



“Ladies First: Marketing Manners & Matters”

Everyone in the golf industry has been hammered about the need to grow the game. One positive rallying point has been the influx of new women golfers. As usual, there is also a flip side: the “out-flux,” (if such a word exists) of same, which unfortunately is almost as dramatic in terms of numbers. This year’s conference put women in the spotlight, featuring dynamic women whose efforts are providing some of the solutions to this aspect of golf’s problems. If there is indeed a gold mine to be tapped, we haven’t found the mother lode quite yet, but with effort the nuggets are starting to pan out.

President Steve: Setting the Sights

GRAA President Steve di Costanzo opened the conference, which followed lunch and the tabletop exhibition featuring a host of golf range & course equipment suppliers and service providers. As a concession to the growing popularity of the Demo Day at Orange County National, this year’s Conference started at noon allowing attendees the option to visit the Demo Day and then get back to the Orlando Convention Center for the GRAA sessions.



Steve di Costanzo, Founder of the Golf Range Association of America welcomes guests to the annual meeting of golf range and short course owners and teaching pros.

Di Costanzo acknowledged the participation of a European contingent, members from the Organization of Golf Range Owners (Erin OGRO!), evidence of the continued growth of GRAA worldwide. Some quick house-keeping issues included GRAA Membership benefit updates: of note to Par 3, executive and short course owners was an announcement that St. Paul Travelers Insurance now provides 100% endorsed coverage for these facilities. Unfortunately, the SpongeBob Squarepants “Swing ‘n Golf” licensing/merchandising promotion with Leading Edge and Nickelodeon has dried up. Steve related that it suffered not from lack of participation or



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execution of the program, but the overwhelming popularity of the cartoon icon that drove up licensing fees to the point where Leading Edge Promotions could no longer afford the arrangement. Leading Edge is actively pursuing other junior and adult promotional tie-ins for GRAA members.

Keynote Speaker Nancy Berkley: What Women Want

When the National Golf Foundation published *Women Welcome Here*, it presented a blueprint for bringing more women into golf. Embraced by Golf 20/20, Nancy Berkley’s strong voice is being heard nationwide. Coming from a background in both the educational and legal professions, Nancy brings a fresh perspective to the golf industry.

Berkley began the session by presenting statistics that indicated a powerful shift in the impact of women golfers: “Women golfers are defined as those playing one or more regulation rounds each year. For some of you, your golfers aren’t even included in the term ‘golfers’. They’re in the industry concept of ‘participants.’ The number of women golfers increased 14%, a huge increase, especially when men only increased 2%.”



Nancy Berkley, author of “Women Golf Here” was the featured keynote speaker.

Women now represent almost one-quarter of all golfers.” Almost identical numbers applied to women playing at short courses and ranges, and she pointed out that the PGA Tour is including women golfers through a new initiative, “The Heart of the Game,” supported by Tour Wives and sporting a ribbon in its logo. She also has noticed that advertising in magazines now include many more products aiming at this market.

Society as a whole, especially the younger generation, expects to see women in the workplace and represented on the athletic fields. “This is one of the most fundamental changes,” she noted, “and women think golf is good for work...you’ll get ahead, be able to participate in corporate outings, and be buddies with the guys. And baby boomer women over fifty are retiring, and retiring with money.”

Balancing Act

Berkley feels strongly that controversy still surrounds the notion that women are an industry opportunity. “Is there anybody



Mitzi Stanley, Kernersville Golf Center *Kernersville, North Carolina) listens with xxxxx Nickerlson from Ironwood Golf Range in Scandia, Minnesota

here,” she asked, “who can honestly say I’ve put a third of my marketing dollars into women’s golf? I think the issue of retention is an over simplification.” She cited the recent study done by the National Golf Foundation at the Golf 20/20 conference: “The retention rate for new women golfers...not the people at your ranges and short courses...is not as high as men. 43% of new female golfers stay for more than one year compared to 54% for men. But when we looked at golfers who were introduced to golf through really structured programs, the retentions rates were not very different.” The implication is that range facilities with excellent learning programs are better positioned to build

a solid foundation. The key targets are working women who have money and are motivated, and working mothers looking for a family activity.

