

Get Golf Ready Up and Running

Seven months into the Get Golf Ready Program, PGA Professionals share experiences

By Tony L. Starks

Get Golf Ready, the industry-wide adult player development program aimed at bringing new golfers into the game in a fast, fun and gratifying way, was introduced at the 2009 PGA Merchandise Show in January. Since then, nearly 1,100 facilities have become registered Get Golf Ready host sites, utilizing a PGA-developed curriculum as a guideline for teaching the game.

PGA Master Professional Ray Cutright, the PGA director of golf at Idle Hour Club in Macon, Ga., will tell you registering to host Get Golf Ready is just the start. "It's a great outline or shell for any PGA Professional, no matter what type of facility they're at, to adapt to and build a successful program," says Cutright, who represents District 13 on the PGA Board of Directors. "It's up to each individual member to decide how successful they want this program to be."

Jack Terry, executive director of The First Tee of East Baton Rouge housed at J.S. Clark Golf Course in Baton Rouge, La., provides an excellent example of how to mold Get Golf Ready to fit your facility.

The nine-hole J.S. Clark Golf Course is an ideal setting for The First Tee, but Terry was having difficulties retaining kids. He came to the conclusion that he needed to first capture the interest of the

parents in order to keep the interest of the kids. How did he do that? By signing up the parents for Get Golf Ready.

"When the parents came for their kids we would recruit them into our Get Golf Ready program," says Terry, who has hosted a total of five Get Golf Ready outings this year with 126 participants. "It has worked well for us. The main thing is the parents and kids are talking about golf and thinking about golf when they're not on the course."

Terry even tied it in with Family Golf Month (July), hosting an event specifically for the Get Golf Ready parents to compete with their First Tee kids.

Robert Clark, PGA director of golf at The Ledges of Huntsville (Ala.), contends that Get Golf Ready has "changed (his) whole strategy towards approaching new golfers."

When Clark first started the program, he thought he would host one or two sessions for the year; he is already planning his fifth session slated for September. "The idea of proactively growing the game and introducing new people to it is what The PGA and this program is all about," says Clark. "I know what one new person can do for our business, and if we can get 20 new people this year that can have a huge impact. I've found Get Golf Ready to be one of the best programs I've ever seen in terms of growing the game and having an impact. Not only does it reach out to beginners, but it provides outings and playing opportunities to keep them coming back."

Clark has witnessed that impact firsthand, as he's seen participants spending time and money at his golf shop, restaurant and driving range.

Terry reminds that while Get Golf Ready will put some dollars in your cash register, the ultimate goal is building a lifelong golfer. "I encourage our participants to look at Get Golf Ready and purchasing golf equipment as an long-term investment,

because there aren't very many sports that you can play as you get older; golf is truly a game for a lifetime," says Terry, who taught his beginning students how to use a scorecard by setting up a mini-course on the putting green.

Adds Cutright: "The real results will show if we (PGA Professionals) maintain the participants and help mold them into golfers. In the beginning it's about how many you can get to participate; in the end it's how many you can get to keep participating. It's like anything else, when you're selling something the goal is to sell through, with this program the sell through is not accomplished unless you keep them playing golf."

Visit PlayGolfAmerica.com to learn more and to register as Get Golf Ready host facility. ■

Get Golf Ready is designed to introduce new players to the game, and keep them participating through additional playing opportunities and outings.



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