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THE COACHING ISSUE

**IT CAN HELP CREATE COMMUNITY
AND USAGE AT YOUR FACILITY**

PGA TEACHER & COACH OF THE YEAR
KEVIN WEEKS

CREATING COMMUNITY THROUGH COACHING

PGA TEACHER & COACH OF THE YEAR KEVIN WEEKS IS AMONG MANY EXAMPLES OF PGA PROFESSIONALS USING COACHING TO HELP STRENGTHEN CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PLAYERS AND FACILITIES

By Don Jozwiak, Senior Editor

IT HAPPENS TWICE EVERY SATURDAY AND THREE TIMES ON SUNDAYS AT COG HILL Golf & Country Club in Lemont, Illinois. A group of six players will convene for a two-hour session with 2023 PGA Teacher & Coach of the Year Kevin Weeks, who orchestrates a cross between a supervised practice and a private lesson in the shadow of the public facility's famed red barn. Some of the groups are comprised of PGA Jr. League players or competitive high school players trying to prepare for tournaments or earn college scholarships. Other groups feature weekend warriors trying to grind their way to a lower handicap, while others are relative beginners looking for an enjoyable way to spend a couple of active hours outdoors.

At the center of it all is Weeks, who sets expectations and uses his three decades of experience as a coach to read what each golfer needs from that day's session. Some require a pep talk or an unsentimental reminder about the importance of practicing between sessions, others may need a chance to blow off some steam about something unrelated to golf, or to hear some words of support.

Swing videos are taken and analyzed, players move between 10 stations to practice different skills, and 120 minutes flies by. Between sessions,

Weeks counts his successes not in championships – though he's coached winners at every level from PGA Jr. League to the PGA Tour – but in the community that coaching creates among the golfers at Cog Hill.

"The more I think about it, coaching is what brings people together," says Weeks, a PGA Certified Professional in Teaching & Coaching. "Teaching is training people to play above the level they're currently at. Coaching is being engaging and welcoming, and giving people what they want from

Coaching juniors has helped Kevin Weeks build connections between golfers at Cog Hill Golf & Country Club.



RUSSELL KIRK/GOLF LINKS

Ten Takeaways

Here are some of the key ideas PGA Professionals shared for this story about how coaches can build community at a facility through coaching programs:

1 **Coaching is a way for PGA Professionals to interact directly with golfers**, and to then connect those golfers with each other.

2 Private lessons, group lessons and supervised practice sessions are all **ways for PGA Professionals to build connections**.

3 Coaching makes golf less of a solitary sport and more of **a team pursuit, where individuals feel like part of a larger group**.

4 Coaching programs aimed at specific groups, like juniors or beginners, can **get other family members and friends involved in the game**.

5 Whether players are trying to get better or just **see coaching as a way to enjoy golf as an activity**, PGA Professionals should make them feel welcome at their facility.

6 **Offer different types of coaching programs** so golfers of all skill levels can find options that appeal to where they are on their personal golf journey.

7 Through coaching, **PGA Professionals get to know their students** and can then pair them with other similarly minded students to play golf.

8 Elements that make team sports fun – like **group dinners, parties and travel** – can be translated to golf coaching.

9 **Off-course facilities**, like ranges and simulator facilities, **are great locations for coaching programs** that combine golf with socializing.

10 **Game-based learning**, including drills and games found on the PGA Coach app, **can make practice fun in a competitive way**.



a golf experience – maybe that's getting better, maybe it's some exercise. It's about the process, not the result.

“Coaching creates connections, especially in groups, where everyone is pulling for everyone else in the group to get better and have fun. By taking people for who they are and what they want, our golfers feel less like customers and more like family.”

And, Weeks points out, families do things together. His adult Cog Hill clients, bonded by their weekly group sessions, become likely to head from the range to the restaurant for a burger and a beer while they set up a round of golf together. Junior golfers tend to form friendships that transcend high school rivalries and last beyond college days, all while keeping parents and siblings involved in

Weeks has coached players on Team Illinois to the National Car Rental PGA Jr. League Championship on multiple occasions.

DARREN CARROLL/THE PGA OF AMERICA



teams that made it to nationals, became mentors for younger players at Cog Hill, starred at their respective high schools and are now all on college teams. Home for the holidays, Weeks hosted the longtime students for a skill-building practice session followed by lunch on a stormy winter day. To his delight, the group finished lunch and went right back to the range, where they stayed until the weather chased everyone home for the day.

"They were having so much fun that they didn't want to leave, and it has to do with the camaraderie and the community they're a part of here," says Weeks, a three-time Illinois PGA Teacher & Coach of the Year. "They were one of my Saturday morning groups for years, and they became friends and really pushed and pulled each other along – not talking trash or being overly competitive with each other, but really trying to make each other better. Those are the same types of connections I see people making at all ages through coaching and playing this game."

Weeks continues to adapt his coaching through ongoing education. He and his staff have completed American Development Model training through PGA Coach, and the tools it provides have meshed with the mentoring Weeks received earlier in his golf career from a pair of Cog Hill coaching legends.

Weeks shares the coaching knowledge passed on to him by his mentors.

golf at the facility.

