

# Area golf pros mix work and play

BY MIKE TERRELL

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The old "Tin Cup" images of barnstorming golf pros that traveled around the country following the weather patterns and golf tournaments are about as hazy as a hot summer day.

The popular Kevin Costner golf movie portrayed the local pro as a kind of nomadic anti-hero

that sacrificed all for the game.

Today's local northern Lower Michigan golf pro is likely to be a business major that is employed year-round at an area resort and is current with all phases of the game from the business to the playing side.

The love of the game in most instances was what led them to become a golf pro, but, unlike Tin Cup, they

have learned to balance that competitive desire to play with devoting time to running the business. And, make no mistake; golf is a big business in northern Michigan.

Golf Magazine has rated northern Lower Michigan as "among the top six golf spots in the nation." It brings in hundreds of thousands of tourist dollars every summer to our region. Resorts have staked their reputations on the quality and variety of golf they can provide to the golfing public, and behind all of that stands the golf professional in charge of the daily operation.

The majority of golf pros range in age from early 30s to mid-40s, and most have a business or marketing degree. One other trait most share is that they feel they don't get enough competitive playing time anymore, but also recognize that goes along with the increased duties of becoming a head professional.

"I do miss the playing time and the competition," said Chuck Olson, head professional for Leelanau County's King's Challenge Golf Club and Sleeping Bear Golf Club, and part owner of The Leelanau Club at Bahle Farms.

He attended Ferris State and was one of the first graduates from the school's highly acclaimed Professional Golf Management program, one of only a handful in the country.

"My duties have evolved more to the administrative

side now. I work more with money now than people," explained the 47-year-old.

Olson oversees both the King's Challenge and Sleeping Bear courses and stays in touch with the Leelanau Club operation. He still does a little teaching and plays in a few selected tournaments around the region as time permits. An active member of the Professional Golf Association (PGA), he's also served on the board of the Northern Michigan Chapter numerous times.

Brad Dean, long-time director of golf and head professional at Crystal Mountain, could be a poster boy for the Michigan Section PGA. He's not only excelled at the teaching side of the business, Dean is one of the top-playing professionals in the state with awards and honors to prove it including being named one of the top three instructors in Michigan by Golf Digest.

Born and raised in northern Michigan, Dean grew up in Bellaire. He didn't grow up in a golfing family, but was taken under the wing of golf cart mechanic Andy DeCamillio at Bellaire Golf Club who taught him the finer points of the game.

"He's deceased now, but, boy, he knew more about the game than anyone I've encountered since," said Dean, who took up the game because he thought it looked cool. "He got me going."

He started out playing for the fun of it. Bellaire High School had no golf team, so it wasn't until college, where he majored in business and marketing, that he discovered the competitive side of golf. He joined his college team and upon grad-



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**Brad Dean, right, is the golf director and head professional at Crystal Mountain.**

uation decided to attend the PGA school and become a professional.

"I knew from the time I was 14 that all I wanted to be was a club pro," said the 38-year-old, who has successfully catapulted Crystal's golf school into one of the top programs in the nation.

Robert Todd, who calls himself "the original Tin Cup," is starting his third season as the head professional at the Grand Traverse Resort and Spa.

"I really wear lots of hats, but one of my main duties is to be visible and talk with the members and customers," he said. "When you come through the door of the clubhouse, this is just like that old TV show 'Cheers,' we know your name — or will in short time."

In addition, RT, as he likes to be called, teaches golf, runs tournaments and outings and oversees the pro shop. Growing up in a golfing family, he knew from the eighth grade that he wanted to become a club pro.

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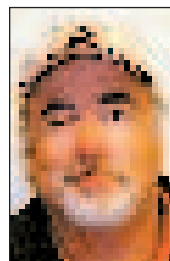
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