



PGA

South Florida Section
South Florida Section, PGA of America
100 Avenue of the Champions
Tel: 561-624-7676
Fax: 561-624-8576

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Contact: Andrea LaBlanc
alablanc@pgahq.com
Cell: 954-729-7887

MARK DURLAND NAMED SOUTH FLORIDA PGA TEACHER OF THE YEAR
ANNUAL AWARD WINNERS HONORED AT THE SFGA ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERSHIP

PALM BEACH GARDENS, FL – PGA Professional Mark Durland has been named the 2008 Teacher of the Year for the South Florida PGA. Durland is recognized for providing outstanding service as a golf instructor and was selected based on his use of teachings, involvement in junior golf activities, teaching techniques and overall efforts in promoting the game.

As the President and CEO of Durland Golf LLC, Mark operates the Naples Grande Golf School out of Naples Grande Golf Club. A PGA member since 2000, Mark took a risk three years ago and branched out as an independent contractor, a savvy business decision that has resulted in his operating a very successful golf school.

“Personally, this a great honor, especially considering the talented list of past recipients,” said Mark on his being named Teacher of the Year. “To have your name held in the same regard as those individuals before me is quite an honor. Having gone out on my own and three years later to be at this point is pretty amazing. This was definitely a goal of mine that I wanted to achieve at some point, but never thought it would come this quickly. It is beyond my wildest dreams to be in this position and I am just really ecstatic to have this moment.”

Attention to detail, timely communication & follow-up, a structured schedule, and maintaining a professional demeanor at all times are several key components that define Mark’s success. His overall impact as the Director of Instruction has increased lesson, round, and food & beverage revenues annually at Naples Grande Golf Club, and the introduction of a structured clinic program for men, women, couples and juniors has surpassed any prior participation levels at the facility.

Prior to his owning and operating the Naples Grande Golf School, Mark was an assistant professional for Naples Grande Golf Club for five years. “To be honest, I had been an assistant for a while and I felt I had done everything I could do and was ready for the next step,” reflected Mark on his decision to venture out on his own.

“When this opportunity presented itself I took a risk. I put together a proposal for the golf school, took it to the Naples Grande management and they liked the idea. I was 30 at the time and there were definitely no guarantees, but it worked. I felt I was young enough to take a chance and that if it fell through I could still land on my feet.”

Under Mark’s guidance, the Naples Grande Golf School provides over 1,500 lessons and clinics annually, in addition to the over 50 hours he donates to one-on-one lessons, junior golf, and growth of the game programs.

In addition to his work at Naples Grande Golf School, Mark finds the time to stay involved with the PGA by attending teaching seminars and participating in events at the Chapter, Section and National levels. He has been invited to speak to Florida Gulf Coast University PGM students and dedicates his time to help some of his peers with their golf games and teaching techniques. Mark has also partnered with the City of Naples to provide a positive influence in the lives of children from all different backgrounds through his junior golf camps.

When asked why his teaching methods are so successful, Mark humbly replies that “It’s communication with the students – really, I think it’s just that I listen well. I listen to what the student wants to do and build the lesson around that, adapting to their needs. I don’t feel like I do anything different than anyone else, but I do think it’s very important to pay attention to the individual you’re teaching.”

“I am passionate about teaching. There’s nothing better than seeing someone one swing away from walking away from the game and being able to turn that around and help them succeed and truly enjoy the game. I feel my job as a PGA Professional is to promote the game of golf and if I can get someone to love the game for the first time or even to come back to it, there’s no better feeling than that.”

For Mark, golf has always been his zeal. His father got him involved in his early teens when he caddied for his dad in a local league at their hometown course. After a summer of watching, Mark asked if he could try it out for himself. He got his first set of lefty clubs and the rest was history. Mark worked at his hometown golf course 5 miles from his house washing carts at 15 and at 16 was promoted to the golf shop. He’d go back and work during his summers away from Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania, where he was a member of the golf team, passed his Playing Ability Test as a sophomore in college, and did his first apprenticeship at Lake Shore Country Club in Erie before traveling to South Florida so he could work full time in the industry.

For Mark, there are many people who have influenced his professional career, beginning with his high school golf coach Don Cragle, and the first professional that he ever took a lesson from, Paul Roman, currently of Irem Temple Country Club, who helped Mark improve his game and instilled in him the desire to teach one day. He also lists all the PGA golf professionals he’s worked for, including Gary Baker at Lake Shore Country Club, John Calabria at Naples National, Tim Foran and Mike Molino at Huntsville Golf Club in Shavertown, Pennsylvania, and all of the PGA Professionals at Naples Grande including General Manager Michael Brooks, former head golf professional Todd Heifner, now the General Manager at the Golf Club of Tennessee, Director of Golf Chris Brems, and current head professional Ryan Brandenburg as major influences and mentors.

Says Mark, “Each of these individuals has played a significant role in my development as a professional, and I am indebted to them for all of their support.”

Lastly, Mark attributes much of his success to the support of his wife, Kelly. “She has been my stronghold and has given me the opportunity to do what I love. She was behind me 100% when I told her I wanted to take a risk and start my own golf school and I couldn’t have done it without her.”

This is Mark’s first South Florida PGA Section Award. He was previously named the Southwest Chapter’s 2007 Teacher of the Year. Mark will receive his 2008 Teacher of the Year Award at the SFPGA Annual Meeting of the Membership on Tuesday, August 26th, at the Breakers Rees Jones Course in West Palm Beach.

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