“The time barrier is very important to women,” Berkley insisted, “and while short courses may be the answer, there aren’t a lot of successful examples we can talk about. We need better clarification about why women should golf. When you’re marketing golf, what are you selling? An activity, a product, an experience?” Since the industry is still male dominated, Berkley is concerned that marketers will find it hard to think as a woman would.

She made a point about women’s handicaps, the median being 28, compared to the men’s median of 15. Only about 3% were single handicappers. This led to her differentiation of women as golf customers: “They like to work with groups, we’re collaborative, generally we’re not out there to compete, aren’t hierarchical, and like to golf because it’s social and fun. If you don’t use the word ‘fun’ in marketing to women, you won’t appeal to the numbers you should be.” Again, time is important, and golf is fit into a schedule of doing other things. “Women don’t feel we’re really doing something unless we’re doing two or three things efficiently,” she insisted. “And because this is such a man’s world (golf), we respond to special attention and encouragement, so little things mean a lot in terms of customer service.”

“John Dough”

Nancy offered up a number of simple changes aimed at improving service to women golfers. “Everyone who comes to your facility should have some sort of name tag you give her,” she suggested, “because the people who work with you don’t know whether you are misses, miss or ms to address you, so they avoid it.” Sending ‘Thank You’ notes for lessons and purchases also pays big dividends, especially when group lessons are offered and priced properly. Personalizing the note and including a comeback offer is icing on the cake. For facilities with courses, she insists having 50-yard markers out from the greens will be noticed and greatly appreciated. And the often-



John Hur from Cedar Park Golf Range in Cedar Park, Texas

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heard mantra of Keep The Restrooms Clean should never be underestimated. “Restrooms are such an issue for us,” Nancy lamented, “and I review courses, noting both women’s and men’s restrooms. Remember, women playing in a women’s league, being the only ones on the course, will mean some of us will use the men’s restroom.”

A Woman’s Driver: THREE Sweet Spots?

Nancy likes to segment markets by age rather than work. “Women in their early 40’s, both new and experienced golfers, are a great target. Women in their mid-50s, retiring Baby Boomers who didn’t have time before, are looking for a leisure activity. And young girls, the five to ten year old segment, is very large nationally...your future golfers.” Identifying some of



Berkley says, “The time barrier is very important to women.”

these segments requires asking women if they work, observing who comes by around five in the afternoon in work clothes, and asking what they’d like from the facility. Seeking out professional organizations and their leaders can lead to meetings where strategies are developed on getting groups out to the range and course. Teachers, nurses, and realtors are groups predominantly female, and offering good deals on programs or social events (such as a cocktail party) to introduce your facility are good initiatives. Anything new, such as a swing simulator, clothing lines, or a terrific instructor can be the stimulus for an informal event. And as the saying goes, from little acorns...

Nancy also reiterated the importance of name tags: “Include on the tag the city they live in, because women are collaborative. I’d look at someone and say ‘oh, you live in the town next to me,’ and we’d strike up a conversation.” Also, publicize that there will be refreshments. Why is this important? It tells me in advance that this is going to be a social event. It’s not a job. It’s going to be fun. Also, realize women are different. Use the word ‘tournament’ and they probably are not going to want to play because they’re intimidated.”

Berkley related how a lesson can be learned from the fast growing “Curves,” exercise program, attractive to women

because it’s structured to be accomplished in a short time frame. “Can we do this in golf?” she asked. “You people in the range business are in the best place to have programs that can be done in thirty minutes: short, friendly and healthy. You’ve got what Curves is offering, but need to advertise these features!”



Liza Abood, PGA member and a Top 50 Golf for Woman Magazine and Top 50 Golf Range Magazine instructor from Olney Golf Park in Olney, Maryland.

What Women Want

Berkley feels three years of commitment are needed to yield the desired results. The bottom line is this: most facilities just don’t know enough about the habits, wants and demands on women. Rather than treat it as a mystery or stumbling block, take the opportunity to ask every women (and women’s group) what they like and need, and then they will happily be shown the way. Nancy welcomes questions and feedback, and can be reached directly at nmberkley@aol.com.

