

MISSIE BERTEOTTI

SCALLY'S GOLF AND TRAINING CENTER, MOON, PA

INTERVIEW BY PAUL RAMEE, JR

As a professional athlete, Missie Berteotti was so successful—and in person she is so relaxed and easy-going—one might be surprised to learn what a restless curiosity she possesses.

But there it is, from the TPI training to the memberships in Toastmasters International and the National Speakers Association, to a study of yoga so intense she ended up an Iyengar-certified instructor, to her National Certification in Therapeutic Massage, all the way to her certification in Rick Jensen's seminal Mental Skills training.

Someone should check this woman's golf bag to see if there's a Rubik's Cube zipped in there someplace.

During her high school days in Pittsburgh, Berteotti won back-to-back Pennsylvania State Championships. She went on to attend the University of Miami, where her successful collegiate career was highlighted by medalist honors at the 1984 NCAA Championship. During her 14-year run on the LPGA Tour, Berteotti compiled \$1.1 million in earnings, won the 1993 Ping Welch's Classic and notched many a top-10 finish in other tournaments. Her career-low round of 65 came on day three of the 1991 Women's Kemper Open, in Hawaii.

After leaving the tour, Berteotti served as an instructor in junior golf clinics administered by the LPGA tour in various cities. She has also conducted LPGA Golf Clinics for Women, a tour-endorsed series owned and operated by Jane Blalock.

Along the way Missie organized and presented her Mental Mastery Workshops to aspiring golfers, showing them pathways toward optimal competitive performance. At the core of all of her coaching is a focus on these very principles, which Berteotti has written about in her book "The Mental Mastery Program: From the Classroom to the Course to Life" available at missieberteotti.com.

Currently working as a teaching professional at Scally's Golf and Training Center in Moon, Penn. Missie enjoys teaching private lessons and continuing to mentor women, which she does through her company The Business Golf Academy. Fellow Proponent member and newsletter contributor Paul Ramee engaged Berteotti in a lengthy conversation recently, yielding these selected



comments about her life and career.

Missie, tell us how you started on your path in golf—a journey that would lead you to a long LPGA Tour career and ultimately into teaching and coaching.

I was the oldest of three kids and my father was a 15-handicap golfer who loved the game. I wanted to play with him but he told me I needed to practice more and get better before I'd be able to go on the course with him. So, I practiced, and I ended up getting pretty good—eventually good enough to receive a scholarship to the University of Miami and then compete for 14 years on the LPGA Tour.

You quit touring when you were still competitive.

When I became a mother I gave up playing the tour. That was in 1999. And then when my husband and I divorced, and he moved to Los Angeles, I became a full-time mom and a single parent.

Was that a difficult sacrifice?

I wasn't one of those players who disliked tour life—I had some really great friends out there and didn't really picture myself quitting. But when you become a parent, you realize it isn't all about you. I started teaching part-time while raising my son. He is now 17 and he, unfortunately, doesn't have a lot of time for golf—his real passion is tennis and he plays competitively.

What did you miss most?

I missed having something to strive for and I missed being focused, on the personal

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Berteotti with LPGA friends and fellow competitors (from left) Barb Mucha, Nancy Lopez, Val Skinner and Rosie Jones.

achievement. I think everyone gets to a point where they are fairly comfortable being on stage and showing off, so I came to miss that.

Tell me about some of your mentors along the way.

One in particular was John Rech, who was the pro at Valley Brook in Pittsburgh, where I grew up. To me he was the personification of grit and being resilient. He was always barking out some piece of advice at someone. John taught me a lot about playing golf, and he had such a classic, old-pro way about him. He would yell at me, “Go putt for an hour, one-handed, then come find me.” He taught me to be tough.

Then there was Ray Gafford, an oil man from Fort Worth. Ray came out of the same caddie yard as Hogan and Nelson. He became a sponsor of mine after college, so I spent a lot of time in Texas playing and practicing.

Obviously, getting into the teaching side would be natural for someone who played at the highest level. Was that an easy decision for you?

