



Q&A

with Kip Puterbaugh, PGA
The Aviara
Golf Academy

What do you recall about your first experience with golf?

"I was probably eight or nine years old going out with my dad and my brothers. My dad was a veterinarian, and he loved it. He played a lot and that helped grow my interest. That and the fact that Paul Runyan was the pro at LaJolla at the time. Gene Littler and Chuck Courtney played there a lot. You see players like that around and it helped my interest tremendously. That was a wow. I was hooked."

What was your first job?

"Working for my dad at the veterinary office cleaning out the dog kennels. I knew pretty quickly I didn't want to do that. I didn't want to be a vet."

What attracted you to teaching?

"I was going to be a player. That was my number one goal. That wasn't working out, so I had to get a job. I ran out of money so I got a job in the golf business. I found out immediately that I enjoyed the teaching side of the business. For a rookie, I did pretty well, I built up a nice clientele and the more I talked the more I realized that was what I wanted to do. I just always enjoyed that aspect of the business more than being a club pro. It was comfortable for me."

What was your first lesson like?

"It was probably the easiest lesson I've ever given. The club champion came up to me and the pro wasn't in. He said "kid, I can't hit a sand shot, can you give me a sand lesson." I'm a rookie, he's the club champ, but I had him go down in the bunker and watched him hit a few shots. His club face was dead square. I told him to open the club face, he popped a couple

out right by the hole, told me thanks and walked away."

Who is or was the best teacher/communicator that you have ever been around?

"Paul Runyan was great. He was so enthusiastic. It's like the Brad Faxon line, "It's better to be committed than to be correct." Runyan was committed. He loved it. He ate, drank and slept golf. His enthusiasm was contagious. I couldn't be as rah-rah as he was, but I can get into it."

What are the most common mistakes that young teachers make?

"I'd say it's not understanding the whole chain of events that takes place in the golf swing. I also see a lack of attention to grip and posture. The basics sometimes get overlooked when they are searching for a bigger problem. Sometimes it's just the basics."

Who Were the Biggest Professional Influences in your Career?

"Paul Runyan and Gene Littler. I talked a bit about Paul and his enthusiasm. The fact that I got to go out at 13 years old and play golf with Gene and he carried his bag on his shoulder just like I did. How many kids can go out and say they played with the U.S. Open Champ as a kid? The fact that I got to do that as a kid was a pretty big influence toward getting me into the game. I'd also have to say Bill Ogden, my first professional, had a big influence as well."

Who makes up your ultimate foursome and where are you playing?

"I'm with my dad and two brothers. Without a doubt, we'd be playing Cypress Point."