



game, the real goal is to get participants to continue to play golf once the sessions are through.

So in the case of the six individuals featured, was the goal accomplished? So far so good...

Ranging from a high school student to corporate executives, all six participants in the television program expressed a desire to continue playing golf when recently contacted by *PGA Magazine*. Furthermore, several have taken legitimate steps toward preparing themselves to be regulars on the course.

“We’re so fortunate that we did this program because **it really opened us up to the sport of golf.** My husband and I really enjoy our time together on the course.”
—Jill Sessions

Six Success Stories

Get Golf Ready’s impact was featured on national TV

By Tony L. Starks

Get Golf Ready, the Play Golf America initiative designed to turn beginning golfers into avid players in five lesson sessions, was showcased in an hour-long television special that aired on CBS in May. Utilizing a reality TV format, six new and former golfers went through the Get Golf Ready curriculum while receiving instruction from nationally recognized PGA/LPGA Professionals.

Hosted by CBS Sports golf commentator Bill Macatee, the program was filmed on location at the PGA Center for Golf Learning and Performance and the award-winning PGA Golf Club in Port St. Lucie, Fla.

A team of acclaimed PGA of America teaching professionals – including 2008 PGA Teacher of the Year Martin Hall of West Palm Beach, Fla., 2003 PGA First Lady of Golf Renee Powell of East Canton, Ohio; and Suzy Whaley of Farmington, Conn. – were joined by 2006 Ryder Cup Team member J.J. Henry and LPGA Tour rookie Stacy Lewis.

This impressive group of teaching and playing talent faced the task of molding six beginning or returning golfers into playing shape in just five sessions. While this program is designed to introduce people to the

For instance, 61-year-old Englishman Jonathan Collins has purchased a complete set of clubs since going through Get Golf Ready, and has even communicated with fellow participant Luis Arrarte about playing a round together.

Collins says the Get Golf Ready program provided him with the ability to see what he needed to do in order to be successful on the golf course. “When I played this game before, I was getting very frustrated because nothing was working out right,” says Collins, who first played more than 20 years ago but eventually gave the game up. “This opportunity has really brought me a whole new feel for golf.”



Above: With the TV cameras rolling, PGA Professional Suzy Whaley shares her expertise with the participants. Right: 2008 PGA Teacher of the Year Martin Hall instructs Donielle Jones on the proper way to release the club during the golf swing.



LAUREN DEMARY/THE PGA OF AMERICA

Seventeen-year-old Dane Christensen, who will be a senior at St. Lucie West Centennial High School next year, was so inspired by his Get Golf Ready experience that he hopes to play for his high school golf team.

“The program was great. I wasn’t really sure what to expect heading into it,” admits Christensen. “But the amount we learned in that little bit of time was completely unbelievable. I look forward to using what I learned to play golf in the future and in trying out for my high school team in the upcoming school year.”

Jill Sessions, who along with her husband Lew participated in the television program, has purchased equipment since partaking in Get Golf Ready and is on average hitting the range twice a week and playing two rounds a month.

“Since Lew and I have kids, time is of the essence when playing 18 holes, but we try to play a full round once every two weeks and go out to the range at least twice a week,” says Sessions. “We’re so fortunate that we did this program because it really opened us up to the sport of golf. My husband and I really enjoy our time together on the course; it’s been so much fun!”



From left: Jonathan Collins, Lew Sessions, Jill Sessions, PGA Tour Professional J.J. Henry, LPGA Tour Professional Stacey Lewis, Dane Christensen, Donielle Jones and Luis Arrarte.

“When I played this game before, I was getting very frustrated because nothing was working out right.

This opportunity has really brought me a whole new feel for golf.”

—Jonathan Collins

Donielle Jones, a sales representative at a local television station, has even prompted her 15-year-old son to become interested in the game since completing her Get Golf Ready experience. “We practice together as often as we can, and he’s very excited about learning more about golf, as am I,” says Jones, who also participated in Play Golf America’s Free Lesson Month with her son.

“To have the instructors Renee Powell, Suzy Whaley, Joe Hallett and the others, who are all well known among the ranks of The PGA, was remarkable. And also to witness the skills that tour professionals Stacey Lewis and J.J. Henry possess, it was really exciting.”

Luis Arrarte, who’d never played the game before participating in Get Golf Ready, has already seemingly been bitten by the golf bug. “It was a great opportunity to view the game from one end to

another,” says Arrarte, describing Get Golf Ready. “I’m very excited about the prospect of taking more lessons and learning more about golf. I’ve even began researching equipment to find out what’s best for a beginner.”

Of the six participants in the Get Golf Ready TV program, each of them has purchased equipment or expressed the intent to purchase equipment in the near future. Also, each participant has expressed interest in taking additional lessons and has visited the practice range at least once. For the PGA Professional, this means Get Golf Ready shows significant promise not just as an introductory golf program, but also as a vehicle for generating future revenue through equipment sales, booking lessons and facility usage.

“The Get Golf Ready program proved very successful for us,” says Daryl Hartig, PGA head professional at Westwood Country Club in St. Louis, Mo. “We had 14 ladies go through all five sessions from start to finish. And since then, some of them have signed up for our nine-hole league. It’s an easy way to get rounds up and have fun. If you make it fun and exciting for a beginner to learn, they’re 10 times more likely to stick with the game.”

Nearly 1,100 facilities nationwide have been certified to host Get Golf Ready this year, the inaugural season of the program. The examples given here provide more reasons for PGA Professionals to consider Get Golf Ready as a valuable opportunity to grow participation. ■

PGA members can watch the CBS Show, promote Get Golf Ready to customers

- PGA Professionals can access the television show on PGALinks.com
- Consumers can watch the different lesson segments on PlayGolfAmerica.com
- PGA Professionals can request a DVD of the entire show be mailed to them by e-mailing playgolfamerica@pgahq.com
- For more information visit PlayGolfAmerica.com and access the Get Golf Ready page.