



Name of Nominee: Bryan J. Harris

Year Elected to Membership: 2009

Award Nominated for: Golf Professional of the Year

My love for the game of golf began at the age of three years old at Charlotte Country Club (in Charlotte, MI) and that love continues to present day. My grandfather Freddie Newsome, affectionately known as Ol' Pops, introduced me to the game which would become my profession and one of my passions in life. Growing up, we played golf *every* day during the summer, and those times and memories on the golf course with my Pops are very near and dear to me.

My official golf career began during my high school years as a freshman at Charlotte High School. I was a four year captain and letter winner, and three time conference champion (earning 2nd place my freshman year). My passion for golf continued during my time as a Professional Golf Management student at Ferris State University. Despite being away at school, I still came back to Charlotte to play on my "home" golf course with my Pops as often as possible. As part of the PGM program, I spent 3 months as a golf assistant intern at Candlestone in Belding, MI, followed by a 6 month internship at Michigan State University, concluding another 6 months at PGA National in West Palm Beach, Florida. These experiences fueled my interest and passion in the game and business of golf. Little did I know that my internship at Michigan State University would be a preview of what was to come in my professional golf career.

I am a proud member of the Michigan PGA Section for over 10 years; fifteen, of the past sixteen years, have been spent at Forest Akers Golf Courses. I started there as an hourly employee in outside operations and teaching lessons. Throughout the years, I was promoted to a managerial role in outside operations and appointed director of teaching instruction becoming a full-time, salaried employee. From there, I oversaw outings, community engagement, and grew our teaching program portfolio. I believe my well-rounded experience at Forest Akers, as well as the resources and programming through the Michigan PGA section, positioned me to assume the General Manager position at Forest Akers three years ago. My responsibilities in that role not only include growing our business at Forest Akers but also increasing our presence in the community and gaining life-long players as a result of our excellent customer service, exceptional golf facilities, knowledgeable PGA staff, and by recruiting the next generation of golfers to the game, just like my Pops did for me.

During my tenure as General Manager at Forest Akers GC we have been able to position Forest Akers-West as a Top 30 collegiate course in the country, as determined by GolfWeek Magazine. Forest Akers first made the list in 2018 rated no.29 and 2019 moved up to no.23, with our long term goal of

becoming a top 10 collegiate facility. Our driving range has also garnered national recognition – it's been a 21 time recipient of the "Top 50 Golf Ranges" in the country award. We host the Lansing All-City Championship annually and have been the host site for MHSAA Boys and Girls State Final Championship since 1983. Additionally, we have hosted four (4) USGA qualifiers, multiple GAM qualifiers and championships, the Tour Championship for the Callaway Junior Golf Tour, along with 60+ fundraising golf events annually benefiting scholarships and other local charities. The NCAA selected Forest Akers West as a host site for the 2019 NCAA D1 Women's Golf Regional along with being the host facility for the 2021 NCAA D3 Women's National Championship. I am most proud that these events bring a range of golfers to MSU and to the game of golf -- men and women, newcomers and veterans, locals and visitors -- to "escape" for a few hours at a time.

However, these events and my career to date would not be possible without the tremendous group of individuals I have had the great fortune with which to work at Forest Akers as well as the mentorship I have received through the Michigan PGA. These individuals share my passion for high quality service to our guests and for the game of golf. We are constantly searching for innovative ways to bring new golfers to the game. One such example is the installation of the TopTracer Range in February 2019. Forest Akers was the first facility in Michigan to install this technology. Since the installation, we have had many phone calls and visits to see and test the product. TopTracer Range allows our facility to not only generate additional revenue in the off-season, but also to deliver a product that helps our guests track their own progress as they seek to develop their game. TopTracer Range allows golfers to choose from six (6) different game modes and even store statistical information on their mobile device. This is a great feature for our daily guests, range pass holders, and the thousands of guests that take golf instruction with us throughout each year.

I deeply believe in creating a pipeline to support golfers as they mature and hone skills with the goal of offering instruction and playing opportunities to facilitate that advancement. To that end, we have developed our PGA Jr. League team into 40 participants annually, with participation numbers steadily growing in our fall PGA Jr. League. Our staff at Forest Akers conduct 2,000+ lessons during the offseason (October-March) in our Winter Golf Program, which was established in 2009 and quickly reached capacity, resulting in the addition of 3 instructors to handle needed demand. In addition, the professional staff at Forest Akers, including myself, serve as adjunct professors for Michigan State University teaching all the kinesiology golf classes that are offered during the fall semester. We have 240 MSU students with us for 36 hours of instruction, rules, and on-course activities; many of them new to the game. Many of these students have come back to us saying that they now enjoy playing the game with their immediate family and many have even joined the Student Club Golf team, of which we are the host facility. We have been able to create an environment that is fun for the MSU Students to learn in and they tend to spend time with us playing, going through club fittings, and some even become employees in our operation.

Forest Akers-East also holds a special place in my heart, specifically the pro shop. I met my wife in that pro shop as she was checking in for a golf class I was teaching, and we have been happily married for over 7 years with two beautiful children later (McKenna Grace Harris and Henley Hogan Harris). My kids have grown up on the Forest Akers Golf Courses; my son is an especially big fan of the game (and the TopTracer Range) – always eager to hit the short game area to practice his putting and chipping. I also hosted a "golf clinic" at my daughter's elementary school this past spring to introduce the game of golf

to her classmates. I aspire to create the environment my Pops did for me growing up around the game of golf and know the impact that can have for a young child.

My role as GM and father keep me pretty busy, but as time allows I still compete in a handful of section tournaments annually. The last three years I have played in the Michigan PGA Professional Championship with a most recent finish of T-10 and 2nd alternate position for the 2020 PGA Professional National Championship. My wife was able to watch me play in a tournament for the first time during the Michigan PGA Professional Championship which was a great experience. But, perhaps most rewarding, at the age of nearly 80, my Pops caddied for me and has always been a constant presence on the golf course.