

**MERCHANDISER OF THE YEAR  
PUBLIC/MILITARY/SEMI-PRIVATE CATEGORY**

***Craig Volentine, PGA***  
*Birdwood Golf Course*  
*Charlottesville, Virginia*

As the Head PGA Professional at a unique facility like that of Birdwood Golf Course, Craig Volentine, the 2016 Merchandiser of the Year – (Public category), has a niche in the revenue stream unlike many courses. Craig understands what his customers want and this allows him to develop a merchandising philosophy that best fits his facility and sales goals.

Craig's first golf-related job came when he was 22 years old at Sheraton Steamboat Golf Club in Steamboat Springs, CO, where he worked for three years. In 1999, Craig moved to Maui, Hi., and began to really pursue a career in golf. In 2001, Craig became a golf professional and was a medalist at his Player Ability Test (PAT) at the Kapalua Bay Golf Course in Maui, Hi. After eight years in Hawaii, Craig moved back to the continental United States and became the Assistant Professional at Two Rivers Country Club in Williamsburg, Va. While in his second year at Two Rivers, Craig was elected to PGA Membership. He joined the Birdwood Golf Course team in August 2010.

In only five years of serving as the merchandiser at Birdwood Golf Course, Craig has been responsible for a 39% increase in revenue and a 41% increase in profit, all while maintaining a 62% average cost of goods sold. Birdwood Golf Course is a unique facility in that they have three logos to stock. Birdwood is the University of Virginia's (UVA) golf course, so Craig and his staff must always have the UVA logo for the students, faculty and alumni. Birdwood is managed by the resort property for UVA, which is The Boar's Head Resort, therefore, the golf shop must have the Boar's Head logo on apparel for the resort guests. Finally, Birdwood Golf Course was opened in 1984 and has a strong following for the Birdwood logo. Craig uses a logo percentage formula for each of the three clientele groups which helps him stay ahead of trends while always having the basics that everyone needs.

Having the UVA connection to the course is a huge advantage to producing golf shop revenue and Craig makes sure he gets the most out of it. Earlier this year, Craig ran a promotion "Buy 2 UVA Logoed Nike Victory shirts and get the 3<sup>rd</sup> Free". This promotion was very successful as Craig sold 126 polos, which equaled over \$4,950 in revenue with a 37% margin. He also partnered with the UVA Darden School of Business Golf Club (DGC) to order DGC logo apparel for the golf shop. This partnership resulted in \$8,750 in revenue with a margin of 40%.

Craig will be the first to mention that he would not be where he is today without the help and advice from his mentor, PGA Professional Gary Planos. Craig worked for Planos, the 1988 PGA Merchandiser of the Year winner for five years while at Kapalua Resort. Working at a facility that did over five million dollars in merchandise sales per year, and the procedures that Gary instilled in him has given Craig the skillset to be a successful Merchandiser.

Hawaii has been good to Craig. Not only did he meet his mentor there, but also his wife of nine years. Craig and his wife Kristen, who is also a PGA Member, were married in Des Moines, Iowa. They have a six year old son, Mitchell, who is currently in first grade. Mitchell loves running, Legos, Minecraft and eating Lunchables. Craig's personal philosophy is to stay positive, never give up, put in the work and you can accomplish anything.