TOP TEN TEASE: Sheryl Bindelglass’s Best Practices

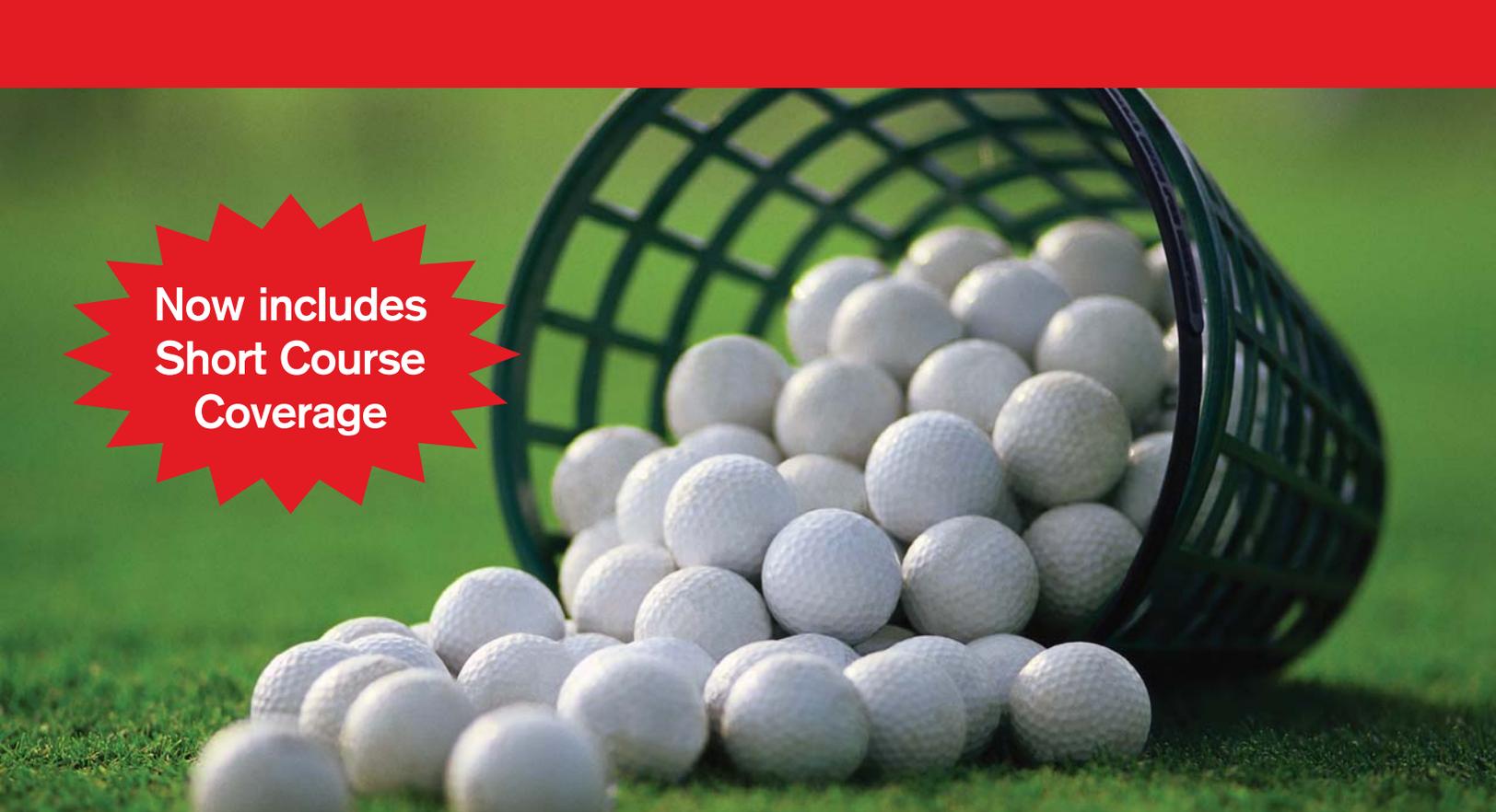
Marketing of a golf range is something Sheryl Bindelglass knows a lot about, having been general manager of a large, highly successful facility in New Jersey for ten years. Fairway Golf Center ran the gamut in offering a range, miniature golf, batting cages, a short course, camps, Top 100 Pro Shop, Top 100 Range, etc. During her tenure she put an amazing array of marketing concepts into practice, and now, as an independent consultant, is marketing her own expertise industry wide.



