

NEW SERIES: CASE STUDIES OF TEACHER-STUDENT COLLABORATION

COACHING A HUSBAND-WIFE DUO USING
A NEW SPIN ON OPERATION 36

By David Gould, *Staff Editor*

There are countless tales in which a female adult beginner is being taught by an actual instructor while at the same time hearing no end of swing tips from the amateur golfer she happens to have married.

This isn't one of those stories, thankfully. It's about an emergency room physician from Houston named Ken Stackhouse and Anita, his wife. Dr. Stackhouse was looking toward retirement and hoping to convince Anita that they would enjoy their golden years all the more if they could play golf together. He sought help from Proponent Group member Janean Murphy, an LPGA professional who serves as director of instruction at two Houston clubs, Oakhurst Golf Club as well as River Plantation Golf Club.

Janean saw this assignment as yet another in which Operation 36 could be highly useful. Op36, the Ryan Dailey-Matt Reagan brainchild that fellow Proponent members found intriguing from the get-go, has truly taken off in the past year or two. Murphy doesn't just follow the existing program, she stays tuned as Dailey and Reagan put out their frequent messages about emerging variations on the concept. (For anyone who may not know, Operation 36 flips the normal golf challenge by setting a target score of par-36 for 9 holes and starts beginners right near the hole—that makes the goal quickly achievable—then moves them gradually back toward the regulation tee.)

"For a while now," says Murphy, "Ryan has been encouraging coaches to use the word 'semester' in marketing your standard Op36 series of 8 or 10 weeks. I've switched to that terminology and it makes sense. You can frame the program that way and keep your students involved year-round, then very possibly bring them back the next year."

Here's the relevant wrinkle on standard Op36 that pertains to her work with the Stackhouse couple: Middle-handicap males, if they're merely a bit open-minded, can and will participate in an Operation 36 series with raw

beginners, starting from the very same distance the rest of the class starts at. Murphy has Op36 pods that include more than one husband-wife pairing where the man is a veteran and the woman is new—in fact once she gets one such pairing it tends to attract others. "For the guys, it's social and enjoyable and they tend to feel like they're doing a nice, supportive thing," says Murphy. "Then, before you know it, they are on the hook to make par from something like 50 or 75 yards and their wedge games get exposed. They turn to me when their ball ends up 50 feet from the hole and I'm nodding my head—like, yeah, we've got some work to do!"

That spins off into private lessons on scoring shots—and there's your model for how Murphy has decided to run her business overall. She gets people in groups, fosters great relationships among members of the pods and then breaks away from group work to get more in-depth with whichever students need and want that opportunity.

Janean would surely excel under the model she has developed if she'd started out as a full-on traditional golf instructor, but in fact she delved into team coaching at the very outset of her career. Around Houston she's known for having coached The Woodlands High School girls' golf team to three

consecutive Texas State Championships in 2001, 2002 and 2003.

With the Stackhouses, her private-lesson work has been more with Anita, and it's all been very upbeat. One reason for the positive vibe is that the wedge struggles undergone by the experienced guy golfers sometimes coincide with some legit pars from the newbies—that only stokes the fire of their motivation.

Now, we spoke earlier about non-professionals feeling at liberty to dole out golf instruction, but Murphy has a twist on that scenario that makes sense and adds to her program. Her own husband, Adam, is a bogey golfer who gets called in to team-teach when it's time to peel the men off from the pod and give the novices their own learning space. In reality, he's just supervising and keeping tabs, but it works out for all parties and contributes to work-life balance for the hardworking coach, Janean. **PG**



Janean Murphy (left) with Anita and Ken Stackhouse.