

The thirty-four year member of the PGA of America presented another impressive case on why he is a proven leader in player development in the game of golf. He truly has a one track mind on how to continue to grow the game, make his home club a better place to enjoy the game and helping his members get better at the game.

Noteworthy ideas and accomplishments that have come to fruition in the recent years has been Wood's continued commitment to golf in schools, becoming a PGA certified professional in player development plus instruction, and creating a Golfnasium in the dining area of the club during the winter months. The Golfnasium offers multiple simulators, extensive teaching devices and putting mats. He also was able to see finish line of an detailed six year plan to get his membership to "Tee it Forward". The plan included extensive member education, statistical research and the addition of new tee boxes on the course.

The Lawrence University graduate was also excited to see his second student accomplish the goal of qualifying for the National Drive, Chip and Putt finals at Augusta National. This coming spring he will accompany Sarah Balding to the event and play the important role of caddie as she competes.

"I am extremely proud to be recognized with the Player Development Award honor and very happy to say that I have been the point person for a number of successful growth of the game initiatives," Wood stated. "The award also reflects the efforts of many who have supported the programs: an engaged membership, a golf operations staff that understands that their work is not a job but a commitment, as well as school phy ed teachers and golf coaches who recognize the core values of the game. Their support is crucial to any growth of the game initiatives."

Other Tidbit - My favorite thing to do outside of golf is: Attend any blues band concert: Bryan Lee, Danny Miller Band, Big Bad Voodoo Daddy... to name a few.



Rich Tock, PGA – Bill Strausbaugh Award

The Bill Strausbaugh Award is presented each year to the PGA member who has shown outstanding integrity, commitment to mentoring PGA professionals and has made a significant impact on the careers of PGA professionals.

Over the course of the past 42 years as a PGA member Rich Tock has personified exactly what the Bill Strausbaugh is awarded for. He has left a lasting impression on the individuals that have worked for and with him, while conducting himself in the utmost professional manner. All you have to do is take a journey around the annual PGA Merchandise Show and his name pops up. He truly is a PGA ambassador.

The 34th recipient of the honor has been on board at Erin Hills since 2010 and was able to be an integral part of the 2017 U.S. Open and 2011 U.S. Amateur. He also spent 21 years as the head PGA professional at Ozaukee CC and 11 years in the same role at South Hills G&CC.

The Mequon resident has been recognized with honors for his work in several areas of the game including teaching, playing and association participation. From the Wisconsin PGA alone he has been awarded the Golf Professional of the Year in 1989 and 2008, Teacher of the Year in 1990, Merchandiser of the Year (Private) in 1995 and recently the 2016 Horton Smith award. He also has won numerous WPGA events and is a 6-time WPGA Senior Player of the Year.

In addition to his awards he also helped created the Wisconsin Assistant Professionals Association and was the Section president in 1987 and 1988.



“PGA Professionals do not give their time or mentor interns, assistant professionals, or head professionals to win awards. I am honored and humbled by my peers voting me as the Bill Strausbaugh Award winner. I will continue to mentor PGA Professionals, Assistant Professionals, and all those wishing to enter into this wonderful business,” Tock said in about the honor.

“I still love going to work and having the opportunity to work for Mr. Andy Ziegler. Thank you for all those that have touched my life with this game of golf. And thank you to my father who exposed me to this game at age 10, god bless his sole. But most important, thank you to my lovely bride of 38 years, Barb Tock who has had to live without me around on weekends for all those years.”

Other Tidbit - My favorite thing to do outside of golf is: Travel with Barb and spend time with my daughter, Alison.

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Bob Burns, PGA – Patriot Award

The second ever recipient of the Patriot Award in the Wisconsin Section, PGA is Bob Burns of Bob Burns Golf in Appleton. The PGA Master Professional is a 41 year member of the PGA of America. Burns was also honored by the WPGA back in 2007 as the Teacher of the Year.

The Patriot Award goes to a PGA Professional who embodies patriotism and shows dedication to the men and women who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

For Burns the honor is not in recognition of what he has done over the past year but a proud representation of what he has spent more than 25 years doing. His emphasis on helping veterans really kicked into high gear after the Gulf War and was reinforced once again after a visit to speak to the 8th Congressional Congress on disabilities in 2007. Visiting with disabled veterans at Walter Reed Hospital during this trip to Washington D.C. was a life changing event.

The impressive work he has done has ranged from developing numerous devices and clubs to help veterans with disabilities play the game, contributing to multiple fundraising and wounded warrior events on a yearly basis, and organizing several golf outreach programs with the help of the Wisconsin National Guard Association. Last but not least he gives his own time to teach the game to these veterans.

“The award consideration materials that Bob submitted are very impressive to say the least,” WPGA Special Awards Chairperson Rob Elliott said about the honoree.

For these efforts Burns was honored as a 2014 Patrick Henry Award recipient by the National Guard Association of the United States. The Patrick Henry Award was created in 1989 and is designed to provide recognition to local officials and civic leaders, who in a position of great responsibility distinguished themselves with outstanding and exceptional service to the Armed Forces of the United States, the National Guard or NGAUS

Other Tidbit – Bob’s golf-specific superstition: I always keep my 1966 "Ben Hogan Special" Sand Wedge in my golf bag. I got it when I was a senior in high school. I still like to give short game lessons with it.



