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ILLINOIS PGA NEWS

ILLINOIS PGA SECTION ANNOUNCES 2017 SPECIAL AWARD WINNERS

11 PGA Professionals Recognized for Outstanding Service to Section and Game

GLENVIEW, Ill. – September 14, 2017 – The Illinois PGA Section has announced its slate of Special Award winners for 2017 which includes the first female Professional of the Year winner, two winners from the same facility known for its outstanding player development programs, a head and assistant pro from the same north shore club and a professional honored for the third time in 14 years for his dedication to educational programs.

Following are the 2017 Illinois PGA Special Award winners:

- **Carol Rhoades, Golf Channel Academy Chicago** – Professional of the Year
- **Nick Cuca, Exmoor Country Club** – Assistant Professional of the Year
- **Louis Sauer, LS Golf** – Teacher of the Year
- **Greg Barasel, Cantigny Golf** – Youth Player Development Award
- **Nick Papadakes, Onwentsia Club** – Bill Strausbaugh Award
- **Todd Sones, Todd Sones Impact Golf** – Horton Smith Award
- **Patrick Lynch, Cantigny Golf** – Player Development Award
- **Dave Huber, Lake of the Woods GC** – Bill Heald Career Achievement Award
- **Dave Schmaltz, Exmoor Country Club** – Merchandiser of the Year, Private
- **Steve Gillie, Randall Oaks GC** – Merchandiser of the Year, Public
- **Reagan Davis, Eagle Ridge Resort and Spa** – Merchandiser of the Year, Resort

“We are privileged to have such an outstanding group of PGA Professionals in the Illinois Section that are dedicated to growing and improving the game for everyone from the junior player to the weekend player to the elite player,” said Carrie Williams, executive director of the Illinois PGA Section. “And this year’s Special Award winners exemplify all the PGA of America has to offer as the experts in the business and game of golf.”

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Professional of the Year

Leading the 2017 class of Special Award winners is **Carol Rhoades**, 54, winner of the Professional of the Year Award. Carol is with Golf Channel Academy Chicago and also teaches at Cog Hill Golf and Country Club in Lemont. Presented annually since 1955, this award honors the working club professional whose total contributions to the game best exemplify the complete PGA Professional. Special emphasis is placed on performance and achievement over the past five years, or specifically in the following categories: overall performance as a PGA Professional at his/her facility, service to the Illinois PGA and the Association, leadership ability, image and ability to inspire fellow PGA Professionals, and the promotion of golf.

“I am deeply honored that my fellow colleagues would want me to represent our section. I accept this award with a great sense of responsibility and want to continue to do everything I can to grow and promote the game,” she said. “Making golf fun and helping those that I have taught try to realize the joy of the game and selling the game on the values that make it different is really important to me.”

Carol grew up in Pennsylvania and was encouraged by her father to play golf. She attended Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia and earned a Bachelor’s degree in Health and Physical education while also playing on the women’s golf team. She went on to earn her Master’s degree in Athletic Administration from Slippery Rock University and following scholastic work, embarked on a golf career that has taken her from Gainesville Golf and Country Club in Florida to Olympia Fields Country Club, Woodcrest Country Club and The Ridges Golf Club.

She has also been involved in coaching, serving as the head women’s golf coach at the College of William and Mary and more recently for the University of Illinois-Chicago. Nationally, she has been recognized as the LPGA Professional of the Year and one of Golf Digest’s Top 50 Women Instructors. Previously, she has won three other Illinois PGA Section Awards including the Bill Strausbaugh Award (2002), the Player Development Award (2008) and the Horton Smith Award (2010). She has also been nominated for Teacher of the Year.

Player Development Awards

Patrick Lynch, 47, Player Development Award, and **Greg Barasel**, 32, Youth Player Development Award, have teamed up to create one of the leading player development programs in the country at Cantigny Golf in Wheaton, Ill.

