

PGA Coach Motivation Letter – Erich Kliem

Firstly, I am humbled by my nomination for PGA Coach and accept it with gratitude. I would like to start my motivational letter with something that speaks to me every day, namely the new slogan for the PGA of South Africa – **Touching lives through the game of golf** – I think it is a great slogan that will make a big difference for the PGA and all its members. I also think it speaks especially loud in the actions of the coaches, as we introduce so many people to this great game, therefore already making a big difference in such a person's life, as well as providing a lot of golfers with the tools to improve, hereby providing the increased enjoyment of the game that goes along with that.

On this theme of touching lives through the game of golf, I have been fortunate enough to have experienced 5 worldwide trips over the last 5 years, coaching and guiding a visually impaired member of our club, Garrett Slattery, at 2 World Championships and 3 Vision Cups (the latter is based on the Ryder Cup format – a North American team vs a Rest-of-World team). There are three categories of legally blind golfers taking part namely B1, B2 and B3, categorised according to the severity of their sight loss. This year's ISPS Handa Vision Cup took place at Portmarnock Links, Dublin, Ireland. Garrett is in the B2 division and is the top ranked blind golfer in South Africa.

At each one of these events I have been so moved by how these totally blind and visually impaired golfers refuse to let their severe limitations get them down, as well as how the challenge and hope that this game and their coaches/guides can provide - in some cases it literally is a lifeline after many of them fell into severe depression after losing their sight. It was on this trip to Ireland that I truly felt the words of our slogan speak to me louder than ever – witnessing these blind and visually impaired golfers of the two teams helping young blind and visually impaired kids as well as people with other disabilities during one of the off mornings of the week, was touching to say the very least.

Blind golfers and their guides are a team at these events, as it would be impossible for them to play on their own. This has given me the fortune of even earning national colours on the World Championship trips. We had top five finishes in both World Champs and either won or retained the Vision Cup at every team event. Garrett also captained the Rest-of-World team to victory in Ireland.

Finally, just a bit more about myself – I started golf rather late, at 21 while studying Sports Science at Stellenbosch University and the bug bit me hard! I served my apprenticeship at Stellenbosch Golf Club under Graham Webster and Arnold Mentz and have remained with this innovative golf club. I am also fortunate enough to be operating out of a world class studio which was built just under three years ago. I take pride in teaching golfers of all ability levels, from beginner to elite, from three years old to 85+ years old. I also oversee a big junior section of about 70 kids including development kids from 8 local schools. Being fluent in German keeps me on my toes in season time, and I am licensed to be able to offer European visitors the chance to complete their "Platzreife" (Course licence) at our club via a German company.

Another highlight has been having Qatar Masters winner and world top 50 player, Justin Harding, who also had a spectacular debut at the Masters, practice in the studio. The practice obviously did him a world of good, and I certainly also learn a lot from him! He plays out of our club.

Once again thank you for the nomination and hats off to all the coaches out there as well as every single PGA member busy touching lives through the game of golf as much as possible every day.

Yours sincerely,

Erich

