



## **Del Snyder, PGA**

**Year Turned Professional: 1966**  
**Facility/Job Title: The Golden Horseshoe GC**  
**Teaching Professional**

### **1. What was your motivation to become a PGA Professional?**

I grew up on a farm in Bath County, Virginia, just outside Hot Springs, Sam Snead's hometown. When I wasn't going to school or working on the farm, you could find me at the Cascades Golf Course at The Homestead. I caddied and played there from when I was 8 years old until I graduated from high school. When I was in my 20s and had just returned to the United States from working for a government contractor in Iceland, I was offered a job with Sam Snead's golf operation at The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. Of course, as I was growing up, Sam was always someone that I looked up to and admired. It was an offer I couldn't refuse.

### **2. How did you learn to play golf?**

My first introduction to golf lessons was when I shagged balls for the teaching pro at The Homestead, Nelson Long, Sr., and I paid attention to a lot of his teaching instructions. My brother gave me a book, Ben Hogan's Power Golf, and I taught myself to play by emulating the pictures. I would practice in the field in front of my house, hitting from one power pole to the next. Caddying helped me develop my playing ability. By the time I was 14 year old, I was shooting in the 70s.

### **2. What is your specialty in the golf business?**

After working with Sam for nineteen years, I managed the golf operation at The Golden Horseshoe in Williamsburg, Virginia for more than twenty-five years.

**3. Please list any accomplishments (Awards, Certifications, and Tournaments.)**

1984 MAPGA Championship (at 51, was and still is the oldest member to win the MAPGA Championship)  
1990 MAPGA Senior Championship  
1992 MAPGA Senior Championship  
1999 MAPGA Teacher of the Year  
2001 and 2002 "Golf Digest" Best Golf Teachers in Virginia  
2005-2006 "Golf Magazine" Top Teachers in the Country  
2009 Bath County Athletic Hall of Fame, Hot Springs, VA

**4. What was your greatest moment in golf?**

I have had many great moments in golf, so it would be difficult to pick just one. However, one great moment occurred early in my career while I was working at The Greenbrier. I was asked to go to the Alpine village of Kitzbuhel, Austria for six weeks to be the private golf professional for Prince Alfred of Auersperg and his wife, Sunny (later know as Sunny von Bulow). I had been giving them golf lessons for two years while they vacationed at The Greenbrier for months at a time. When I asked Sam if I could have the time off, he said, "You better go. You will never have another opportunity like that again." He was right about that. It was an experience I will never forget.

**5. What or who has had the greatest impact on your career?**

Of course, I would have to say my mentor and friend of more than 40 years, Sam Snead. Sam's influence certainly impacted my playing and teaching philosophy. The most valuable thing I learned from Sam was rhythm and tempo. People may not know that Sam played a couple of musical instruments. When he was practicing on the range, he would hum to himself as he hit the balls. He would think of a piece of music to set his tempo. Sam used to say the golf swing was like dancing to a waltz. And whether he was hitting a wedge or a driver, he never lost that waltz in his head. The first time I played golf with Sam, I was so nervous I could barely draw the club back. I cold topped it, but I still

made 4 and so did Sam. After that, I was never nervous playing with Sam.

### **6. Besides golf, what else do you enjoy?**

I enjoy spending time with family and friends, watching spectator sports including the PGA Tournament, gardening, reading, and bird and/or critter watching. A golf course is one of the best places to observe and appreciate nature.

### **7. If you could give lessons to anyone in the world who would it be and what advice would you give?**

I have given lessons to individuals from all walks of life from the President of the United States to the everyday golfer and to the individuals from all over the world. Giving lessons to beginners is a great challenge and one that I prefer because you're starting with a clean slate and beginners show such enthusiasm and appreciation for what they have learned. When you work with someone who has never played before and help them evolve into a golfer, as a golf instructor, you have really accomplished something.

### **8. What advice would you give someone, young or old, who wants to take up the game?**

There is not time like the present to learn this wonderful sport. Fortunately, golf is not about age, size or strength, but rather it's a game of touch, feel and finesse. It takes a while to develop the skills necessary to play the game well, but the beauty is, unlike most other sports, you can start at any age. Golf teaches and reinforces so many important life lessons and requires character traits needed for success in both golf and life. For example: honesty, integrity, perseverance, patience, courtesy, respect for others, personal responsibility, mental strength, sound judgment, self-control, self-discipline, civility, and etiquette come to mind. Golf opens doors and provides opportunities that you would not otherwise have. I think you will find, though, that the real rewards for playing golf, at any age, and what makes all your hard work worthwhile is that the friendships you develop along the way are priceless.

### **9. What is the most common problem you see in teaching?**

I would have to say muscle tension. Without a doubt, muscles that are tense or rigid interfere with a golf swing more than anything else. When your muscles are tense, you simply cannot perform the motion necessary to swing the golf club properly. You must learn to relax and remain loose. Muscle freedom is important, if not critical, in everyday activities. For instance, when I'm teaching a surgeon, I ask if he or she

hold the scalpel as tight when performing an operation as they do when gripping the golf club. They immediately know what I mean.

### **9. What is your favorite golf instruction tip?**

My favorite golf instruction tip is "keep it simple". There are so many ways to learn golf today – private instructors, golf schools, group clinics, magazines, books, videos, television, computer software to name a few. It's very easy to clutter your head with too many techniques, swing thoughts tips, etc. That old adage "paralysis by analysis" is certainly true in golf. Teaching golf is very rewarding but at the same time, it can be very challenging. Everyone's physical makeup is different. Everyone learns at a different pace, and everyone relates differently to various teaching methods. The key to a good golf instructor is having many ways to get a method understood. If a person doesn't understand the first time, you have to change the way to say things until you find a way for them to understand. A good golf instructor must be a good communicator. Learning to play golf requires an enormous amount of patience and persistence on the part of the student and instructor. I have found in my more than fifty-five year of teaching that keeping my instructions simple works best.