



PAUL STUART

MY JOURNEY TO 30 YEARS

From caddie to head PGA professional



What are some of the most memorable moments you have had while working at the London Golf Club, and how have those experiences shaped you personally and professionally?

Over the 30 years at the club, I have had many great experiences. Winning the Tillman Trophy on the Heritage Course was a memorable few days. Receiving great support from the members and my colleagues and ultimately winning, really helped shape my amateur career.

Hosting Jack Nicklaus on a corporate event was a pretty cool experience to say the least. Watching him hit shots up close whilst he performed a clinic was inspiring.

Lastly, and it's not so much of a moment, to see some of the people I have mentored through the years thriving and doing well as they have progressed in their careers really means a lot. If I have helped someone, even in a small way, I enjoy that.

How has the golf industry changed since you first started working at London Golf Club, and how have you adapted to those changes?

Without a doubt, advancements in technology is where I have seen the most changes. Range Finders, Coaching (e.g Trackman) and even clothing. When I started playing we all had wool pringle jumpers... These days we are all wearing moisture wicking and stretch technology. In terms of clubs, balls and equipment, I am hitting it further than I was 30 years ago!

As a coach, I would recommend being open to new ideas and to keep researching the progress there is in coaching and club technology. It's important to

challenge yourself and to try to take some form of self-development, whether that is following a different teaching style or maybe understanding an element of the game better. An example of that is different swing trends: when I first started, Nick Faldo's golf swing was seen as a good model to emulate. Now, using data, we can accurately measure why players are successful and understand biomechanics a lot more. This shows how the use of technology has really enhanced all elements of coaching. It's amazing to think that, when I first started, we had just started using video yet now we have all got video analysis cameras on our mobile phones. Keeping on top of advances in technology is vital for any golf coach. Using launch monitor technology such as Trackman and coaching apps have changed the structure of golf lessons. I am no longer reliant on watching the ball flight, the use of technology now validates my coaching instinct.

Could you talk about how you got started at London Golf Club, and what your initial role was?

In August '93, I was playing in a club match. My opponent happened to be a friend and asked what I was doing through the winter. At the time I was aspiring to be a pro and I remember he said to me "I've got a caddie job at London Golf Club with the caddie master Dean, do you fancy it?"

To which I replied, "yeah, why not!". I had no idea what lay ahead. A week later I came for an interview and naively underestimated what the club was all about. I flew straight past security as I arrived, who then started to chase me down the drive, I carried on driving and took the first turn into the

Greenkeeping compound, which I thought was the clubhouse!

Anyway, following a quick chat with Dean and a six month job over the winter to fund my amateur career for golf... 30 years later here I am!

Initially, I started to caddy at the club for about five years until about 1998. From there I was lucky to experience the soft opening of the club where I carried for Jack Nicklaus Jr., who was playing alongside his father. I remember being about 20/21 years old and looking around wondering "how am I here right now?".

Through this time I started to build a good relationship with the Nagahara family (original owners of the club). They were really encouraging towards my amateur career. The pinnacle of this time was to go on and represent England at Sunningdale and play alongside Luke Donald.

I then started to transition into the pro shop as an assistant PGA Pro, in doing so I qualified in just under four years while working at the club. This then lead into the role of head PGA pro for LGC which came alongside the club's current ownership who took over the club.

In 2009, the position for director of golf became vacant and after a bit of 'umming and arring' it seemed like the natural next step for my career, as I had stopped competing in tournaments. Eventually, I was appointed as director of golf and went on to host the likes of the European Open, Volvo World Matchplay and Open Qualifying which was an amazing experience and a big test for me in my role. It was a real honour to be the director of golf when the European Open was played here in 2009. There were great crowds and



a good field, including a young Rory (McIlroy). To be leading the team was very exciting and I really enjoyed that.

Fast forward to 2018, the opportunity arose to create and Head up the 'LGC Academy'. I am passionate about developing the coaching platform for both members and visitors with some exciting plans in the pipeline.

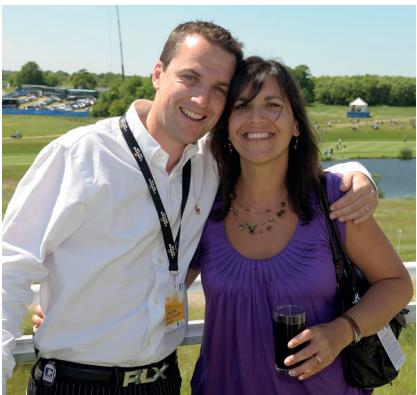
As I'm sure you can see, my journey at the club has been far from straightforward, but I have enjoyed every moment so far and look forward to what the next chapter will bring.

Looking back on your career at London Golf Club, what are some of the achievements you are most proud of, and how did you accomplish them?

I would say the first thing that springs to mind has to be more of a personal achievement in my career. In 2019 I was honoured to be named the PGA South Region Coach of the Year. To be recognised by this after putting so much hard work into my lessons and coaching was a great accomplishment.

Throughout my career, I have been really lucky to have received great support and developed many strong working relationships within the industry. I have always felt that I have had a good rapport with the membership which is important to me as we have tried to grow the club since opening. The support I have received from these different quarters helped us navigate some of the more challenging times at the club.

I started in 2008, working with a young player who went on to win the 2008 English Girls Championship. I have got a bit of a reputation as to having a strong short game and this was the area we focused on which helped her achieve a success.



I really enjoy helping people through my coaching to achieve their goals, be it a professional, top amateur or a club golfer.

Other challenges we've faced revolve around our renowned English weather. I can recall a period five or six years ago when we had a spell of wintery weather resulting in the club being closed. A winter that just kept coming with a seemingly endless spell of snow and ice.

As we are quite high up and are two or three degrees colder than other clubs, it didn't really shift from here for a long time and that was challenging.

Weather in the golf industry is always a factor, from cold spells and rain to hot spells like the one we had last summer when we had to keep the golf courses alive and in a playable condition.

Finally, how do you reflect on your 30 years at the club?

I have been very fortunate to build a career in golf doing something that I love and enjoy. As the saying goes, "find a job you enjoy doing and you will never have to work a day in your life", and that is how I have felt at London Golf Club over the last 30 years.

The experiences I have had, the people I have worked with and the people I have met have all shaped where I am right now. I am looking forward to the next chapter in my career, especially if we are chosen to host the Ryder Cup in the future.

In our industry of hospitality, entertainment and leisure, you've got to be prepared to work hard. You have to quickly realise that you're going to work some unsociable hours but it's important not to lose sight of the fact that you have gone into the industry because you love playing golf, and you should take advantage of the chance to enjoy a game whenever you can.



The winning team of the March invitation





RAPID FIRE QUESTIONS

What is your favourite hole at LGC?

The 5th hole on the Heritage course. It's a testing risk and reward hole and gives you options on how to play it.

Who is the best player you have played with?

Hands down, Adam Scott. I don't think that requires too much explanation.

Do you have a favourite event throughout your tenure at LGC?

If I had to pick one... it would have to be the 2009 European Open. The club was packed with 30,000 plus people, the atmosphere was electric, and the place came alive. It was incredible to see the potential of the club for such big events.

