



***THIS IS ONE OF THE FIVE AWARD-WINNING  
TEACHING BEST PRACTICES SPONSORED BY  
YAMAHA***

*Monday, November 27, 2017*

***Mark Croft***, the 2009 Southwest PGA Section Youth Player Development Award winner, is the PGA Owner/Operator of the Mark Croft Golf Academy and the PGA Head Professional at Las Barrancas Golf Course in Yuma, Arizona.



## **Offer Individual and Group Adaptive Golf Instruction to Veterans**

### **Mark Croft on the importance of offering individual and group adaptive golf instruction to veterans:**

I feel the game of golf can be very therapeutic and the benefits of participation are far-reaching. After contacting our local VA and Chamber of Commerce, I was joined by 2014 PGA Teacher of the Year, Kathy Gildersleeve-Jensen, as we combined efforts with PGA HOPE (Helping Our Patriots Everywhere) to conduct a six-week adaptive golf program specifically geared towards disabled veterans. I always said that golf is a sport for everyone, and as a recent amputee myself, I felt I could communicate with these men and women on multiple levels; most importantly, on how to play the game of golf and the benefits of doing so. The program kicked off with a media day to promote this very special event. The participants would arrive at our facility on six consecutive Wednesdays to learn everything from the proper setup and golf swing, to short game, putting and on-course management. We ensured all the proper equipment and apparatus were on hand for use by those students who needed them. Ensuring these folks were as comfortable as possible was vital, as learning the game is tough enough under the best of circumstances. Considering the variety of physical disabilities these heroes are living with makes their comfort even more important. The attention we received from media, sponsors and the local community has ensured additional clinics of this kind will be planned. The more veterans we can touch with our great game, the better the game is for it.

### **Mark Croft on the business impact of offering individual and group adaptive golf instruction to veterans:**

The impact of offering golf programs to disabled veterans goes beyond our club's bottom line. The good will and satisfaction that comes from doing something from the heart is immeasurable. With that being said, 6,000,000 disabled veterans is a sizable market to consider and gaining even a small percentage of them as regular golfers can have a positive impact on your business. Not to mention the great effect you will have on their lives. With a dozen individuals attending our pilot program, four of whom had never played golf, we had a manageable sized group. Five of these 12 people are now playing twice per week and they're telling their friends about the game. Out of the 12 new golfers, two joined our men's league and three of their kids joined our youth program. Also, we've sold a few putters and wedges, and even gained some individual lessons. We have also been working with the VAs in Phoenix and Tucson, with programs that began in both locations early in 2017. In addition, "Red, White, and Blue," a nationwide group committed to veterans and their families, has asked that we run a new program this summer. Getting these families at our facility on a regular basis will improve their lives, while introducing the game and our club to many new customers. The program is free, but the residual business sure to come from growing the game is something I strive for with every program I facilitate.

