

GREAT GOLF DEALS
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COMPLIMENTARY

GREAT GOLF

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In This Issue

Today's Golf Pros Are Important
To A Club's Bottomline

and

How Golf Can Save
High School Sports

Basking Ridge Country Club

A Country Club Adapting For Today's Golfers

Serving New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania

A GOOD GOLF PRO SHOULD BE

A GREAT GOLF PRO!

Today's Golf Professionals Are Important To A Club's Bottomline.

Like many industries, golf has not been spared by the current economic times. Professional events are scrambling for sponsorships while financial institutions, that had been long time sponsors of PGA and LPGA events, are being prevented from continuing their sponsorships if they received government bailout monies. Unemployment has caused private golf course memberships to decline with the benefit shifting to the daily fee courses that do not require bonds or initiation fees. Many country clubs are significantly down from their normal roster of 325-350 members. Daily fee courses have created membership programs with many of the amenities offered by private clubs such as advanced tee times and numerous club competitions. At the same time, private clubs have either lowered their membership fees or devised creative financing allowing the new member to pay the upfront costs over a period of time. With the improvement in the quality of daily fee golf courses in recent years, public and private golf courses are significantly competing for the same golfer.

Because daily fee golf courses depend on day to day booked rounds for income and cannot rely on upfront membership fees, they have been forced to "tighten their belts" by reducing golf course staff and combining job responsibilities. Very few daily fee courses have both a General Manager and a Head

Golf Professional. The Head Golf Professional is now often operating the pro shop, overseeing/training assistant pros, providing golf instruction, and developing golf programs while assuming the general manager role of managing the entire golf facility which includes marketing, staffing and some food & beverage responsibilities. The problem is that many golf pros do not have general manager training and accept the additional responsibilities in order to retain their employment.

Private clubs have begun to shift focus from corporate memberships to a family friendly environment. One golf pro shaping its club's future is Mat Kent at the Basking Ridge Country Club. The programs Mat has developed combined with the high level of service he expects from his staff has to make you think that Basking Ridge CC just might have it all!

Mat Kent is the Head Golf Professional at Basking Ridge Country Club. A graduate of the golf management program at New Mexico State with a degree in business administration and marketing, Mat focused his career on the business aspect of being a club professional rather than just a golf pro capable of hitting a golf ball straight and far (although Mat is very accomplished at both). Having spent time at such prestigious clubs as Upper Montclair, Hamilton Farm and The Ridge at Back Brook, Mat came to BRCC in 2004 at a

time when the club's management began a strong commitment to making the golf club a contender for memberships at the affordable private country club level. Owner Roger Mahan invested a great deal of money into the course with improved drainage, rebuilt greens, newly constructed bunkers and redesigned holes. With the club's renovation, BRCC needed a strong teaching golf pro. What they got was a person who understood the business of golf and how to drive revenue. Mat's reputation as a top teaching pro in NJ, combined with his service experience in golf hospitality and pro shop merchandising, made him the ideal candidate for the top assistant golf position at this "new" country club.

After two years of developing the teaching and junior programs, Mat was moved into his current role as the Head Professional. One of the first things he did when he arrived at BRCC was to implement an inventory control program that tracked pro shop inventory on a day to day basis. This allowed Mat to identify which items were the shop's best sellers, when to mark items down, giving him greater controls when placing orders for his next season. As a result, Mat has increased the profitability and turnover of his merchandise, which keeps the shop looking fresh throughout the season. Mat recognized early on that the internet and sporting goods stores were going to have a huge impact on merchandise sales and

increased his focus on customer service, custom fitting and providing a wide selection of products for his members.

Prior to Mat's arrival, pro shop sales was the leading revenue generator for the country club outside of food and beverage and memberships. Golf instruction generated a modest amount of revenue but Mat envisioned its potential to generate income for the club well beyond that of the pro shop sales. Under Mat's direction, the Golf Academy at Basking Ridge Country Club was expanded with the development of a practice facility that has become the envy of many of the most expensive country clubs in the area. A section of the land was dedicated specifically for the instruction of the short game with practice bunkers, chipping areas, and large putting greens. Mat also created a highly respected junior golf program luring young people into the game at an early age resulting in an increase in families playing golf together and an increase in club memberships. Today, the Golf Academy accounts for more than half the revenue generated under Mat's areas of responsibility.

Basking Ridge Country Club has evolved into one of the better membership clubs in the northern NJ area. I have to believe that it wouldn't be the same without the contributions from their PGA Head Golf Professional, Mat Kent.

Jamie Gacos is the Publisher and contributing golf writer for Great Golf Magazine.