



Bob Feller, PGA – Youth Player Development Award

In 1988 the Wisconsin Section, PGA began recognizing PGA professionals for their excellence in youth player development. First time recipient, Bob Feller of Reedsburg CC has been awarded this year's honor. The Wauwatosa native has been the head professional at the club since 2000 and is a twenty year member of the Wisconsin Section, PGA. He spent time at both The Legend at Merrill Hills and River Club of Mequon before taking on his current head professional role.

For Feller and his team the year started off with an emphasis to take their junior golf program to a new level. That process began by completing level-one coaches training for The First Tee. Shortly thereafter and with the help of The First Tee of South Central Wisconsin, Reedsburg CC became a new programming site for the organization. With this mix of new programming and some added marketing efforts, the club saw a sixty percent increase in participants.

Other highlights of the season included the club hosting a WPGA Junior Tour event for the 17th straight year, continuation of their popular family golf program and the opportunity for six of their juniors to participate in The First Tee Skills Challenge at The American Family Insurance Championship.

The year was then capped off by Feller working with five local elementary schools to incorporate The First Tee program into the physical education classes. Between 2016 and 2017 the program will look to bring the game of golf to more than 1000 Reedsburg area elementary students.

"I am humbled by the respect that I have earned from my peers in the golf industry," Feller said. "By surrounding myself with dedicated staff, I have been able to create a wonderful program, which will continue to thrive. It is a great feeling to be acknowledged for our teamwork at RCC, and we are extremely motivated to continue to grow our program."



Jeff Ellingson, PGA – Player Development Award

The 12th recipient of the Wisconsin Section, PGA Player Development Award is Jeff Ellingson of Edelweiss Chalet CC. Ellingson is currently the general manager at the facility and has been in his current role since 2007. Prior to arriving at Edelweiss Chalet, Ellingson also spent time at Kestrel Ridge GC and Deer Valley GC.

He was elected to PGA membership in 2006 and earned the prestigious honor of being named both the 2006 WPGA Assistant Professional of the Year and the 2015 Bill Strausbaugh award winner.

The Mount Horeb native has been actively involved with the Wisconsin Section, PGA since becoming an apprentice in 2002. In 2010 he upped his involvement as he was elected as a board member for the section. He has played a key role as a past chairperson for the WAGPA committee and now currently heads up the player development committee.

As chairperson of the player development committee Ellingson played a key role in the decision and process of hiring of Erika Pirkl, the section's Player Development Coordinator. He also represented the Wisconsin Section, PGA on a national level at key player development meetings.

Ellingson's efforts carry over nicely to the club level as he is a proud programming site for The First Tee of South Central Wisconsin, is actively involved with PGA Junior League Golf and also provides an advanced program towards high school golfers.

"I am humbled to be recognized and honored to win this award," Ellingson said. "To be fortunate enough to work with a great group of people, both at Edelweiss Chalet CC and around the Wisconsin Section, inspires me to be the best I can be every day. It motivates me to want to help in any way I can."



Joel Weitz, PGA – Bill Strausbaugh Award

Joel Weitz, the general manager and owner of Vitense Golf and in Madison is being recognized as the 32nd Wisconsin Section, PGA Bill Strausbaugh award winner. It is Weitz's fourth WPGA special award, with his other honors coming as the 2005 Golf Professional of the Year and 2006 and 2012 Player Development recipient. He also served as the Wisconsin PGA president from 2003 to 2005.

The Bill Strausbaugh Award is presented each year to the PGA member who has shown outstanding integrity, commitment to mentoring PGA Professionals and has made a significant impact on the careers of PGA Professionals.

For Weitz the framework of the award dates back to the inception of Vitense Golf and. The facility which was opened by Weitz's grandfather in 1955, has always been a facility that has proudly displayed the PGA brand while employing PGA professionals to both teach the game of golf and work in several other facets.

It is considered a hotbed for golf instruction that currently has five WPGA members and one apprentice teaching out of its Top 50 rated golf range and TaylorMade Player Development Center. In 2015 it also became home to The First Tee of South Central Wisconsin.

