

WEEKLY SPOTLIGHT ON GOLF

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Golfers from coast to coast cheering methods taught by Kip Puterbaugh

By **Tod Leonard**, STAFF WRITER

CARLSBAD — Scott Simpson is no braggart, but he's been saying for years he has the best teacher around in Kip Puterbaugh.

Simpson's good friend, Larry Mize, finally believed it this year, and the 1987 Masters champion has emerged from a horrendous slump to find his game with Puterbaugh.

"Kip is very much underrated," Simpson said.

The trouble is, Puterbaugh doesn't have a segment on The Golf Channel. He doesn't have a trademark hat or a distinctive accent. He hasn't taught Tiger Woods. He doesn't live in Florida with most of pro golf's population.

"If he was at a top club in Orlando," Simpson said, "there's no doubt guys would be flocking to him. The more guys you have, the more chance you have of other guys coming to see you."

But golfers are a funny lot when it comes to habits, and the Southerners can't bring themselves to make the trek to Carlsbad.

And since Puterbaugh, the director of the Aviara Golf Academy, isn't about to vacate his lovely spot along Batiquitos Lagoon, having a successful little golf factory will have to suffice for now.

"I want to build on this, but that will happen when it happens," Puterbaugh said.

In the 10 years since Puterbaugh moved from The Golf University at Pala Mesa, he has steadily constructed a stable of teachers and students that rivals any in the county.

On any given day on the driving range at Aviara, you can see PGA Tour pros such as Simpson, Dennis Paulson and Dave Stockton Jr. fine-tuning with Puterbaugh. Chris Riley, the San Diego native, pops in occasionally from Las Vegas to work with his instructor, Bob Knee.

Jenna Daniels, the 2000 NCAA women's champion, did much of her work at Aviara, as has 2000 California State Amateur champion Nick Jones.

Puterbaugh coaches most of the starters, including two of his sons, on the La



Kip Puterbaugh is director of golf at Aviara Golf Academy. Dan Trevan / Union-Tribune

if the clunky video systems from a decade ago could only provide modest feedback. Today's technology can break down a swing into incremental movements and compare it to those of the world's best golfers.

"The feedback is instantaneous, and that is really critical," Puterbaugh said.

"We're not trying to reinvent the golf swing; everything has been done and said before. But we're trying to put it together within the framework of the individual. What am I going to do to make it better for that particular student?"

Most teachers would profess that desire, but Simpson said Puterbaugh is unique in his ability to achieve it.

"It's the techniques he teaches that I agree with more," said Simpson, who's been working with Puterbaugh since

with Butch Harmon, Mize had gotten out of sync with his golf swing — too slow at the top, too fast in the transition and too slow at the bottom.

"He was very messed up . . . totally lost," Puterbaugh said.

At first, the two worked by phone and video exchanges through the mail. They united in Chicago before the Western Open; Mize made a trip to Aviara; and then Puterbaugh visited him in Georgia.

The cuts turned into weekend paychecks, and Mize's confidence rose.

"I'm too much of a perfectionist, and he was really able to simplify things for me," Mize said. "He cleared my mind of thoughts so I could focus on playing. There are certain things I know I can't do, and I've learned that the hard way."

The navoff came last month at the Mar-