Sheryl Bindelglass, former general manager at Fairway Golf in New Jersey and now a GRAA consultant looked at Best Practices. A full article will run in the May/June issue of Golf Range Magazine.

You won’t get the full story here. GRAA members will have received a GRAA Member-Only Newsletter (part of the GRAA Member Benefits) that looks at some “Best Practices” and things

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Stephen DiMarco from The Golf Zone in Horsham, Pennsylvania

you can do at your facility. So all you non-GRAA members... see what you're missing! By the way, Sheryl's presentation, "Top 10 Over 10" is so loaded with great information that it will be showcased in an upcoming issue of GOLF RANGE magazine. But only GRAA members will receive the full transcript as part of the next eGolfnews/GRAA Newsletter via email in May. But just to whet your palate, the topics covered include Range, Mini Golf, Batting, Pro Shop, Short Course, Lessons/Camps, Birthday Parties, Community Involvement, Corporate Outings, and Staff.

Put 'Er There Partner! GRAA Alliances Which Add Value to Your Membership

VGM Club: First and Ten, Do it Again!

GRAA President Steve di Costanzo emphasized the core benefit of automatically being a VGM Club member through the association, and it's expanding list of benefits: "Many of you have taken advantage of range ball programs from Top Flight, Srixon, and Wilson, but there are also very good programs on the equipment side from Tour Edge, Riddick, LESCO, Granger, GE light bulbs, and just added Home Depot." Now entering its second decade of doing business, VGM Vice president Kent Dierks is the contact person for tapping into the VGM array of products and services that are virtually risk free. Di Costanzo cited numerous examples of members saving several thousand dollars on everything from range balls to even the discount on all services from KINKO's. He also clarified that purchases made through the VGM vendor companies is done the same way: you still use your reps....it's only once the order gets placed through your various sales reps that the VGM discount pricing gets applied. For that reason, all GRAA members are encouraged to renew their memberships promptly on a calendar year basis since all the GRAA members need to be submitted to VGM and then from there to the VGM vendors.

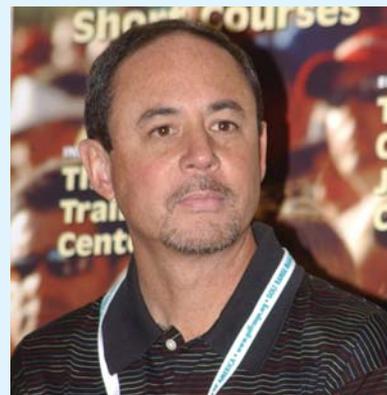
Golfsmith: Whatever You Need, From A to Z

Custom club makers are responding to the increased demand from educated golfers on the importance of getting fitted with high performance shafts. Director of Clubmaking Darron Mauldin informed attendees that Golfsmith is staying on top of the curve in this area. "We now have access to the Speeder program with Fujikura, so those of you doing club replacement

and repair in your shops certainly want to look at this. All GRAA members are put on the "Pro Plan," which gives you better pricing than any other price in our catalog. You'll see three columns of pricing, based on volume, but you get better pricing than that every single item, including tools."

Company Vice President of Research and Development Jeff Sheets was also on hand to assure everyone that whether it is simple re-gripping, adjusting face angles, or something as sophisticated as frequency zone analysis Golfsmith is eager to provide any level of technical support to GRAA members. "In 2005 we have new products that include all the weighting systems that are popular," he explained, "and new materials that can be used either from forging or cast processes. If you're coming to us for components to build for your customers, you are getting state-of-the-art technology in high-end materials." They also carry customer aware brands, such as Snake Eyes. "This is the number one premium brand for components on the market," he emphasized, "and Killer Bee offers fantastic value for the line, and XPC, one of the longest running brands in the component industry."

GRAA members get additional benefits and discounts from Golfsmith training schools. Half-price tuition is offered for all training, be it basic or the four-day Master Craftsman School. "The experienced skilled club makers are looking for new skill sets," Sheets pointed out. "They want to differentiate themselves from other club makers, by working with launch monitors, understanding zone profiling, shaft analysis, all the way down to custom grinding equipment." Free tuition to the Harvey Pennick Academy in Austin, Texas makes the partnership with Golfsmith very attractive.



