

MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR

Public Category

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.

WILLIAM E. SASS III, PGA - Ocean City Golf and Yacht Club

William “Buddy” Sass was born April 6, 1962 in Washington, D.C. to William, Jr. and Jayne Sass. He has a brother, Patrick and a sister, Suzanne. His father introduced him to the game of golf at the age of 10, by playing golf with him on Saturdays and by presenting him lessons from PGA Professionals Bill Deck and Bob Haley. He graduated from High Point University in 1984 with a BS in Accounting (where he was also an NAIA Academic All-America) and in 1991 received his MBA from Salisbury State University.

Buddy’s first golf-related job was being a part-time range person at the High Point Country Club in High Point, N.C. After discussing his future with PGA Professional Bill Sporre, whom he admired and respected, Buddy decided to turn professional in 1984. He was elected to membership in The PGA in 1987. Buddy has been an assistant golf professional at High Point County Club, High Point, N.C. (1984-1987); Lochmere Golf Club, Cary, N.C. (1987-1988); The Beach Club Golf Links, Berlin, MD (1988-1990) and as a Head PGA Professional at Ocean Pines Country Club, Berlin, MD (1991-1996); Deer Run Golf Club, Berlin, MD (1997-1998); Ocean City Golf and Yacht Club, Berlin, MD (1999-Present).

Buddy’s merchandising philosophy centers on meeting four goals: perception, loyalty, profitability and responsibility. He believes that image is the key component to effective merchandising at your club. His staff works hard to develop a floor plan, displays, products, and other items that enhance the customer’s perception of the facility. Buddy’s desire is to look upscale and therefore only considers merchandise that fits this image. His displays are wood and have been constructed to produce the look of a specialty shop.

Buddy also believes that proper merchandising creates happy and loyal customers for both the golf shop and golf course. He is promoting the entire facility. Buddy believes the mission is accomplished when the customer’s expectations are exceeded -- the cornerstone of this function is personal service. Buddy and his staff look to establish one-to-one relationships with their customers. Personalization and customization of products is provided whenever possible.

Buddy realizes that no operation can survive without making a profit. New displays, the changing of existing displays, staff uniforms, and the amount and type of merchandise that is sold are all orchestrated to return a profit. Buddy employs a team of advisors to keep his business on track and to increase the bottom line.

As a member of The PGA of America, Buddy believes in a responsibility to teach his staff the basics of the business and to fully prepare them for their future in the golf industry. Therefore, an essential part of his marketing effort is to utilize his assistants’ unique talents. Buddy believes the best way to prepare them for a future in golf is to involve them in paying bills, merchandising products, rotating displays, and meeting with salespeople.

When asked what he attributed his success to, Buddy replied, “Whatever success I have had in my life has come through and because of my relationship with Jesus Christ. All the values and beliefs that were taught

to me by my parents were based on his teachings and life as told through the Bible and church doctrine. I try my best to live a life that glorifies Him. I have been fortunate to have fantastic parents and a wonderful wife to help me do the right things personally and professionally.”

Buddy and his wife, Debora have been married for seven years and have three children, Cecily (6), Will (5) and Chloe (3).