

SUMMER 2006

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SECTION 2

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ELEGANT OUTDOOR DINING

Area restaurants that set the table for summer

LESSONS FROM A PRO

Golf instructor Dave Rasmussen of New Berlin has taught some of the game's best players

THE
Business
Journal
SERVING GREATER MILWAUKEE



RULES OF THE GAME

It's Sunday at the Masters. Tiger Woods stands over a must-make 15-foot putt. The outcome of golf's most prestigious tournament is on the line. The television camera zooms in, capturing the movement of Tiger's eyes as they trace the path his ball will take on its short journey to the record books. Tiger, to be sure, is in his "zone."

Over the years, every golf analyst who has whispered his way through a Sunday afternoon has defined a moment like this in cerebral terms. If the putt goes in, the analyst talks about focus, mental toughness and the ability to block out everything but the task at hand. If not, he reminds the audience how important it is for the golfer to forget a bad shot and move on.

The message is clear: At the end of the day, championship-caliber golf is played between the ears, not the shoulder blades. A good golf shot, it's implied, is not so much a physical act, the way a buzzer-beater is in basketball or a walk-off home run is in baseball, as a mental one.

But the mental aspect of the game, Dave Rasmussen will tell you, is only half the story, if even that. Good golf begins and ends with a good swing, and a good swing is a physical act, first and foremost.

"If you can't make the physical movements a good golf swing requires, you'll never succeed," Rasmussen says.

Rasmussen's credibility is beyond dispute. He's widely regarded as one of the premier golf instructors teaching today, with a reputation that extends far beyond metro Milwaukee. By his own count, "at least a dozen guys I've taught are on the (Professional Golfers' Association) tour," Rasmussen says. And others used to be.

"Dave has a very comprehensive understanding of the golf swing," says CBS golf analyst Bobby Clampett, who Rasmussen coached during much of his 15-year career on the PGA tour. "He has developed over the years as one of the best instructors in the world."

Rasmussen operates from Moorland Road Golf Center in New Berlin, where he typically logs 60-hour weeks in the summer, 40-hour weeks in the winter. Demand for his services is high, even at \$200 an hour for adults and \$140 an hour for "juniors," who he defines as anyone from 5 years old through college.

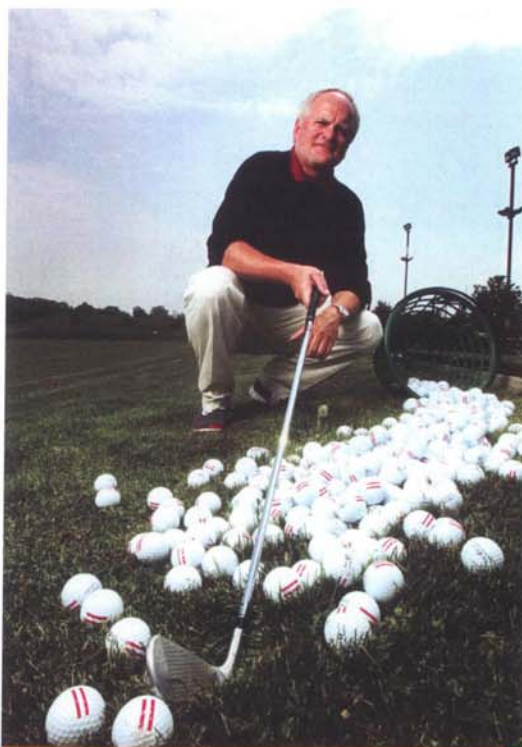
"Most of my clients are at a fairly high income level," Rasmussen says.

Regardless of income, customer satisfaction is high and long-term teacher-student relationships are common.

"Dave is an unbelievably good coach," says Michelle Fick, who was a student of Rasmussen's during her four years as a member of Racine Horlick High School's women's golf team and subsequently as a four-year co-captain of the women's golf team at Minnesota State University-Mankato. "He taught me not to over-think the game. I can't tell you how many times I've stood over a shot and said to myself, 'Now what would Dave tell me to do.' He's just that good."

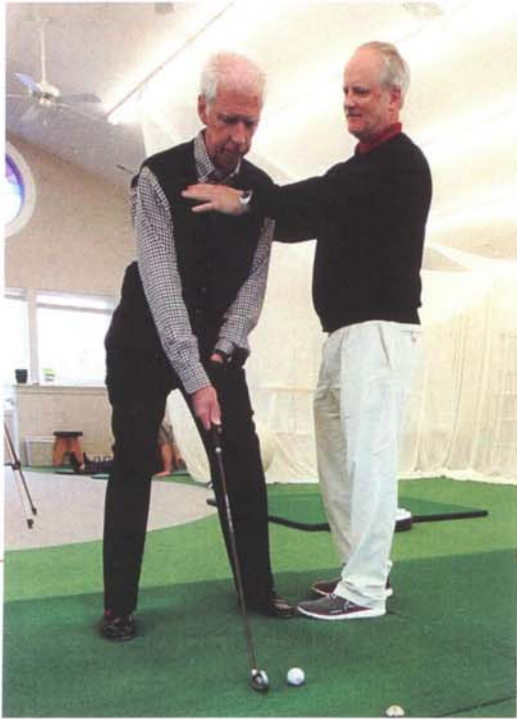
Rasmussen, 51, and a Milwaukee native, first took up golf in 1976, at the age ▶

Legendary golf instructor
Dave Rasmussen preaches
physical fitness to improve
your swing



The mental aspect of the game, Dave Rasmussen will tell you, is only half the story.

