

Tell Me Something I Don't Know

TIM CUTSHALL: GURU OF TEACHING BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE

by David Gould, Staff Editor

Proponent Group is preparing to survey members about teaching buildings, as a follow-on to the original academy-building questionnaire and report we came out with in 2012. Change can occur quickly at the upper tier of golf coaching, including—perhaps especially—on the technology end. To fill in our potential knowledge gaps in this specialized area, we did the logical thing and placed a call to Tim Cutshall.

By consensus Cutshall is the industry expert on design and installation of everything that makes a “smart” golf learning center, from wiring and lighting to cameras, monitors and high-tech diagnostic systems. Once we

tracked down our constantly traveling colleague, it made sense to keep asking questions until Tim ran out of time. The topic at hand was simple enough: *What are the latest trends in high-tech teaching facilities?* Well, for one thing, the cost of installing absolutely first-class video cameras has gone down significantly.

“The state of the art right now is the German-made IDS industrial video camera,” says Cutshall, “which five years ago would have cost you \$15,000 but the price for it today is just \$1,500.” As Tim explains, this is a “low-light” camera, with high-powered sensors inside it that eliminate the need for expensive lighting. “With low-light cameras, you don’t need to dump \$5,000 into studio lighting for a teaching bay anymore,” says Cutshall, “so, you’re saving those budget dollars.”

At a recent job for a Midwestern club that has hosted major championships, Cutshall wired up and installed several of these cameras, and did not even set them at their potential highest frames-per-second speed. “With those cameras set at 100 fps—and they actually go up to 300 fps—the image quality is like what you see on a movie screen at the cineplex,” says Cutshall.

The haves-and-have-nots dichotomy in golf coaching tech is by all means still in place, with certain evolutionary changes, according to Tim. The big Midwestern club



Jupiter Hills Club's three bay teaching center is one of Cutshall's latest projects.

he outfitted “didn’t have a budget” for its academy building, Cutshall explains—they just brought in top contractors and told them to not to waste any money. The full outlay was \$750,000 for the structure and all the shiny objects inside. It was

likewise in Florida, where a club that recently hired Cutshall “wasn’t trying to keep up with the Joneses,” he says. “They wanted to *be* the Joneses everyone else needed to keep up with. I ran out of stuff to sell them.”

Coaches without deep pockets have been improvising creatively of late. “The low-cost alternative in teaching tech is easier now because of apps,” says Cutshall. “For video analysis software you go with the V1 app, which has a wireless interface, then you add a sunlight-readable iPad Pro, with a camera that gives you slow-motion at 240 fps, and combine that with BodiTrak ground-sensor unit. You’ve paid about \$4,000 and now you’ve got a setup that not too many years ago would have been state-of-the-art.”

This has been a big year for new academy buildings, according to Tim, but the structural work has been delayed on basically every project. “Turns out that the first big wave of teaching buildings, post-2008, came when contractors needed work,” Cutshall notes. “Now the builders are slow to get to these jobs—they’ve got plenty else going on.” **PG**