

TEACHER & COACH OF THE YEAR

This award bestows special recognition on a PGA Professional for excellence in golf instruction along with overall distinguished performance as a PGA Professional.

Bernie Najar, PGA
Caves Valley Golf Club
Owings Mills, Maryland

Bernie was born December 3, 1971 in Bethesda, Maryland to Andre and Bernadette Najar. He grew-up in a large family with siblings Andre, Johnny, Bob, Maryse, Cathy, Isabelle, Helene, Carolyn, Valerie, and Kenny.

Bernie began playing golf at age 13 when he skipped tennis camp to attend his first junior golf clinic at Kenwood Country Club with head PGA Professional Rod Thompson. Rod and his staff at the junior clinics made Bernie's introduction to golf a fun experience. The thrill of playing a new sport and the challenge of hitting the ball to a distant target encouraged him to play more.

Bernie caddied at Bethesda Country Club under Jim Folks, PGA and worked at Las Vegas Golf and Tennis during his senior year at Walt Whitman High School. He made the All-Metropolitan Golf Team 1988-1990. After his high school graduation in 1990, Bernie attended The American University on a golf scholarship and graduated in 1994 with a BSBA degree in Finance.

In 1994, Bernie went to work at The Suburban Club of Baltimore County in Pikesville, Maryland. A year later, he was hired by The Staples Corporation to teach PGA Professional Charlie Staples' son, Whit, full-time in Florida. During the summer, when Whit was traveling to tournaments, Bernie taught lessons at Montclair Golf, Tennis, and Swim Club in Montclair, Virginia. In the spring of 1996, Bernie joined the staff at Woodholme Country Club in Baltimore, Maryland as a teaching professional. He completed The PGA's Golf Professional Training Program in 1998, at which time he was elected to PGA membership. In 2012, Bernie moved his teaching talents from Woodholme to Caves Valley Golf Club in Owings Mills, Maryland where he continues to teach today as the Director of Instruction.

Since 2000, Bernie has been recognized by *Golf Digest* in their "Best Teachers in State" listing. He has been named a Golf Digest Top-50 Instructor, Golf Magazine's Top-100 Instructor and a GRAA Top-50 Growth of the Game Instructor. Bernie is the author of the "The Game" Enjoying Golf On and Off The Course," and a regular contributor to Golf Digest and Golf Magazine with instruction articles and videos. He has been a speaker at many MAPGA Teaching and Coaching Summits and other MAPGA educational sessions including his Caves Valley Spring Seminar which raised \$3500 for the PGA REACH Middle Atlantic Foundation in 2023. In addition, Bernie is a national speaker, speaking at other PGA Sections and at the National PGA Teaching & Coaching Summit in 2015.

Some of his notable student achievements in 2023 include: Bryan Kim winning the 2023 USGA Junior Championship and is playing on the Men's Golf Team at Duke University; Max Rottluff won multiple tournaments on the European Challenge Tour and earned playing privileges on the DP World Tour for 2024; Ryan McCormick earned his PGA Tour card via the Korn Ferry Tour by finishing 28th on the points list; Owen Newberry won the Maryland State Junior by four shots; Ilene Garten won her 8th Straight Senior Club Championship; and Landon Rottman won the Under Armour National Championship.

Bernie's success as a PGA Professional is a result of loving his job and being self-motivated to continuously develop and improve his skills as a teacher and as a player. When asked, he shared that his mission as a PGA Teacher & Coach is to help others love the game as much as he does, a

value he inherited from his mentors. Bernie explained that this has been supported by his tremendous circle of family, friends, peers and co-workers at the incredible facilities that he has worked.

This is Bernie's fourth time receiving the MAPGA Teacher & Coach of the Year, he received it in 2004, 2014, and 2022. Najar is also the recipient of the 2011 and 2012 MAPGA Professional Development Award. In 2023, he earned his PGA Master Professional status in Teaching and Coaching, the highest educational designation a PGA of America Member can obtain.

He is married to his wife Jennifer, whose father Dr. Mounir Mady is an avid golfer who even had a par-3 in his backyard, and has a step-daughter Amelia (12).