By Mike Dries



Dave Rasmussen corrects attorney Richard Reilly's swing.

of 21. He quickly made up for lost time, thanks in part to instruction he received from Hank Haney, one of the best golf teachers in the business. Haney today is Tiger Woods' coach.

Haney saw something special in Rasmussen.

"You have the ability," Rasmussen recalls Haney telling him. "You should think about teaching."

In 1982, Rasmussen heeded Haney's advice and hooked up with his mentor. Rasmussen and Haney wound up teaching together for five years.

Early on in his teaching career, Rasmussen started picking up "tour player overflow," coaching a number of PGA up-and-comers including Mark O'Meara, Rick Fehr, Keith Clearwater and others. Fox Point's Skip Kendall, who's notched 23 top-10 finishes during his 19-year PGA career, and Mark Wilson of Menomonee Falls, who tied for ninth in this year's Chrysler Classic of Tucson, also have profited from Rasmussen's tutelage.

Even so, "Dave really hasn't marketed himself as a tour coach, though he certainly has the qualifications," Clampett said.

"I teach all ranges of golfers," Rasmussen says, adding that he derives his greatest satisfaction from teaching "the guys who don't have a lot of natural talent."

According to Rasmussen, "just about anybody can learn to play the game reasonably well. There aren't a lot of different pieces to a good golf swing, but you have to do them right."

The key, Rasmussen says, is physical fitness. He's a leading proponent of Gyrotonic, a fitness program developed in the 1980s by Juliu Horvath, a principal dancer with the Romanian State Opera. It's designed to lengthen and strengthen muscles, stimulate circulation, and enhance flexibility, joint mobility and coordination. Rasmussen is a certified Gyrotonic trainer and his wife, Jeanie, is in the master training program.

"When you get people who aren't in good physical shape, it's difficult for them to execute the movements that are essential to a good golf swing. If you can improve a golfer's ability to turn, you will see immense improvement," Rasmussen says. "Gyrotonic train-

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<p>nancyBmeeks.com</p>		

ing makes difficult movements easier. It gives golfers the best combination of strength, flexibility and speed, all of which are essential to developing the golf swing to its full potential."

Learning the Gyrotonic system and incorporating its principles into his teaching has made Rasmussen "an even better teacher than he already was," says Matt Aversa, vice president and chief operating officer at Gyrotonic International Headquarters, Dingmans Ferry, Pa.

"Dave has a clear understanding of the functional capacity of the entire body and how it relates to an effective golf swing," Aversa says. "That's why he's a great teacher. Dave doesn't go right to the golf swing. He starts with the body."

Adds Fick, whose Mankato team won two division titles: "You didn't even have to have a golf club in your hand to practice the techniques he taught."

But, Rasmussen emphasizes, you do have to practice.

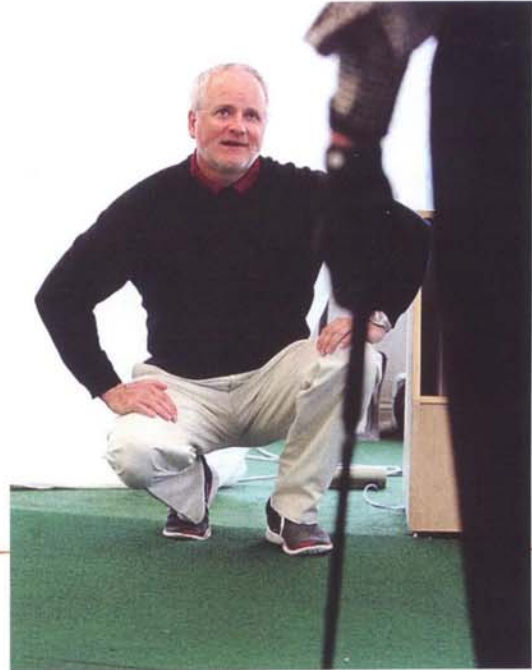
"Golf is a repetitive motion game. If you really stay focused on working on the right things, you will see improvement," he says, explaining that he teaches his students routines they can work on at home.

To become a really good player requires a bit more effort, but is within the reach of virtually every golfer willing to make the commitment, Rasmussen says. And lessons are an essential part of that commitment.

"To achieve a single-digit handicap, you have to have at least two hours a week to work on your game," he says, distinguishing "working on your game" from playing a round or two.

Those who make that commitment not only keep coming back, Rasmussen says, but also account for the sum and substance of his personal marketing strategy.

"When someone succeeds in golf, they generally talk a lot," he says. ■



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MIKE DRIES is a contributing writer for Executive Living.



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