One such group of students – five players who started in Weeks' group lessons as grade-schoolers – met up with their coach at Cog Hill last December. After years of playing and practicing together, the young men played together on PGA Jr. League

PGA Coach resources can help your coaching business

Coaching players to become better at golf is about more than swing mechanics, and the same goes for running a successful coaching business. As the PGA Coach brand has continued to evolve since its introduction four years ago, this powerful suite of tools can help coaches grow and manage their businesses and become better at helping golfers enjoy the game – and also help improve work-life balance for PGA Professionals.

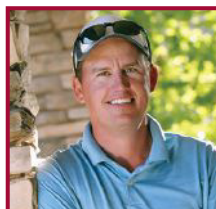
"The best thing we can do as PGA Professionals is to listen to what our students want, and to listen to other coaches who are successful – then make a commitment and give your program time to develop," says PGA Professional Will Robins, owner of Robins Golf Logistix (RGX) and an advisor to the PGA. "Why would I ever get back in a cab after using Lyft and Uber? Give the consumer a better option, an experience that's better, or you'll be the Yellow Cab. If we keep reinventing ourselves and listening to the customer, people will buy into you as their coach."

PGA Coach includes all the tools PGA Professionals need to become what Robins calls a PGA Modern Coach: training on the American Development Model (ADM), instructional videos, marketing aids that will help your business attract clients, and tools to help manage your calendar, bookings and payments. These can all be

accessed from the PGA Coach app, with is a free download in both the Apple and Android app stores.

The first step in using PGA Coach is earning a certification in the ADM approach, which can be done in a few hours

as you have available time. ADM is a proven model for developing athletes that is used by USA Hockey, USA Basketball and USA Lacrosse, and helps keep players



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—Will Robins, PGA

engaged in the sport as they are learning it through positive early experiences.

After ADM certification, PGA Professionals can use PGA Coach to create their own PGA Coach Profile, which will help golfers who visit PGA.com find them more easily. PGA Coach has a dedicated team that helps with functions like Search Engine Optimization (SEO) that increase web

traffic for participating coaches – a service for which some other companies charge hundreds of dollars on a monthly basis.

Students can even book lessons with PGA Coaches directly through PGA.com, and coaches can use the included PGA Calendar service to keep track of their lessons and clients – and to block out times when you're not available. And the PGA Payments portion of PGA Coach helps process and track payments, whether you choose to have students pay in person or online.

PGA Coach also assists professionals by using ADM techniques to create programming that appeals to the three main golfer mindsets: Win, Socialize and Escape. Coaches can use PGA Coach to create lesson plans that cater to competitive golfers (Win), golfers who want to spend on-course time with friends and family (Socialize) and those who want to enjoy the game as a way to get away from other commitments (Escape).

A new element to PGA Coach is being able to create PGA Group Events. Coaches can easily enter details for clinics and other group golf events, and PGA Coach creates a marketing page for the event on PGA.com and manages the registration process.

If you haven't already become a PGA Modern Coach, you can go to pga.coach today and learn more about the benefits, and start your own journey toward taking control of your coaching business.



“COACHING CREATES CONNECTIONS, ESPECIALLY IN GROUPS, WHERE **EVERYONE IS PULLING FOR EVERYONE ELSE** IN THE GROUP TO GET BETTER AND HAVE FUN.”

—KEVIN WEEKS,
2023 PGA TEACHER & COACH OF THE YEAR

they had the utmost respect for each other. I really learned a lot from DeDe in terms of finding out why that student is in front of you and what they need from you – and how to give them what they want.

“I remember one particular lesson, DeDe’s student only hit three shots. Afterward, she told me the woman had just gotten some terrible news and just needed some time to talk, and that was more important than golf that day. Sometimes that’s all a person needs, and that’s coaching.”

There’s a “wall of fame” in Weeks’ indoor studio, near where Owens and Suttie used to teach, where visitors can see some of his students’ accomplishments represented by signed flags from PGA Tour victories, Illinois high school state championships, USGA amateur events and the Drive, Chip and Putt National Championship.

As a coach, however, Weeks sees his own accomplishments on the range and the four golf courses at Cog Hill, where his students continue to enjoy the game together.

“At the end of the day, swing mechanics are essential, but so is knowing how to communicate with your students – this is a communications business, and that’s what builds community,” Weeks says. “Coaching them, welcoming them, making them feel welcome at their facility, making yourself available to them. If golfers feel that coming from you as a coach, they’ll keep coming back to play, to practice, to eat and to hang out.” ■

A native of Mississippi, Weeks came to Cog Hill in the late 1990s and had the chance to learn from two of the facility’s coaches at the time: 2000 PGA Teacher & Coach of the Year Dr. Jim Suttie and two-time LPGA Teacher of the Year Dr. DeDe Owens. Suttie, now coaching at The TwinEagles Club in Naples, Florida, was a trendsetter in swing mechanics and teaching technology, pioneering the use of high-speed video in golf. Owens, who passed away in 1999, was an education expert who knew how to hone in on what a player needed.

Studying Suttie and Owens helped Weeks find his own balance of technique and communication, which led to the coaching approach he uses today.

“I didn’t know hardly anyone when I came to Cog Hill, and spent a lot of time with Jim and DeDe – it was like having John Wooden and Bill Belichick in the same place, so I spent a lot of time watching them on the lesson tee,” Weeks says. “They had two completely different ways of doing things, and

Weeks was recognized with other 2023 PGA Award Winners at the recent PGA Show in Orlando.

DARREN CARROLL/THE PGA OF AMERICA