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Skip Simonds, PGA - Private Merchandiser of the Year

Winning the Merchandiser of the Year is not an easy task. Winning twice in a row against the highly competitive private club market has never been done before. Now, Skip Simonds of Milwaukee Country Club has done just that.

How does one accomplish such a feat? Let's start with increasing sales and margins in a year where rounds were down by over 10%. Simonds and his team have increased their focus on fitting over the past few seasons and the results are paying off with satisfied members. Those members are then spending more time in the golf shop and making more purchases from the shop. The focus at MCC has long been to provide the best service and selection possible while keeping with the tradition of the club.

Simonds credits much of his success to a couple of items. One is the mentorship and training he received from WPGA legend Manuel de la Torre as an assistant for Manuel. The other main influences were Tom Gees and Tim Skogen during Simond's forays to the desert at Ranch las Palmas resort.

The second item is the staff at Milwaukee Country Club. "I take a lot of pride in what I do as a PGA golf professional and receiving this recognition is very gratifying," Simonds said. "I am very fortunate to work with an outstanding and talented group of assistant professionals and interns. Our success is a team effort and I'm very proud and happy for the young men and women who work with me at Milwaukee Country Club."

Mike Bastian, the long-time Polo representative offered "It comes as no surprise that Skip has won merchandiser of the year again. From his beautifully curated shop, to the attention to detail with each crafted display...Ralph Lauren himself would be impressed by the shop that Skip has created."

Other Tidbit – Skip's golf-specific superstition:
 I only keep one tee in my right pocket when playing golf.



Matt Boesch, PGA - Public Merchandiser of the Year

Our only first-time winner in the Merchandiser of the Year category is Matt Boesch, head PGA professional at Hawk's View Golf Course in Lake Geneva. The Pasco, Washington native has been in his current role at Hawk's View since 2011 and was on board as assistant professional prior to that. He is a graduate of Ferris State University and is also a PGA certified professional in general management.

The shopping experience at Hawk's View is one that has been created through years of mentorship by PGA Professional, Chuck Dammeir. Boesch has taken what he has learned from his predecessor and added his own touches to develop one of the best golf shops in the state. At Hawk's View, ladies golf and ladies apparel is not a side show. Almost 40% of the soft goods sold in the shop are to women. Boesch truly understands to grow the game and the business, the course and the golf shop must be engaging to everyone.

"When I learned I won the award, my first call was to Chuck Dammeir to thank him for everything he taught me, especially in the merchandising aspect of the operation," Boesch said via email. "It's a special feeling for me for Chuck to be proud of my accomplishments, as I always tried to absorb everything he taught me along the way as an apprentice and his assistant."

Boesch has also been recognized as a Callaway Certified Master Club Fitter and is able to utilize the on-site simulators to increase equipment sales during the off-season winter months. The use of



the simulators has helped the club create an overall 10% growth in golf shop sales while almost 1/3 of club sales occur in the winter.

Del Kolasinski, Callaway Golf sales representative offered this take on the Hawk's View operation,

“Matt’s golf shop is a great example of a retail space that provides an engaging experience. He makes sure to provide his customer base with the products they want, with service that is beyond their expectation. Through training and marketing he is able to grow his business year after year. The time, energy, and focus he dedicates to the business are a direct relationship to the results he achieves.” Kolasinski wrote via email. “Matt also works hard on hiring and developing the right people. His leadership is displayed in how enthusiastic and knowledgeable his team is, and that is something you can feel every time you enter the property. This award is well deserved, congratulations Matt.”

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Other Tidbit - Who is in Matt’s dream foursome?:

Me, Tiger Woods, John Daly & Charles Barkley



Pat Stein, PGA - Resort Merchandiser of the Year

The Wild Rock Golf Club merchandising operation is being recognized as this year’s resort recipient for the fourth time overall. The honor is Stein’s second WPGA merchandising award, with the other one coming in 2009.

The Madison native is the fourth 2019 award winner to have graduated from Ferris State University. He was elected to PGA membership in 2000 and has been in his current role as general manager at Wild Rock since 2014.

“Being recognized by your peers for an award like this is amazing,” Stein wrote about the accolade. “Then to win and join the other professionals that have set the bar so high is truly an honor.”

In a year where poor weather got the best of the golf industry in Wisconsin, the club was able to increase their total shop sales by seven percent over the previous year. It was an accomplishment that was not taken lightly and attributed to a total team effort. That effort stems from Stein creating and incorporating an environment where the rest of his professional staff is very involved in the buying and decision making process.

In addition to the collaborative process, Stein credits successful techniques such as bundling items together as a package, running promotions that incorporate merchandise along with golf, lunch and an item such as a ticket to the American Family Insurance Championship, and finally getting creative with out-of-box items from non-golf brands.

“Pat Stein is a pure example of professionalism in his chosen career. His organizational skills show an attention to detail that is demanded in the performance of his job. He takes the knowledge of his customer base and applies his buying plan towards the correct mix of product that he knows he needs to meet budget...and usually exceeds,”. Dave Denoyer of Under Armour conveyed via email. “His drive and determination to achieve the tasks at hand offer up proven results and allow him to showcase his merchandising talents.”

Other Tidbit – Pat’s golf-specific superstition: I mark my golf ball with three red dots. One mark for each one of my family members and red for my love of the Wisconsin Badgers