

MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR

These awards recognize those PGA members who have demonstrated superior skills as merchandisers in the promotion of golf. The award is given for excellence in golf shop operations in three categories: Private, Resort, and Public/Municipal/Military/Semi-Private.

Resort Category

ROBERT (BOB) S. BALDASSARI - River Run Golf Club

Bob Baldassari is a native of Tarrytown, New York. He was born in 1962 to Bob Baldassari, Sr. and Claire Baldassari. Bob's father is a Quarter Century PGA Golf Professional who is still active in the New England Section PGA. Bob and his sisters, Theresa and Lisa, learned the game of golf from their father when they were very young children.

Throughout high school and college Bob received a number of amateur awards and titles. He worked and learned from his father at Hillview Country Club, North Reading, Massachusetts during summers while he earned his degree in Journalism/English at Walsh University, in Canton, Ohio. This is also where he met his wife, Pam.

In 1987 Bob declared his professional status. He entered the PGA apprentice program in 1988. Bob continued working with his father during the Massachusetts' golf season, and spent two winter seasons working as an Assistant Professional at JDM, the original home of the PGA of America in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. There he had the opportunity to learn from different golf professionals throughout the country. In 1988 Bob took a position as Head Assistant Professional at The Congress Lake Club in Hartville, Ohio. In the absence of the Head Golf Professional, Bob managed all aspects of golf operations. Bob's merchandising skills were further cultivated by being fully responsible for the displaying, stocking and inventory of merchandise entering the golf shop. In the 1988 winter season, Bob took a position at Indian Creek Country Club in Miami Beach, Florida. In 1989 he went back to Massachusetts where he accepted a position as Head Assistant Professional at The Weston Golf Club.

In 1992 Bob accepted his current position as the Head Professional at River Run Golf Club & Community, a Gary Player signature design, 18-hole resort facility. His merchandising skills are evident in the dramatic growth in golf shop sales he has brought to this club.

Bob's accomplished playing record includes being selected for the New England Assistants Wilson Squire Cup Team three consecutive years, 1989 - 1991, and he was a member of the 1990 - 1991 Florida Winter Golf Tour. In 1993 he won the Middle Atlantic PGA Pro-Director, in 1994 he was winner of the Mid-Atlantic Pro-Superintendent and in 1995 he won the Chesapeake Classic in Annapolis, Maryland.

In addition to his accomplished playing record and strong management and merchandising skills, Bob's contributions to his community are exemplary. He has served on the Governor's Economic Development Committee for Ocean City, Maryland every year since 1993. Additionally, he has coordinated charity golf tournaments for the Gary Player Foundation, and since 1993 Bob has conducted an annual "Santa's Open" for the Ocean City, Maryland JAYCEES Christmas Toy Program. In 1996 he was the lead instructor at a golf clinic for the Maryland Governor's Tourism Industry Conference.

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 in 1991 - 1992. In 1991 he was selected as the New England Assistant of the Year. He was elected to PGA membership in 1991. His service to his association continued after moving to the Middle Atlantic Section. In 1995 he was elected the Northern Chapter Secretary, and is currently a member of the MAPGA Section Board of Directors. In the past four years, under Bob's guidance and supervision, three of his First Assistant Professionals have been chosen for Head Golf Professional positions .

Bob is a devoted husband and father. He and Pam have three children - Olivia, Victoria and most recently, Robert, Jr. Bob professes that just as he and his sisters were exposed to the game of golf since birth, so shall his children learn the game "right from the crib!"

Bob's professional objective is to be accomplished in all phases of the golf business and to exemplify the highest standard of professionalism. Bob himself summarizes it best in the following quote: "I have known golf as long as I've known anything. Growing up in this game with your dad as a PGA professional offered me an intimate and unique view on golf, life, and the special people I have met and the friendships that have resulted. The joy of the game now is as strong as when I tagged along with my dad to the club each morning. The times and circumstances have changed, but I still have the desire to arrive at my club and be witness to generations, new and old, and their enjoyment of the game of golf."