Surround Yourself with Mentors Willing to Share Expertise

Award winners Stephanie Curran and Eli Eilers share their journeys in the golf industry, advice for fellow PGA Members

By Kara Marsom

PGA Magazine is spotlighting recent Section winners of the PGA Assistant Professional of the Year Award. These Q&As with ambitious PGA Members detail their career paths thus far, and allow them to share helpful tips with other PGA Professionals in the early stages of their careers. In this month’s installment, we caught up with PGA Professionals Stephanie Curran and Eli Eilers.

Stephanie Curran, PGA
2018 Midwest PGA Assistant Professional of the Year
PGA Assistant Professional,
Kansas City Country Club,
Mission Hills, Kansas

How has winning the PGA Assistant Professional of the Year Award helped advance your career?
Stephanie Curran: Winning this prestigious award and being recognized among my peers has been an honor. Achieving this milestone so early in my career is an accomplishment that has solidified my credentials, and will undoubtedly serve me well in terms of career advancement. It has also allowed me to quickly expand my networking opportunities with other PGA Professionals, vendors and organizations that impact the golf industry. Future employers will hopefully look at this award as a validation of my ongoing commitment to peak job performance.

What advice do you have for other PGA Assistant Professionals as they progress in their careers?
Curran: It is important to maintain focus on ultimate career goals and make wise decisions in pursuit of those goals. Dedicate yourself to achieve full potential and explore opportunities as they become available across all facets of the golf industry. Surround yourself with mentors willing to share their expertise and take personal interest in guiding you to success. Do not be afraid to falter, and enjoy the relationships that will be forged as you advance in your career.

How important is it for assistants to learn how to run tournaments and outings?
Curran: Running golf tournaments and outings can be daunting, but it is a staple of the job as these events spotlight your club. Effective planning and execution will not go unnoticed. Successful job performance during tournaments will be measured and evaluated by participating members, guests and staff. Pay attention to even the smallest of details, solicit both positive and negative feedback, and show a willingness to adapt to change as needed.

Eli Eilers, PGA
2018 Sun Country PGA Assistant Professional of the Year
First PGA Assistant Professional,
Sonoma Ranch Golf Course,
Las Cruces, New Mexico

How has winning the PGA Assistant Professional of the Year Award helped advance your career?
Eilers: Winning the award has certainly earned me more exposure throughout the Sun Country Section. At the beginning of the year, I became a part of the Section’s Education Committee. Now I mentor six PGA Professionals and Associates. I have also been invited to host GolfGenius Seminars, and featured in Las Cruces community magazines. I am earning experience through Section activities.

What advice do you have for other PGA Assistant Professionals as they progress in their careers?
Eilers: Realize the value of your experiences. If you feel that you are currently underpaid, know that your hard work will pay off in the future. Do not leap into a situation just because of money. I have seen some friends become PGA Head Professionals at the wrong place and/or at the wrong time. Scrutinize each job opportunity and ask your interviewer the same sort of thoughtful questions they’ll be asking you. Take something away from every interview in which you participate – learn from them.

How important is it for assistants to learn how to run tournaments and outings?
Eilers: It is essential! I won the APOY Award based in part on my tournament and league prowess. These events serve many different purposes, including introducing new or beginning golfers to the game. The majority of my lesson income has been derived from my loyal league-goers, many of whom learned about league offerings through tournaments or outings. We offer four different leagues a week.