together the student will be able to practice and play in a "flow state." This is vitally important. It's a set of conditions that you're always working toward—the golfer becomes fully immersed in what they are doing. The sensation they get is of energized focus, total involvement and increased success.

**That's such an ideal state for any player. What do you see as the steps leading to it?**

To help my students reach this level of golf experience, I set

clear goals, provide direct and immediate feedback and create what I hope is the ideal balance between their natural ability and the training challenges I'm creating for them.

**Who in the coaching world would you cite as having influenced you?**

Certainly I'd list Dr. Rick Jenson, Dr. Paul Schempp, Butch Harmon, John Wooden and Peter Mattsson. Also, Dr. Greg Rose and TPI. Outside the U.S., I'd mention the Victorian Institute of Sport and Steve Bann, Golf Canada and Golf New Zealand. I'm glad to recognize certain individuals and organizations of influence, but equally important as a source of growth has been my peers. Being involved with Proponent Group, with social media groups, and with section PGA committees is vitally important to me. There are too many people to recognize individually.

**What is the motivation that spurs you on?**

The way I see it, inspiration is infinite. I literally get it everywhere, and from everyone. My belief is that you should never close your eyes and mind to an opportunity to learn, to see something through a different lens.

**How was it you became acquainted with Jordan Spieth, the 2009 and 2011 U.S. Junior Champion?**

Jordan's father is a friend of Rob Addington. Rob is executive director of the Texas Golf Association and happens to be a client of mine. With assistance from Rob, Mr. Spieth was making a list of prospective coaches for his son, who was 12 at the time. My name came up, along with several other high-profile instructors around Dallas. I was the first of the group they visited and interviewed. Our meeting must have gone well, because after that meeting the Spieths didn't go to see anyone else on their list.

**What was your impression of this junior golfer's abilities?**

Jordan had never had any formal instruction before he met me, and it showed up in certain idiosyncrasies. He'd already been winning tournaments and he had shot a 62 (-8). After our meeting and my evaluation, I laid out a long-term plan that both Jordan and his father liked very much. Being able to visualize the picture of what Jordan said he wished to achieve and the steps needed to get there was an important first stage. I think it demonstrated to him and his parents my coaching ideology.

**How important to your teaching brand has it been for you to have a player advance from your lesson tee to gain national recognition? Has it opened up**

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**- Cameron McCormick**

### **new opportunities?**

Nurturing arguably one of the best junior golfers in history has been a tremendous gain for my brand. I can't accurately quantify the economic impact but it's certainly opened doors for me. Opportunities tied to Jordan's success progressed from local media requests to national TV exposure. Local, regional and national magazine exposure—along with writing opportunities—has come along. Opportunities to coach other talented players in the DFW area expanded to a regional pull then into a national pull.



Cameron McCormick with rising star Jordan Spieth at last month's HP Byron Nelson Classic.

### **It's often said that what you want in life is great offers.**

Without a doubt that is true, although you have to keep delivering. Certain opportunities will come one's way due to a student's success, but turning them into further success is an entirely new challenge. I need to be able to provide results for all clients who come my way. So it becomes about realizing goals, whatever they may be, with each individual.

### **How do you juggle the needs of Brook Hollow members with the needs of your elite players from outside the club?**

When I was hired at Brook Hollow there were certain spoken agreements we reached. One was the understanding that I could keep a roster of clients who were non-members. There was no contract language, just the word of the club governance. They've shown me tremendous support and loyalty that I try to mirror by putting the needs of the membership first. Part of that is rescheduling non-member lessons to make space for member demand. It's also a matter of recognizing that there are certain off-peak times that non-members would best fit into. In general it is up to me to use discretion when offered opportunities to grow my brand. For that to work, it needs to be a good thing for all involved. I try to balance growing my brand while also doing the right thing by the membership of the club, the organizations I'm active in, and my non-member clients.

### **How much time do you spend away from Brook Hollow with your tournament golfers?**

Combining events from the PGA Tour, the LPGA Tour, the Web.com Tour and various collegiate or amateur and junior events, it comes to between 20 and 25 days a year. It's helpful when the events are in town. That allows me to teach a few lessons on the flip side of being at the event.

### **What advice do you have for young teachers who are getting started in the profession?**

Seek knowledge. Seek it in every form, from every source. I find myself continually aware of "knowledge width" versus "knowledge depth." In general I seem to favor knowledge width, or diversity—drawing from a range of sources. At times a subject will come along that draws my interest and pulls me deep into its details. A young instructor or coach is well-advised to seek out goal-oriented, like-minded people. When the chance comes along, sit at the feet of a master and absorb as much explicit know-how as possible. As you're discerning the

points and ideas this teacher expresses, think about what hasn't been said. The things a top-echelon coach doesn't say are as important as what he or she does say.

### **When and how does the younger golf instructor begin to develop instincts and confidence?**

Those attributes will come as a result of passion. Basically I would say: Get out there and do it. Don't waste time in work or tasks that fail to make your heart sing. It's "time in the saddle" that will develop your subtle knowledge. Time in the saddle takes what you've cognitively learned and turns it into behavioral knowledge. Plan out your career with defined goals and steps to get there. Give yourself a road map for success.

### **What do you focus on with elite-level players?**

Skills, skills, skills. Everything I do with elite level players is driven by the goal of skill optimization. Almost every coaching session I give begins with a discussion about performance. We talk about KPI's or Key Performance Indicators. They are my drivers of the end results. KPIs are the building blocks of the score a player signs for at the end of the day. Improving performance is directly correlated to reductions in variability built around refining performance in about a dozen areas. These include movement patterns, psychological processes, physical conditioning, your equipment, tactical experience, training environment and training challenges, and also the social, family and peer environment a player finds himself or herself in. All of this is very individualized for each player and each session.

### **Within all that, how do you shape your role as coach?**

I'm like a gardener, you might say. A coach in many ways is a cultivator of skills. Within this scope of cultivating skills there are techniques you come to trust to provide the desired results. It's probably accurate to say, in my case, that I am style-

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