I did have an interest in getting into the business world, but every job I interviewed for wanted a full-time person. I needed to have some flexibility, so I started teaching part-time and was able to fit it around my

schedule. I was really lucky to have some great people available to support and educate me—Lorin, Rick Jensen and Henry Brunton, to name a few.

The work you’ve done on “Mental Mastery” is a real signature for you. How did that come about and evolve?

It came about as a reflection of my struggles on tour. I don’t consider myself very different from the typical tour player, in terms of the doubt and fear that arises to compromise performance. Most everyone who is out there has choked at one time or another. So, the book “Mental Mastery” was a project borne of necessity—I felt I had to understand these emotional experiences much more clearly.

What was the actual writing experience like, with this particular book?

I sat down and wrote it in two weeks—it all just flowed out. But then I spent the next six months editing and revising it. “Mental Mastery” teaches you how to trust properly. It helps players realize that they are not “chokers” and that the obstacles are normal. It comes with the territory that as you progress in competition, new sets of feelings and emotions will arise, but there are patterns within that and some

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Berteotti's love of the game and her quest to help others has made her a leader in helping women get a greater benefit out of participation in the game.



effective ways to prepare for them. I wish I had known all this back when I was 20, it would have made a world of difference.

Can you share any specifics about your time on tour and how the stress of competition affected you?

Early on Pat Bradley really had my number. I remember so clearly my rookie year, playing in a group with her. My dad was following us and for some reason being around this player made me extremely self-conscious. I couldn't perform. This went on for a while.

Did it ever remedy itself?

Well, I actually approached Pat and talked to her about it and she couldn't have been more welcoming. She was really a formidable player. I remember when she needed a few wins to get into the Hall of Fame, she was coming to the end of her career and I was so impressed with her laser focus to get those last couple of wins. It was just an unfortunate thing that I always played poorly around her.

Can you share with us your definition of a "performance coach?"

It's someone who is capable of getting the player into their best state to play. Sounds easy, but it isn't. There

are so many variables. There is breathing, visualization, having clear intentions—and it's very hard to maintain clear intentions when playing at a high level, because there is just so much going on. There are TV cameras, media, family, other players... a lot to grapple with. And that golfer has to know how they are going to react when they make their first bogey.

Do you need a different recipe for each student?

Absolutely, but they have to take ownership. It's their own personal responsibility for getting themselves ready to play. It is 100 percent on the player at that point. Golf is a solitary sport, mainly played on your own. The help you get is in having someone who shows you and explains to you what your specific individual process is, for preparation and then on the course.

But you teach a lot in groups, how do you let the group interact so it can benefit each player in it?

When I grew up we believed that if you were scared of something, you would never really let anyone other than maybe your sports psychologist know. You certainly wouldn't let another player know, for fear of them exploiting that weakness. Now, players benefit from the comfort of a group and the ability to realize they are not alone. They can see that their peers have the same fears they have.

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Berteotti's 14 seasons on the LPGA Tour included top 10 finishes in all four majors played at that time and one career victory along with hundreds of happy pro-am partners.

What are some of the professional opportunities you envision for yourself?

I would love to help women with their business golf. So many are new to the game and unsure of what to do out there. They struggle with the things that seem to us to come naturally, like where to stand or where to park the cart. Most importantly, so many women don't realize how much golf can help them advance their careers. I was talking to a friend recently who was recounting how much she had used golf to advance her career. She made a key point—how women don't realize that the men who are out there playing business golf are mostly such mediocre players, but they manage to use the arena to create business connections. My mission would be to get women competent and confident enough to enter the golf arena so they are able to hold their own.

You mentioned becoming a parent

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and realizing that it “isn't all about you.” And yet to play professional golf does require intense focus on yourself, to the point of being self-absorbed, in some cases. How did you manage such a big shift?

All I can say is I am really so glad it happened. I do miss competing, but my life has another point of view to it. Without the role and the experience of being a mom to my son I would never have gotten as far as I have, personally.

As you look back on your career, what are you most proud of?

Probably the things that make me the most proud are the fact that I have given so much of myself and have taken the time to learn things that I can pass on. As a competitor, I always think I should have done better, but in the end, my career would have been nothing if I had not been able to pass along what I've learned. **PG**

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