

Written by Christina Tetreault

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"It's all about persistence." Dick Hyland, three-time Golf Professional of the Year Award, most recently with The Southwest Section PGA for 2014, does not need anyone to motivate him. He is currently the Director of Golf at The Country Club at DC Ranch, and has had quite a long career with many accomplishments and awards but insists, "yesterday's home run, won't win today's game."

We had a chance to sit down with this humble man, who embodies a life based on hard work and discipline.

AFM: Congratulations on being named SWSPGA (Southwest Section Professional Golf Association) Golf Professional of The Year. Can you tell me about this award and what it means to you?

DH: The Golf Professional of the Year Award is the most prestigious award from the Southwest Section each year. I am honored and flattered my peers selected me for this award. When they called me to tell me I was the 2014 recipient, I thanked them and mentioned, "this is not all about me." The award is as much about the team we built, the members and the board at CCDCR who have given me the opportunity to make a difference within the SWSPGA.

AFM: What's your golf style?

DH: I am a very fast player because that's the way I grew up playing golf. We had to play in the late afternoon most times so we had to play quickly to get 18 holes in before it got dark.

AFM: What changes have you seen in the club here at [CCDCR](#) since you've signed on?

DH: The Chief Operating Officer at [Country Club at DC Ranch](#), Paul Skelton and the late Jon Flora, then President of the Club brought me on board in September of 1987 to lead the golf operation. They both relayed to me their vision of the future of the golf program at the Club. We all agreed on a plan and I was excited to be a part of their team and take on this endeavor.

We focus on four critical areas, starting with building a team with the right people in the right positions that match their skill sets. We provide exemplary service throughout each department. We offer products in the golf shop, which members and their guests may want, at the fairest and most competitive prices they could find anywhere. We have implemented meet or beat prices on all hardgoods as well. And finally, we present all facets of the operation in the most attractive, classy way possible. Our goal was really to create a "wow" experience from the time they arrive at the club until they depart with a fond and lovely farewell.

AFM: What makes the [Country Club at DC Ranch](#) so unique?

Dick: The mantra at the club is fun, family and friendliness which the team embraces and encourages through every department at the club. We have one of the best locations for a private golf club in the Valley. My biased comment is that golf is the driver to a positive member experience and we have many golfers at this club who enjoy great service both on and off the course.

AFM: You often are quoted as saying you have never had a job, only a career. What do you mean by that?

DH: When I started out in the golf business many years ago, I knew I wanted a career, not just a job. A job is limited to tasks and hours and careers are not. I knew whatever I put into my career, I would get out of it. I understood that would require more than a 9-5 work day. I mention to people thinking about getting in the golf industry I believe the first 40 hours of the week feeds your family and what you do after that, feeds your career. The success or lack there of is dependent on how much time you're willing to spend it.

AFM: We understand you are still a good player and, years ago, held a number of course records including breaking your own record in consecutive years. Explain that.

DH: "I'm not as good as I once was but I can once be as good as I always was", at least that's what I believe. My equipment is better than ever and does not know and does not care how old I am and how little I play and practice.

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I used to compete a great deal but as my family and career responsibilities grew, I found less time to play and practice. If you don't make a living with your sticks, you had better stick to what makes you a living. There was a period in the 90's when I competed at the highest club professional level and represented myself and the club admirably. In that time yes, I had a number of course records one of which was at The Legend at Arrowhead. I set it one year and broke it the next in a SWPGA tournament. The second year I had a bunch of fun making 6 birdies in a row at the end of the round. That gave me the confidence I needed to win the tournament.

AFM: Golf is such a unique and niche game of concentration. What's the pressure like in golf as compared to other professional sports?

DH: Pressure in golf is all self-induced and you cannot rely on anyone else to handle it for you. In a team sport you have teammates to support you if you make a mistake. In golf, you have no one to blame but yourself. I cannot look for a teammate to make a swing, hit a shot or have any influence on my game. It's all what I bring to the game. I personally break the game down to four components.

Physical – Is my game in the best shape it can be? Can I hit the shots I need to?

Mental – Am I making good decisions under pressure?

Emotional – Can I handle my nerves and settle them when required?

Experience – Have I been in this scenario before and what did I learn from it?

In golf, the more you master these four components, the better player you will be.

AFM: We understand the [CCDCR](#) has been a recognized tournament host in the golf community. ? Tell us why.

