



PGA

Kentucky Section

2017 KPGA ASSISTANT GOLF PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR NOMINATION

Name of Nominee: Robert Costello
Facility Name: Wildwood Country Club
Facility Address: 5000 Bardstown Rd, Louisville KY 40220
Facility Phone Number: 502-499-1001
Nominee E-mail Address: mcostello@pga.com

1. Please describe the nominee's overall performance as an Assistant Golf Professional. I would describe Robert's performance as consistent and inspiring this year. Robert was hired at the beginning of 2016 by new Head Professional Blake Watts as the 1st Assistant. Robert was given many goals when he was hired which included: Grow the Junior Golf Program, Grow the Ladies Golf Program, elevate the level of customer service to members and guests, increase social media presence, and help our other two assistants grow in their positions. These were just a few of the goals that he was given. Robert accomplished all of those goals and more. He not only accomplished those goals, but he well exceeded the expectations of those goals and was highly consistent day to day with normal tasks. There was never a time when a daily procedure fell through the cracks and Robert's ability to follow-up with our members is incredible.

Our Junior Program saw new heights this year that it has never seen in years past. Robert not only increased the number of juniors participating in the current Junior Golf Program in PGA Junior League and Junior Golf Clinics, but he also added new programs. Robert grew the PGA Junior League team to 16 juniors on one team and they accomplished a winning season for the first time ever. Robert was also named the All-Star Coach and 3 of our Juniors from Wildwood were selected to play. Robert also started High School Prep Sessions, Family Golf Nights, and U.S. Kids Golf Camp. High School Prep Sessions is designed for juniors that are wanting to play high school golf and compete and at a high level. They met once a week for 4 weeks and they met for 2 hours each time. Robert would go over ways to better their practice habits, better their course management, and better their mental approach. Family Golf Nights had existed before at Wildwood, but never before was it done the way that Robert did it. Robert would host these on Saturday or Sunday evenings once a month in the summer months and Robert would do a free 30 minute clinic with the juniors and adults. He would rent the inflatables from Golf House KY and set them on the practice tee. Then after the free clinic there was some sort of contest and Robert would hand out prizes. Finally, they would go and play a 4-hole scramble format on holes 1 through 4 and Robert would hand out prizes to the top two teams. This was a fantastic way to get families together and everybody really enjoyed it.

The U.S. Kids Golf Camp was probably the biggest addition. We have always had a Sports Camp every year but the Sports Camp involved tennis, swimming, and golf and its main focus was tennis. So, Robert designed the U.S. Kids Golf Camp and it was a full week of golf instruction centered upon the U.S. Kids Golf Curriculum. Robert is a U.S. Kids Certified Instructor and it was very neat to see all the

things he did with the juniors in that camp each day. They all received booklets that showed their progress and different areas of the game they were working on. For each area they passed, Robert gave them a pin to attach to their hat or golf bag. Parents loved it because the kids would take the booklets home each day and Robert would give them homework. Parents could review with their children and come back the next day ready to take on any challenge that Robert presented them with. The camp not only focused on the playing part of the game, but also rules, etiquette, and course management. Very cool camp and we are excited about having it again next year and see what else Robert adds to it!

Robert was also put in charge of the Ladies 18-Hole group this year which is our biggest group of Ladies we have at Wildwood. Robert improved communications with the Ladies by utilizing more e-mails, phone calls, and text messaging than they had ever had. Each week he would provide an e-mail showing the weekly winner, points update, and a reminder about upcoming weeks. Guest Days were probably the biggest highlight of the Ladies 18-Hole League. Our Guest Days were bigger than ever and Robert came up with some new additions to really make the experience memorable. Robert would go around and personally take a picture of each 4-person group as well as a big group photo before they would tee off. While they were playing their tournament, Robert would create these amazing collage photos and print off enough to where each person could take one home with them to remember the day. Robert would always have them finished by time they came in for lunch! Robert also added some nice touches on the golf course by adding flowers on the tee boxes for Guest Days. At the end of the day he would let everyone take home flowers with them and the ladies really loved that!

Another great thing Robert did this year was lead our other two Assistant Professionals. Both had a year of experience under their belts at Wildwood, but both are not PGA Class A yet and are still working towards that. Robert showed them new ways to improve their customer service, showed them how to increase a junior golf program, how to teach better golf lessons (Robert gave nearly 200 individual golf lessons this year), and how to be more engaged with our members. Robert showed them that more times you interact with members in positive way, whether through junior golf, individual instruction, tournaments, or daily interaction in the golf shop, that can lead to a member wanting to come back for whatever else their needs are. Robert really taught them that relationships are key and showed them how to build relationships. Robert was remarkable in growing the Wildwood brand both internally and externally. We created a new Facebook page that was for the Golf Shop and Robert took it over and created some amazing posts on a weekly basis that covered tournament results, new merchandise in the golf shop, teaching, junior golf, and the list goes on and on. Robert also took our members on some very fun golf outings as they competed in many KPGA Pro-Am's throughout the state and again this helped grow relationships. Robert has been a very big part of the operation this year in 2016 we can't wait until next year! Robert has done all this and he's been planning his wedding as well as he is getting married on January 6th, 2017. He is one busy guy!