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“At Cantigny we are lucky to have a youth golf course that allows the kids to play without supervision. We give them the responsibility to book a tee time and converse with the pros. It’s been key to developing good golf character and skills as well,” said Lynch. “These awards reflect on Cantigny and all the good we do here. We can say that we’re part of a great collection of golf professionals who are passionate about developing junior golfers.”

Head/Assistant Pros at Exmoor CC

Dave Schmaltz, 34, and **Nick Cuca**, 30, work side-by-side at Exmoor Country Club in Highland Park, Ill. and have developed a solid working relationship that allows them to excel. Schmaltz is the winner of the Merchandiser of the Year Award for a Private facility and Cuca is honored as Assistant Professional of the Year.

“It’s just such a great honor,” said Cuca. “There are so many professionals in the state that are doing great work. This truly validates the hard work and dedication I have put into my golf career.”

Third Time’s a Charm

Todd Sones, 55, really loves to teach and learn. So much so that he is the winner of the Horton Smith Award for the third time in 14 years (2003, 2014, 2017). From his early days at White Deer Run to his current role operating his own teaching program in Vernon Hills, Ill. Todd has dedicated his professional golf career to developing and improving educational opportunities for PGA Professionals while serving as instructor to PGA TOUR and LPGA Tour players as well as leading amateurs.

“Winning this award means that I’m doing my job right, and being recognized by peers is always a great honor,” said Sones. “I think focusing on the person in front of me at all times and working with my team to grow our teaching ability every day has kept me relevant with golfers and my fellow professionals.”

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Additional Award Winners

Rounding out the Special Award winners are **Louis Sauer**, 44, of LS Golf, Northbrook, Ill., winner of the Teacher of the Year Award and instructor to many top area amateur golfers including Patrick Flavin, winner of the Illinois Amateur and Illinois Open this summer; **Nick Papadakes**, 45, Onwentsia Club, Lake Forest, Ill., winner of the Bill Strausbaugh Award for his mentorship to fellow PGA Professionals in improving their employment situations and through service to the community; **Dave Huber**, 61, Lake of the Woods Golf Club in Mahomet, Ill., winner of the Bill Heald Career Achievement Award for a career in service to employers, mentoring and community service; **Steve Gillie**, 34, Randall Oaks Golf Club in West Dundee, Ill., winner of the Merchandiser of the Year Award for a Public facility; and **Reagan Davis**, 34, Eagle Ridge Resort and Spa in Galena, Ill., winner of the Merchandiser of the Year Award for a Resort facility.

Both Gillie and Davis have their work cut out for them as golf apparel and equipment are such a major aspect of the game at both Public and Resort facilities. Fashion trends change frequently and it's crucial to stay updated on apparel styles and brands as well as equipment that will help golfers improve their game. Davis contributes his success to the relationships he has developed over the years with sales reps and golf companies. With more women playing the game, his current focus is on presentation and products for women specifically.

A private awards ceremony will be held Thursday, October 19, 2017 at Medinah Country Club.

E-Z-GO is a proud sponsor of the Illinois PGA Special Awards: E-Z-GO ELiTE Professionals.

About the Illinois PGA/Illinois PGA Foundation

The Illinois Section of the PGA of America is a professional organization serving the men and women golf professionals in northern and central Illinois who are the recognized experts in growing, teaching and managing the game of golf. The Illinois PGA is responsible for the administration of competitive golf tournaments, educational opportunities, support programs and growth of the game initiatives. With over 840 members and apprentices, the Illinois PGA is one of the 41 regional Sections that comprise the PGA of America. The Illinois PGA Foundation focuses its community efforts on promoting the goodwill and growth of the game with an emphasis on activities that benefit youth. Foundation initiatives include: GolfWorks Illinois, Youth-based Scholarship Funds and the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame. For more information about the Illinois PGA and the Illinois PGA Foundation, please visit www.ipga.com and join us on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

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