Whether it is a new apprentice or PGA member looking for a place to teach, Weitz has always done and continues to do what he can to help dedicated golf professionals.

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Vince Pulizzano, PGA - Private Merchandiser of the Year

The 28th recipient of the Wisconsin Section, PGA Private Merchandiser of the Year award is Vince Pulizzano of Westmoor CC. The Chicago native recently finished up his third year as the head professional at the club. Prior to arriving at Westmoor he held the same position at Hamilton Farm Golf Club in Gladstone, New Jersey. At Hamilton Farm he played a key role in the club being recognized as the New Jersey Section, PGA Club of the Year in 2012. He has been a PGA member since 2005 and has also spent time as an assistant professional at Conway Farms Golf Club just north of Chicago.

This past year produced a great result for his 1000 square foot golf shop, as he continued to adapt to the needs of his members and provide them the highest level of service possible. His merchandising philosophy puts an emphasis on a clean presentation of goods, flipping the golf shop multiple times a year and limiting the number of brands they carry in order to increase their knowledge of the product. With these philosophies the shop was able to meet each and every one of their monthly sales goals.

"This award means everything to me because it is truly a team award," the 2004 Ferris State University graduate said. "Our staff at Westmoor deserves this honor much more than me because of their hard work and dedication to our members."

It is the second time that Westmoor CC has had their head golf professional earn the honor, with Tom Kabler taking home the 2nd ever award in 1991.



Andrew Barrett, PGA - Public Merchandiser of the Year

They say records are made to be broken, which is precisely what Andrew Barrett of Brown Deer GC did this past year. The record setting performance for the Brown Deer GC merchandising operation delivered Barrett his second consecutive Public Merchandiser of the Year honor. It is the first time that a Wisconsin PGA member has earned the honor in back to back years.

He is now two for two at Brown Deer GC, as he recently wrapped up his second season as the head professional. Prior to arriving at the course he was the head professional at Oakwood Park GC for five years and also had stints as an assistant professional at Tripoli CC, Chenequa CC and The Legend at Bristlecone.

The Madison native exceeded all expectations as he eclipsed his 2015 numbers by an extraordinary margin in the areas of sales, profit and dollars per round. The results even produced an impressive end of the year inventory which was less than \$10,000.

“Winning last year was great, but this year means so much more,” Barrett said. “With so many deserving members that could win this award, many of which were not even nominated, I am humbled by this honor”

His performance even caught the eye of PGA Magazine as he was featured in the July edition for his best practice of increasing shoe and golf bag sales.

In addition to his Merchandiser of the Year honors, Barrett was also recognized as Assistant Professional of the Year in 2010.



Jim Lombardo, PGA - Resort Merchandiser of the Year

Before the state of Wisconsin enjoys their first ever U.S. Open this summer at Erin Hills, the club and its staff will have to take a few moments to enjoy their second WPGA Merchandiser of the Year honor. Taking home the award for the facility is their Head Professional, Jim Lombardo. Lombardo and Erin Hills prior honor came on the Public Merchandiser side of things in 2013, before they built their onsite lodging options.

Leading the way for the club’s merchandising operation is Lombardo and buyer, Stephanie Williams. The impressive operation has only gotten better from year to year as they lead up to the U.S. Open. With the help of the U.S. Open branding and some additional staff presence on the shop floor, the club was able to increase their merchandise dollar spent per round by over \$13 from the previous season. The even more notable accomplishment was the fact that it was the fourth straight season that that figure had increased substantially.

“We are very much honored to win this award and it feels great to know that our mission and our plan for success in our golf shop is working,” Lombardo said. “It is a lot of fun to share this award with our staff, especially Ms. Stephanie Williams, who has done a tremendous job coordinating and managing our golf shop.”

Lombardo has been on staff with Erin Hills as the head professional since the club opened in 2006. Prior to assuming his position he was the head professional at Olde Highlander GC and also spent time as an assistant professional at Ozaukee CC, Desert Mountain and Troon North GC.

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