Jeff Sheets, VP of Research and Development for Golfsmith briefed the crowd about the Golfsmith-GRAA program saying they are eager to provide any level of technical support on club fitting and repairs.

May I Have This Dance?: New Preferred GRAA Partners

Bowling for Golfers: eNews What he's Talking About
GRAA Member Tom Hubbard made the transition from bowling centers to golf centers, and a long time friendship with Carey Tosello has spawned preferred partnership status for eGolfNews, which utilizes customized email marketing. Tosello, a long time member of the BPAA (Bowling Proprietors

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Association of America) has been involved with the BPAA on their email marketing programs for several years before taking it to the golf industry. "The beauty of what we do is taking flyers and information you've already created and package it into an email newsletter delivered to your data base of customers, so you don't have to do it," Tosello explained. "You collect the names, send them to us, and we do all the work from there."



Carey Tosello's company eGolfNews focuses on custom email marketing for golf facilities. He's been doing the same with bowling center proprietors (BPAA) for several years. (Look for a related article in this issue)

With 160-million potential customers on the internet (57-million golfers) Tosello wants to remind clients to revisit range facilities. His product is colorful and interactive by design, yet Tosello claims less than an hour each month is all the time required to provide his company the information it needs to generate the newsletters. "If you know your customers will be at a specific place at a specific time, then that's the place to market to them," he insists. With links to and from client websites, it's technology applied to this computerized environment we now dwell in. Unless you don't own a computer, Carey can be reached at www.egolfnews.biz.



Tom Straus from Broadway Driving Range in Depew, New York.

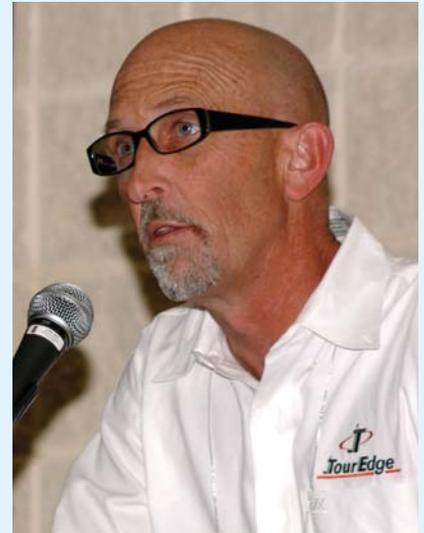
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Tour Edge: Andy Silas, the National Sales Manager for Tour Edge, emphasized that for ten years his company has provided golf clubs that showcase game improvement features for the majority of golfers. By offering affordable prices for consumers and healthy 50% margins for retailers, Tour Edge is coming off a stellar year. Club testing and proper fitting make the clubs an easy sell, and is born out by their number two-market share (and consumer preference rating) in hybrid "metal woods."

Silas described the new "Exotics" division that showcases some of the amazing technology available in club design. Their fitting system consists of thirty-six clubs, is compact, and allows retailers to avoid stocking much product: "If you were

to custom fit one of your customers, and place that order with us on a Monday, it would go into production Tuesday and be shipped Thursday. And that is your big advantage as a range owner. Having the ability for your customer to go out and see the ball fly in the air. That's how you compete against the large brick and mortar operations."

Silas encouraged everyone to take advantage of their customer base, and during peak times, have staff members take some clubs up and down the tee line and let the players hit the club, asking for feedback on new products. He predicted that 20% would end up buying Tour Edge product.



Andy Silas from Tour Edge Golf talks about the new "Exotics" division

Forging Ahead with KZG: Company President Jennifer King related that KZG's roots in the golf industry began when they fulfilled massive orders of tri-metal clubs for Orlimar (close to 2-million) and has evolved into a top custom pro line company with its own stable of top designers, metallurgists and engineers. Their Gemini driver has garnered numerous awards from independent testing groups for both distance and control.

KZG also claims to make the best forged irons in the industry, attributable to their "double forged" process. Handcrafted in Japan, this process was described by Jennifer: "Basically, we take a round billet of premium carbon steel, heat it up to 1200-degrees centigrade, slam it down with a one and a half ton hammer-like tool which squeezes the molecular structure together. This gets



Jennifer King, president of KZG

rid of the voids and bubbles inside the metal. This cools down, is reheated to 800-degrees, then hit it again with a half-ton hammer to further squeeze it down." At this point Japanese artisans hand craft the irons to spec. King insists that this is true forging as opposed to the claims of many manufacturers who say their clubs are forged, but in reality heat up cast products to 400-degrees and press it once.



