

# Get Ready to Develop New Golfers



MONTANA PRITCHARD/THE PGA OF AMERICA

**Get Golf Ready works, and can significantly enhance your – and your facility’s – earning power**

By Ted Bishop, PGA

**T**he most important initiative facing the entire golf industry in 2011 is how to enhance and stimulate player development and increase participation in the sport we call our profession. PGA President Allen Wronowski has made this the primary goal of our Association under his leadership with his “Power of 10” call-to-action, which exhorts all PGA Professionals to bring 10 new golfers to the game this year. Shortly thereafter, Wronowski gave me the directive to serve as chairman of Get Golf Ready – the industry’s primary tool for developing new golfers – for the next six years.

Wronowski’s charge was music to my ears. In my opinion, Get Golf Ready is the best player development program that I have seen in my 35 years in golf. Here’s why: Get Golf Ready gives the consumer the opportunity to sign up for five lessons for the cost of \$99. These sessions are recommended to be 1.5 hours in length and an integral part of the Get Golf Ready curriculum is to give the consumer an “on course” experience each time.

The PGA or LPGA Professional who gets the maximum of eight students in their Get Golf Ready session could significantly enhance their hourly earning power as an instructor. In addition, the 7.5 hours spent with each participant will go a long way toward developing a student/teacher relationship that will drive future dollars to the golf facility. Statistics provided by Get Golf Ready indi-

cate that 84 percent of those who complete the program will stay in the game and spend an average of \$806 on golf in the first year.

To demonstrate the power of Get Golf Ready, allow me to share a story with you: Recently, while delayed in the Charlotte airport, I placed a call to Michael Breed, PGA Professional and host of “The Golf Fix” on Golf Channel, asking him to consider doing a segment on Get Golf Ready in the upcoming weeks. Breed, himself a proponent of Get Golf Ready, agreed to do so.

After I ended my phone conversation with him, I was approached in the terminal by a young woman who said, “I wasn’t eavesdropping on your phone conversation, but I could not help hearing you talk about Get Golf Ready. I just want to tell you that the program is great and is the reason that I am playing golf today.”

The woman, Jennifer (Jenna) King, is an attorney in Charlotte, N.C. She is a self-proclaimed Navy brat who was never exposed to golf as a youth. Golf has since opened doors for her professionally and personally, and King credits her Get Golf Ready experience at Sunset Hills Golf Course in Charlotte as life changing from a golf standpoint.

Says King: “Golf can appear too intimidating. It requires you to go to an unfamiliar location. It has a reputation of requiring expensive equipment and being a difficult game. There was a perceived cost issue for me with golf and the \$99 fee for Get Golf Ready broke that barrier.

“I can’t say enough about my PGA instructor, Brian McFarland. He instilled enthusiasm and made this a fun and non-intimidating environment.

Get Golf Ready is a perfect tool for reducing the intimidation factor students have when just starting out with the game.

Being able to play golf has given me more professional opportunities. My husband was shocked that I could actually get the ball in the air. Now we play golf together all of the time!”

Lindsey Johnson, a Charlotte banker, attended the Get Golf Ready clinics at Sunset Hills with King. She had never picked up a club before. Johnson felt intimidated by the setting and also thought golf was too expensive. She had been an acquaintance of McFarland, the PGA instructor, and he encouraged her to bring a friend and sign up for the Get Golf Ready classes at Sunset Hills.

“It was a small class with all women,” notes Johnson. “Brian made it easy. He was patient and we had a blast. I was really the only one who had never played before, but I never felt like I held anyone back. The other ladies got a lot out of the sessions and we all progressed at different speeds. The best part is that I made some new friends and we now play golf together.

“Professionally, it has given me the confidence to go out with a group of people I am in banking with and participate in golf outings. I now feel comfortable taking clients to the course – something I would never have done before Get Golf Ready!”

McFarland, an apprentice professional who has since become the PGA director of instruction for The First Tee of Cleveland, did the most important



the PGA Professional was able to enhance his own lesson income while driving dollars to the facility.

The above scenario is happening with increasing frequency across the country, at all types of PGA Professional-staffed facilities.

Todd Firestone is the PGA head professional at Fort Wayne Country Club in Indiana. In 2010, Firestone enrolled 264 ladies in Get Golf Ready programs. His story proves that Get Golf Ready can have an impact at private clubs, too.

“Every Wednesday at my club is Swim Team. This is sacred ground,” laughs Firestone, who is also the vice president of the Indiana PGA Section. “One week, I was looking at all of those moms just sitting there and watching their kids taking swim lessons. I decided we might as well get them on the course for an hour to play two or three holes,” says Firestone.

“It has been unbelievable. This group of ladies now brings their husbands to our Nine and Dines and they spend money at the club. Originally, I thought Get Golf Ready was more for public courses. I was wrong about that!”

I look forward to sharing more Get Golf Ready success stories with you (in *PGA Magazine* and on *PGA-magazine.com*).

In my opinion, our value as PGA Professionals has never been afforded a better opportunity to be showcased as it can through Get Golf Ready. ■

**Ted Bishop** is the Vice President of The PGA of America, and the PGA general manager at The Legends Golf Club in Franklin, Ind.

Fort Wayne (Ind.) Country Club PGA Head Professional Todd Firestone (pictured) has enrolled more than 260 women in Get Golf Ready programs at his private facility.

“Get Golf Ready ... is great and is **the reason that I am playing golf today.**”

—Jenna King, Charlotte, N.C.



thing a PGA Professional can do when utilizing Get Golf Ready: He made the learning environment fun and relaxed, which allowed him to solidify a personal and permanent relationship with his students. He also went above the norm by providing each Get Golf Ready graduate with a video of her swing.

“When I saw my swing next to Annika Sorenstam’s, I was excited because even though I don’t play like her, my swing did look good and I was not embarrassed to be seen by others on the course,” explains Johnson.

For King, the highlight of her budding golf career has been: “Using *my* tee shot on the first or second hole at a golf retreat held by my law firm!”

And Johnson adds: “I made par on a par-3 hole my first time out. I immediately called Brian and told him!”

Get Golf Ready is a win-win-win program for the student, the golf professional and the facility. Both King and Johnson have now purchased their own golf clubs. They have spent money on apparel, additional golf lessons, range balls and green fees. And

### Get Golf Ready’s projected financial impact

Based on data collected from Get Golf Ready host facilities in 2010, it is projected that for every 30 GGR graduates, the golf industry could see a positive financial impact of more than \$23,000.

Estimated Number of Get Golf Ready Graduates	30
Per Student GGR Program Fee	\$99
<b>TOTAL: GGR Lesson Revenue</b>	<b>\$2,970</b>
Number of Retained GGR Graduates (84 percent)	25
Average Spend for Each Retained Golfer (Includes all golf-related spending, excluding \$99 GGR Program Fee)	\$806
<b>TOTAL: New Golfer Spending (Not including \$99 GGR Program Fee)</b>	<b>\$20,150</b>
<b>TOTAL: Spend from New Golfers</b>	<b>\$23,120</b>