2. Please briefly describe the nominee's service to the local Section and to the Association. Robert became involved in the Section earlier this year when he became the Vice-President of the Assistants/Apprentices division. Just recently, Robert was voted in as the President of the Assistants/Apprentices division. Robert has worked with Will Schneider on planning the Assistants Championship this past year and Robert secured the spot for next year's Championship. Next year's Championship will be held at Wildwood and we are very excited about hosting! Robert also stepped in for Will when Will was playing in the National Assistant's Championship by going to the Board Retreat in Lexington for a couple days. Robert only looks to continue his service to the Section and Association by continuing his work with the Assistants/Apprentices division and then Robert hopes to be elected to At-Large or Director position after that.

3. Please briefly describe the nominee's leadership ability.

One of the tasks that Robert was given when he was hired at Wildwood was to lead and mentor our two other Assistant Professionals. Robert has lead by example on a daily basis as has really helped them form relationships, follow-up in a timely manner, teach better, grow a junior golf program, and run a better tournament. Whenever there is an issue of any kind Robert is typically always the first one to step up and solve the issue. Again, the way Robert leads by example is pretty remarkable and Robert is also a vocal leader too. One of things that is very noticeable about Robert is that he is always looking for ways to improve both himself personally and Wildwood. You can often over hear Robert talking about a new way to improve a tournament, improve a junior golf program, improve something about the daily operation, and the list goes on and on! Robert is a big believer in that things can be changed and that just because something has been done a certain way in the past does not mean it has to stay that way.

4. Please briefly describe how the nominee inspires fellow Assistant Golf Professionals.

Again, this was one of the biggest things we noticed this year was that our other two Assistant Professionals really took well to Robert. Robert showed them many new ways to improve their skills and be better Golf Professionals. Both of our other Assistants at Wildwood are Apprentice Professionals and are actively seeking their PGA Class A. Robert is big on relationships and relationship building and Robert taught them that. Relationship building can happen in many different ways, but the bottom line is that any chance you have to make a positive interaction with anybody who walks through the door at Wildwood, you should do so and Robert always does. Robert also showed them how important teaching golf lessons are and how that can lead to other opportunities down the road with potential golf club equipment sales, participation in a tournament, more lessons, and the list goes on and on. Robert also taught them the art of follow-up and how important that can be in any situation. Robert is big about following up after lessons with things to work on and he is also big about follow-up for special orders and club repair. Many times, Robert will use his off time to go and get a club repaired for a member if it can't be repaired in house.

One other thing that Robert is also big on is merchandise and displays in the golf shop. Robert is constantly refreshing displays and doing so in ways that our Assistants had not seen before. Robert also took over our Golf Shop Facebook page and really marketed our club well. These are all things our other two Assistant Professionals had never really seen before and Robert has been a big inspiration to our guys! Robert has also worked at other clubs with other Assistant Professionals and interns. Robert keeps a big network of people through those previous positions and his Alma Mater ECU PGA Golf Management. Robert is often having conversations with anybody in his network about ways to improve their careers or anybody seeking advice about junior golf, teaching, merchandise or tournament operations. Robert keeps his phone on him at all times and is a great networker!

5. Please briefly describe how the nominee grows the game of golf at the facility, in the community and throughout the Section.

There are many ways to list but most importantly Robert does a phenomenal job with the Junior Golf Program at Wildwood. Robert grew the PGA Junior League team to 16 players which was the most Wildwood has ever had. He also had the most wins that Wildwood has ever had in a season and was voted to be an All-Star Coach and took three of Wildwood's PGA Junior Leaguers with him. Robert also made Wildwood's Family Golf Nights bigger and better than ever. Routinely he had big turn outs for Family Golf nights. He created a 30 minute clinic before the Family Golf night officially began and had inflatables, prizes and a clinic that both parents and kids could participate in. Robert also created a U.S. Kids Golf Camp that was designed around the U.S. Kids golf curriculum and parents and juniors loved it. It was one-week of instruction from 9a.m. to 12pm each day and each junior was given a booklet, hat, and pins upon completion of certain parts of the program. The U.S. Kids Golf Camp was

a huge success and Robert is looking to expand it again next year. Robert also did a great deal to grow our Ladies golf this year as he expanded participation and had better ways of communication by weekly e-mails that included updates on who won, points standing, and upcoming events. Robert also made the Ladies Guest Days a huge hit as he personally took pictures of each group and an overall group picture. Robert would print up collage photos and give them to each person to take home with them after the tournament wrapped up.

Something very interesting about Robert is that he also serves on the Board for the Epilepsy Foundation of Kentuckiana. Robert's younger sister suffers from Epilepsy so Robert is always looking for ways to help her. Robert is very involved in the planning of their annual Golf Scramble and regularly attends planning meetings and volunteers time to help raise money. Robert even presented the Epilepsy Foundation with a check earlier this year from his 100 Holes of Hope Fundraiser where he played 100 Holes in a Day to help raise money for the Kentucky Golf Foundation and The Epilepsy Foundation. He did do the 100 Holes of Hope last year, but he presented the check to the Epilepsy Foundation this year before their golf scramble and it was a very touching moment.

6. Please list any Section or National awards the nominee has received
None