

A LOOK INSIDE GOLF DIGEST'S LISTS



By Lorin Anderson, *Founder*

As most of you know, I am responsible for the first Top 100 Teacher list published by GOLF Magazine 20-plus years ago. While they will never be a perfect showcase of teaching talent, I strongly believe the lists that are published around the industry today have benefited all teachers by reminding millions of golfers on a regular basis that

there are plenty of excellent instructors available, no matter where you happen to live. The lists have always been intended as a service that helps connect golfers to coaches.

Of course, on the industry side there are always gripes about who made the lists and who didn't and how the lists are constructed. And, of course, there are plenty of conspiracy theories about who actually controls the final rankings.

Maybe it was the full moon or some other cosmic event, but something was in the air when this year's Golf Digest teacher rankings hit newsstands last month. In more than two decades working with the game's top teachers I've never gotten so many calls and emails about perceived slights in the rankings. So as a former editor, I picked up the phone and called my friends at Golf Digest to see if something had changed in the process that would have accounted for all the complaints and questions.

I spoke with Peter Morrice, who oversees Instruction for the magazine and works closely with Matt Rudy, the staff member who oversees the Golf Digest Top 50 Teachers in America list and the Golf Digest Best Teachers by State list. He said nothing in the magazine's process had changed that would account for the unusual number of complaints I received. But I told Peter I believed many of our members

don't really understand the entire process and that I wanted to share with them exactly how Golf Digest currently builds the lists. Here is what I found out:

1) The final lists at both the national and state level are not manipulated with any "bonus" or "penalty" adjustments in any way. According to Morrice, the votes are counted and the list is published (and in my 20 years of working with Peter he has *always* been a straight shooter—I have no reason to believe he's not being truthful about the actual voting process).

2) Some of our members said they didn't receive a ballot this year, although they had last time around. Peter noted two reasons for this possibility. First, if your email address changed in the past two years and you didn't tell the magazine they likely sent your ballot to your old email address. Second, everyone on the previous ballot *who earns less than 10 percent* of the vote is removed from the next ballot.

3) You can't be sabotaged by your peers if for some reason they deeply dislike you, as the computer balloting flags all very low scores and tosses them out automatically. For example, if a bunch of teachers at another academy across town all decided in a fit of immaturity to all give you "1's" on the ballot's scale of 1 to 10, those scores are thrown out automatically. Only scores above a certain threshold are counted toward the teacher's final score.

4) There were questions about GolfTEC exerting more influence over the list than in past years. Peter explained that as the company has grown, more of its teachers have been added to the various state and national ballots.

The Golf Digest lists are based purely on peer voting, unlike most of the other lists in golf instruction. So my advice remains the same every time someone asks how they can improve their odds of being included or moving up the list: Be as visible as possible and contribute to the education of your peers and you'll have a fair shot at earning a spot. **PG**

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