Mike Amira, from KZG works with two thousand dealers of their equipment.

Also on hand was Mike Amira, who works with two thousand dealers, teaching them the art and science of fitting KZG clubs. “The nice thing about custom fitting is that we can reduce your inventory provided we can turn that sale around quickly enough,” he explained. “We get an order in-house and within 48-hours its on its way to you.” Amira believes retailers using launch monitors do more club business. “The customer needs to be convinced you know what you’re doing, and the launch monitor may help them understand what you’re talking about when you say ‘you’re hitting the ball too high.’ If you can show them what their clubs are doing and then show them what our clubs do, it makes it a much easier selling process.”

KZG conducts three-day classes for dealers and their staffs and also supports the concept of “post-fitting” for customer retention. The goal is customer satisfaction and getting referrals. As a partner, KZG offers Premier Pricing to GRAA members to guarantee healthy margins.

Over the Top Technology from TopGolf: “Hello Mr. Chips”

Nano technology is upon us, and for those who don’t know about it, it’s the science of making machines very, very small. Bob Wallace showed a presentation of how a microchip inserted in a range ball has opened up a new dimension of range practice and play in England. Termed the “ID Ball System,” a range ball that looks and performs the same as other premium range balls is scanned and tracked. This allows players to compete against themselves or each other, shooting at targets with every club in the bag. The closer the ball comes to target, the higher the point total. A computer keeps track of scores (including previous rounds), so like many arcade games, players can see where they rate point-wise against all the top competitors.

Victorious Ryder Cup captain Sam Torrance extols the fun and benefits of the system, and Wallace is introducing TopGolf to the U.S. “You become part of the reality of the game,” Wallace

enthused, “and up to five players can play in a bay at a time. This is really not a better range per se, but an entirely new concept in leisure and golf entertainment. We attract a much larger percentage of the general population than a typical golf facility, with almost 45% of the customers ‘non-golfers’ (with 70% under the age of thirty). However, we do have a tremendously loyal core group of golfers who come to the (U.K.) facility and enjoy the immediate feedback on their shots.”

Game advisors help acclimate newcomers to the environment. A game of TopGolf golf runs just under an hour for four players, fitting busy schedule demands of many partici-

pants. The data gathering also builds handicaps (conceptually similar to bowling) so everyone can compete equitably. The final selling point is ancillary revenues because the TopGolf



Robert Feldman of Airport Golf Center in North Attleboro, Massachusetts

facility is not perceived as simply a place to hit balls, but a leisure destination and hub for social activity. Wallace related that the current facilities are clocking about 200,000 participants a year, and looks for that type of success to be duplicated stateside by refitting existing facilities with the TopGolf system in metropolitan or high-density suburban areas.

Are Male Golfers Really from Mars and Women Golfers from Venus?

Nancy Berkley keynoted the conference by emphasizing the importance of golf being a fun activity for women. Author and nationally recognized instructor Debbie Steinbach put the exclamation point on this concept in the wrap-up session: “We’ve got to put the FUN back into the fundamentals.” Steinbach recruited GRAA Editor-in-Chief Mark Silverman to “model” as the prototype male golfer so she could illustrate the physiological differences between men and women. “Look at the way his arms hang...knuckles facing out, palms facing back. Our (women’s) arms have the palms facing much more to the front. The male

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golfer's physique is a triangle with the widest part at the top. Women are just the opposite...smaller upper body with the base of the triangle at the bottom. Face it, we're different!"

The differences between men and women golfers create an enigma that confounds not only instructor and pupil, but also the entire golf industry. As golfers we cherish many of the game's traditions as hallowed, yet we also embrace vast changes in many aspects such as technology. There are no pat answers or foolproof formulas on how to make more women golfers. The only sure thing is that change must happen, it's going to happen, and it will be a hard effort. The journey has begun. □



Debbie "Venus" Steinbach, a TV personality, noted teacher and former LPGA Tour player capped off the conference with a spirited look at instruction for women.

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