

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT AWARD

Robert S. Baldassari, PGA
Cannon Ridge Golf Club, Fredericksburg, Virginia

Throughout his childhood, exposure to the game of golf was a constant for Bob. Born in Ossining, New York, his father, PGA Professional Robert H. Baldassari, and mother, Claire, moved to Tarrytown, New York when Bob was quite young. It was there that Bob, at the age of 15 months, and his two sisters, Theresa and Lisa, were introduced to the game of golf by their father. As his father's career advanced, the family spent a great deal of time on the road, enjoying summers in New England and winters in Florida. Each year, Bob and his sisters would start school in Boston and then, around Thanksgiving, they would transfer to Sebring, Florida for the remainder of the school year. They did that for ten years! Bob's father is currently a Life Member in the New England Section of the PGA.

Bob attributes his love of the game of golf and the success he has achieved in his career to his father's powerful influence and the strong foundation he provided plus the inspiration he received from his mother, a tournament-tested golf competitor who knows first-hand the value of quality practice. Claire was also Bob's "golfing partner" in his early years. Bob and his sisters grew up with the game of golf playing a very important role in their family life. He learned early the commitment that must be made to have a successful career as a PGA Professional.

Bob loved being around the golf course and he started working in his dad's golf shop when he was thirteen years old. It didn't take long for him to become addicted to the game. Throughout high school and college he received several amateur awards and titles. He continued to work and learn from his father at Hillview Country Club in North Reading, Massachusetts during summers while he earned his degree in Journalism/Communications at Walsh University in Canton, Ohio.

Before moving to the Head PGA Professional position at Cannon Ridge in 2003, Bob was the Head PGA Professional at River Run Golf Club in Berlin, Maryland from 1992 to 2003. From the day he arrived in the Middle Atlantic Section from the New England Section in 1992, he has worked diligently to promote the game of golf that he loves so dearly and the vital role that the PGA Professional plays in it.

Bob's commitment to his profession and his leadership abilities were evident early in his career. He served as Secretary of the New England Assistants Association in 1990 and went on to serve as President of the New England Assistants Association from 1991 to 1992. He was elected to PGA membership in 1991, when he was also selected as the New England Section's Assistant PGA Professional of the Year. Bob continued to be active in Section affairs and governance after moving to the Middle Atlantic Section. He served as the Secretary, Vice President, and President of the Northern Chapter from 1995 to 2000. In 1997, Bob received the Section's Merchandiser of the Year (Resort Category) award. In 2000, he was the recipient of the Section's Bill Strausbaugh Club Relations Award. In 2001, Bob was selected as the Section's PGA Professional of the Year and was elected Secretary of the Middle Atlantic Section. He has since served as Vice President and is currently in his first year as President. Under his guidance and supervision, six of Bob's First Assistant Professionals have been chosen for Head PGA Professional positions.

In addition to his fine playing record and strong management and merchandising skills, Bob is well-known for the many hours he devotes to serving his community. He served on the Maryland Governor's Economic Development Committee for Ocean City, Maryland from 1993 to 2003. From 1999 to 2001, Bob served on the Maryland Water Advisory Committee, which was established as a result of the devastating effects of the previous year's drought conditions on the state's economy. Since moving to Fredericksburg, Bob has been appointed to serve on the Board of Directors for the American Red Cross Rappahannock Chapter.

Additionally, he has coordinated charity golf tournaments for the Gary Player Foundation. From 1993 to 2002, Bob conducted an annual "Santa's Open" with the proceeds going to the Ocean City, Maryland JAYCEES Christmas Toy Program, the Big Brothers and Big Sisters organizations, and more recently in Fredericksburg the Red Cross "Letters to Santa" program. In the thirteen years since its inception, this program has raised over \$300,000 in donations. In 2003, Bob received one of six national Amstel Light Golf Recognition Awards given for significant contributions to his local community.

As Chair of the Section's Public Relations Committee since 1998, Bob works diligently to increase public awareness of the role of the PGA Professional. Bob has led the charge in encouraging members to use their PGA initials after their name on business cards, correspondence, and voice mail. The Section has made tremendous strides in the public relations arena, thanks in great part to Bob's tireless efforts. In 2000, Bob was appointed to the National PGA Public Relations Committee, and has brought many of the MAPGA's ideas and successes to the national level. In 2004, he was named the Chair of National's new Communications and Public Relations Task Force. Also, since 2004, Bob has been a member of The PGA's President's Council for growth of the game initiatives designed to encourage new, former, and occasional adult golfers to play more golf. He also gets his staff involved: in 2005, Cannon Ridge was one of only a few clubs in the country with four PGA Professionals on the President's Council. Cannon Ridge hosted the Section's very successful 2006 Play Golf America Day.

Bob's professional objective is to be accomplished in all phases of the golf business and to exemplify the highest standard of professionalism. His personal commitment, drive, and passion ensure success and his growth of the game programs are re-educating people on what "golf" really means. With lack of time cited by many people for not playing golf, his Family Golf Program gets families practicing on the range and then playing on the course together. Rather than waiting for enough time to get 18 holes in, more people are enjoying spending time with their family playing Cannon Ridge two or three times a month under this new, limited concept program, which consists of practice on the range followed by playing one, three, six, or any number of holes less than the traditional 18. The Deane Beman 6/90 program, designed to get returning players shooting 90 in six months, has shown a dramatic impact on course rounds played and increased revenues.

Bob is a devoted husband and father. He met his wife, Pam, when they were both attending Walsh College. Pam traveled with Bob to Florida all the winters that he worked as an Assistant and when he played the mini-tours. Bob and Pam have three children – Olivia, Victoria and Robert, Jr. – who are the inspiration for Bob's unique and successful Junior Golf and Family Golf Programs.