

# Corporate Catalyst for Growing the Game

Turner Sports, parent company of PGA.com, utilizes Get Golf Ready in an innovative fashion to grow the women's game

**G**et Golf Ready can be more than a program, it can be a movement. And when circumstances allow, and a small suggestion blossoms into a big idea, the power of golf comes to life in a very effective and very compelling way.

Such was the case at Turner Sports, where one question about where to take a golf lesson became a company-wide initiative to encourage women (and all beginners) at Turner to give golf a try.

With the support of Matthew Hong, senior vice president & general manager for sports operations at Turner Sports, and area PGA Professionals, a series of Get Golf Ready clinics were created targeting the women employees at Turner — held during PGA Women's Golf Month (June).

"We're always looking for innovative ways to both build teamwork and improve the mental and physical wellbeing of our employees. Conducting women's golf clinics was a fantastic way to meet those objectives," says Hong. "Plus, because of our connection to golf, doing so within the framework of Get Golf Ready and Women's Golf Month was icing on the cake."

In past years, PGA.com staff members had encouraged and arranged for lessons for smaller groups of co-workers. Though fun and fulfilling, the enrollment numbers were lukewarm and the conversion rate from first-time lessons to full-fledged golfer was unspectacular. It was not uncommon nor unexpected. It was a problem the industry knows too well.

Turner Sports' women employees were encouraged to participate in a series of Get Golf Ready clinics for beginners during Women's Golf Month in June.



But this year was different. This year they were able to sign up more than 60 people for the Get Golf Ready clinics. How?

Turner arranged for clinics at six different times of the week at four different facilities and gave people the opportunity to select a primary lesson location. However, if someone signed up for the Saturday Get Golf Ready class, but weren't able to make it one week, they could make up that lesson by going to the Wednesday clinic. Essentially, participants could piecemeal their entire plan based on their schedule. It took cooperation and understanding on the part of the instructors, but the payoff was obvious to all.

"The incredible response shows that all it takes is a little encouragement and logistical help and people will respond in a big way," adds Hong.

Group sizes were kept relatively small, ranging from six to twelve students. Because they are with other women, other beginners and people they work with, it's a comfortable atmosphere that provides a positive introduction to golf and makes them more likely to stick with the game in the long run.

"I have always felt too intimidated to pick up golf, but the Get Golf Ready clinic and PGA Professional Scott Szymoniak and his staff at Canongate Golf Club have helped me drop my misconceptions about the game," says Jessica McGinnis, senior global properties manager at Turner Broadcasting. "The clinic is tailored to individual needs, which for me meant starting with the basics. The opportunity to learn the basics in a friendly environment with other beginners was a must for me."

The PGA Professionals involved could also see how this format was a huge benefit to the participants and to their facility.

"It is much easier to get people to try something new like golf if one: It is offered to them by someone they know, which in this case is their employer. And two: if they are able to do the activity with people they already know, like co-workers," says John Crumbley, PGA director of golf at Mystery Valley Golf Club in Lithonia, Ga., who hosted one of the clinics. "This could easily turn into a golf league or regular group. That truly represents new revenue for the facility, something we could all use."

Even more, those taking lessons overwhelmingly agreed that the comfortable and social setting of the lessons meant it was more likely they would remain involved in playing golf, long after the last lesson in the series was given.

Adds PGA of America President Allen Wronowski: "This is the innovation and promotion of golf that will lead to true growth in the game. Corporate support can take many forms; this is a great one. What a great story to see a company offer its employees a chance to do something they really want to do, PGA Professionals get a chance to grow and promote their business while also growing the game and most importantly, those who participate are taking a first step into a game they will enjoy for the rest of their lives." ■