

# Who's away

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*(And what's he putting for?)*

BY JOEL JACKSON, CGCS

**W**ho's away? What's he putting for?

Those were the questions that crackled again and again over Roger Halak's headset as he worked as a spotter during the PGA Seniors Championship last month at the PGA National Club in Palm Beach. His partner at the 10th green, Peter Brooks, called in the scores of the players after they finished the 10th and made their way to the 11th tee.

Halak is assistant superintendent at Boca Del Mar GC in Delray Beach and Brooks, CGCS, is superintendent at The Everglades Club in Palm Beach.

Members of the Palm Beach chapter of the Florida GCSA collectively have earned a reputation as savvy, knowledgeable spotters during ESPN's coverage of the Oldsmobile LPGA Classic at Wycliff C.C. and NBC's coverage of the PGA Seniors Championship.

In fact, they have done such a good job that Lou Safrin, a freelance television producer who has been organizing and coordinating spotters and score reporters at golf events for the past 10 years, wants the

superintendents back next year.

He also invited the Palm Beach crew to handle the Disney Classic in October and the TPC at Eagle Trace next year.

"The Palm Beach group worked out just great," said Safrin, who works with all the networks but mostly NBC.

"Because of their knowledge of golf and golf courses, I had a lot of confidence in their reports and answers. The guys knew where to look and what to look for. It made my job a little easier because I felt comfortable that they were on top of the action.

"Besides that, the guys had a lot of fun doing it."

Using a superintendent chapter has another advantage for Safrin: one-stop shopping.

"Sometimes I have to use three or four contacts to get enough people to meet my needs," he said.

Among his other sources for spotters are collegiate golf teams and local amateur golf associations.

Although flattered by the offer to work the tournaments out of Palm Beach County, Paul Crawford, Palm Beach GCSA external vice president, advised Safrin that other FGCSA chapters around the state could provide equally qualified spotters.

*Members of the Palm Beach GCSA earned \$5,200 for scholarships and research by working as spotters at two televised tournaments*





PAUL CRAWFORD/PALM BEACH GCSA

*Peter Brooks, CGCS, left, and Roger Halak on the 10th green at the PGA Seniors Championship.*

Crawford suggested that a core group of experienced spotters go to the Disney event this fall to help coach and train the Central Florida group and help establish contact with the networks.

Golf tournament organizers provide volunteers for most tournament operations, but the television networks must provide their own communications personnel, and that's where the Palm Beach chapter members come in.

Rich Brogan, formerly superintendent at the Polo Trace Club in Delray Beach, was contacted by Safrin and asked if he could find about 20 people to help with the February LPGA event at Wycliff CC in Lake Worth. He said ESPN would donate \$2,500 to the Palm Beach GCSA for scholarships in return for services rendered.

Brogan took the proposal to the Palm Beach Chapter and the members agreed to participate. Because of a very close contact with the tournament director of the Wycliff event, the chapter was able to buy time to air a GCSAA TV ad for only \$500 and get credit for the members' work during the telecast.

**I**mpressed by the group's efforts, Safrin contacted Brogan a few weeks later to see if the Palm Beach superintendents would be willing to work for NBC at the PGA Championship in April.

Brogan had left the area and he passed the baton to Crawford. This time the Palm Beach Chapter netted a \$2,700 donation

for scholarships and research.

The routines at each tournament were slightly different.

At the LPGA event, 10 spotter-scorer teams walked the back nine with assigned groups of players. The spotters reported scores, club selections, situations, difficulties, etc., back to the control booth so they could track and report the most important action going on. The scorers called in the scores for each player at the completion of each hole.

At the PGA Seniors event, the spotters were stationary — assigned to tee, fairway, and green locations — but essentially reporting back the same critical information needed to produce a logical, coherent, and interesting telecast of the event.

Each location had a coded receptacle for





FGCSA

Part of the crew at the PGA Seniors Championship, from left, Steve Goedereis, Jeff Klontz, Mark Henderson, Paul Crawford, Dale Mitchell, Peter Brooks, Ray Hansen, Scott Spara, Richard Colyer, Brad Stuart, Vince Meade.

the spotter to plug into the “wire” that ran throughout the course and back to the “high resolution trailer.”

At each green there were two lines: one marked “Away” and the other marked “Score.”

Safrin and his wife, Patti, are responsible for the “high resolution board” in the “High Res” trailer, which provides the updated scores and information shown at commercial “cuts.” Lou handles the “Away” line and Patti oversees the “Score” line. This freelance production couple is a fixture at many of golf’s televised events.

Each day, the spotters met at the Safrins’

trailer two hours before air time for a briefing and to receive their assignments. They were given “color sheets” to help identify the players by the color of their clothing.

At 45 minutes before air time, everyone had to be at his assigned spot for roll call. Then they got a 30-minute break. Everyone was back on line 15 minutes before air time and stayed on line for the duration of the broadcast.

At each green, the spotter on the “Away” line was responsible for providing the putting order and the score the player was trying to attain with that stroke when asked “Who’s away and what is he putting for?”

The scorer called in the scores of the players as soon as they completed play on that hole. Spotters at par-three tees and at fairway locations on par fours and par fives gave club selections and shot results when asked.

“Based on the proposed schedule of events that we know about now, we stand to raise almost \$10,000 by working these tournaments,” said Crawford.

Actually, if the FGCSA worked all 15 tour events in Florida and earned an average donation of \$2,500 per event, the association could raise \$37,500 annually for scholarships and research.

“The biggest hook is the fun we had doing it!” says Crawford. “There are guys asking if they can be assured of working at next year’s events based on their ‘seniority’ established this year!”

“There’s no reason we can’t develop this thing statewide and even nationally. With our knowledge of golf courses and our love for the game in general, superintendents are naturals to provide excellent communications to enhance televised golf events.”

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