DH: I have been fortunate throughout my career to be a part of PGA, LPGA, USGA and European Championships from which I learned from the best in Championship golf. We were able to take these experiences and share them with the SWSPGA, AGA, AWGA, JGAA and other allied associations when hosting events at CCDCR. It's all in the little details that others may not want to take the time to do which provides the ultimate experience for the each contestant.

AFM: The course is called a “sleeper” yet it's recently hosted some of the most significant golf championship in Arizona. How good is the golf course?

DH: The course is very “member friendly” with wide driving fairways to get your ball in play but demanding to and around the greens. It is very difficult to post a really low score as evidenced by over 240 Men's US Open Qualifying rounds of which only 5 scores in total have been at even par or better. Many of these contestants have said they Country Club at DC Ranch is “sneaky, hard and very underrated”



AFM: You are said to enjoy golf course architecture and have your own criteria for good design. What is it?

DH: I have been fortunate in my career to have worked with some world renowned golf course architects and designers such as Jack Nicklaus, Tom Weiskopf, Tom Fazio and Kyle Phillips on courses in Scotland, New Mexico, Arizona and Hawaii. They each have designed memorable golf courses and I have been able to pick their brains and learn about their thought process and strategies from which I've developed my own ideas.

A golf course is like a piece of art and should be as memorable as possible. It should be challenging and fun for all level of players and every shot must be strategized in each and every round that's played. When you walk up the 18th hole, you wish you had more holes to play. When you can remember every hole distinctly after playing the course one time and if you're asked if you would be disappointed if you never played it again, you would say yes and did you have fun? If I were to design a course I believe I would keep those ideas in mind.

AFM: What's your favorite hole here? And anywhere?

DH: I'm a big fan of really good par 3's, especially short ones. Our 13th hole at the [Country Club at DC Ranch](#) not only has breath taking views,

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but is a risk/reward par 3 of only 130 yards from the back tees. Your tee shot must carry the desert ravine, fronting the green and avoid bunkers left of and beyond the putting service. The green does not have much depth, so club selection and precise shot making is mandatory. It will yield birdies if played properly. I'm not so certain long par 3's are fun for golfers at all levels.

A sneaky fun challenging par 3 is one many have never played. It's on the 6th hole on the West Course at Merion Golf Club in Pennsylvania, not to be confused with the East Course which has hosted many USGA Championships. This hole plays at 120 yards, maximum, straight downhill to a kidney shaped green which you cannot see from the tee. A creek wraps around 70 percent of the green to catch shots short and left of the putting surface and there are bunkers butting up to the green on all four sides. You have no idea of the quality of your shot until the ball comes to rest. Its one of the most fun par 3's I've ever played.

AFM: In the last four years, upon having had an influx of new members, which create a great deal of activity and play, how do you deal with it?

DH: In the last four years the Country Club at DC Ranch has had added a number of members to the club. This has created a great deal of activity and play. We are excited about the number of new members who have joined the club and yes, they play a lot of golf! We are a club who's focus is on fun, family and friendliness so we encourage as much golf activity as possible. We need to make sure every member has as much open access to the golf course as possible and we've utilized a 1st and 10th tee start to accommodate play on our busiest days. Over the last few years, many clubs have struggled to retain members and we are very fortunate our membership is full and the club is thriving. On any given night, there could be a couple hundred members enjoying the club with their family in friends. It truly is their 2nd home.

AFM: Tell me a little bit about your family and their support through the years. How has your family played a role in your career?

DH: My wife Jeri of 32 years and daughter Kaycie have sacrificed a great deal for my career. Jeri has been the stabilizing foundation of our family and was largely instrumental in Kaycie being the wonderful woman she is today. This is a very demanding career and they have been with me every step of the way.

AFM: Where did your passion for golf start?

DH: I was raised in Ardmore, PA, 3 blocks from the world renowned Merion Golf Club. Most of the kids in our neighborhood learned the game of golf as caddies at Merion and my two brothers and I were among them. I would work on my game before and after school and it quickly became a passion for me. It wasn't long before I knew someday golf would be a career for me. And low and behold in 1982, I became a Class A PGA Member.

AFM: Just for kicks, I'm wondering, what's your favorite color?

DH: Black.

AFM: Why?

DH: I believe black is classic color that has stood the test of time.

