

Cindy Reid History



In order to be a great teacher, you have to be able to relate to your students. I'm able to do that, because, like many of the people who come to my Academy for lessons, I didn't take up golf until I was an adult, age twenty-four to be exact. Before that, I was a skier, a basketball player, a fast-pitch softball player, and an elementary school physical-education teacher; I'd never paid much attention to golf.

In order to pay my rent and make my monthly car payment, I took a part-time job as a beverage cart girl at a local golf club. That's when I first took an interest in the game.

Even then, I still didn't see what was the big deal? The ball was sitting still, for goodness sake. All you had to do was hit it. I'd been a fast-pitch softball player in college, and more than a few my pitches had been clocked at over ninety miles per hour. Once, during a goof-off afternoon when we were sharing a field with the men's baseball team, I challenge a couple of the guys to try to hit one of my pitches. The team's best hitter gave it a go but didn't have much luck. The fact that his name was Barry Bonds didn't mean much to me at the time. I understood that hitting a moving target was tough, even for the best in the world. But the golf ball was sitting on the ground right in front of you.

It wasn't until I tried it for the first time that I realized how wrong I had been. Hitting a golf ball the distance and direction you wanted was one of the toughest athletic feats I'd ever attempted.

That feeling, that competitive charge was something I sorely missed. I grew up as the ninth of eleven children in a household where you had to compete to survive. My father was a former amateur boxer and my mom had competed as a figure skater. So athletic competition was a part of my life from the time I could walk. I had competed with my siblings since the time I was a toddler. That competitiveness had paid off for me in the form of a college scholarship, as well as a chance to compete on the U.S. Junior National Ski Team. At Arizona State University, I played basketball and softball while earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in early childhood education but I know from the beginning that I had no athletic future beyond college. There was no WNBA and no outlet beyond recreation leagues for women softball players. After graduation I found that, for the first time in my life, I had no competitive athletic outlet. Golf changed that.

I decided to give the silly game a try. With \$100 from the tips I'd made, I assembled a set of clubs out of the lost-and-found bin and set out mimicking the swings of the golfers I saw on the course. It never dawned on me that these people were not great or even good players and that copying their golf swings was a mistake. Fortunately, a kind pro named Ed Oldfield, one of the nation's finest instructors, took me under his wing.

"Hit it as far and as hard as you can," Ed told me during our first lesson together. I did as instructed, and the ball flew a decent distance.

"Again," he said. I did as I was told.

"Okay," Ed said after I had hit a dozen balls as hard as I could. "If you have the desire and the determination to work hard and learn this game, I'll coach you. If not, don't come back."

Not only did Ed teach me the fundamentals of the golf swing, he taught me how to play the game, how to conduct myself on the golf course, how to score, and how to win. I practiced on the driving range, the putting green, and the chipping area for two years before I ever played my first round of golf. Before school I was out hitting balls, and I'd slip out and roll a few putts during lunch. After school I was out at the course until dark. Ed would come by and offer tips and drills, and I'd go off and practice for a few more hours.

I did this, nonstop, for twenty-four months, and I loved every minute of it. My financial situation hadn't improved – I didn't play during that two-year period because I couldn't afford it – But I had a new challenge, a new athletic endeavor that I knew I would never outgrow, and I loved it. I had no aspirations of turning pro. It wasn't even a dream. I simply wanted to learn the game for me, for my own self-confidence, my own competitive needs, and my desire to be outdoors and in the company of fun, funny, like-minded people. Golf gave me all of that, and a lot more.

When I finally did play, I shot an 82 in my first round from the men's tees at the TPC of Scottsdale. Ed paid for my green fees. He also gave me a set of Pings clubs he had in stock. But more than anything he gave me confidence in myself as a golfer and a person.

I played with a couple of LPGA touring pros that first day, and they were stunned when we totaled the scores. You weren't supposed to break 90 your first time out. You weren't supposed to break 120 in your first round. I later learned that ninety – five percent of all golfers have never broken 100. I thought 82 was okay, but I wasn't satisfied with it. I could do better.

A year later I was playing, and winning, on the Players West Tour, a mini-tour for aspiring tour players. I had made it to the finals of LPGA qualifying in my first attempt, but having only played golf for one year, I lacked the experience to compete against the greatest women golfers in the world. After two years on the Players West Tour, I played a season on the Japanese LPGA Tour, then returned home where I played four years on the Futures Tour. During those four years, I won 4 professional events and was top 5 for 4 consecutive years on the Futures Tour. In addition, I had the opportunity to play in 12 LPGA TOUR events on sponsors exemptions.

What I didn't realize when I made the decision to play golf for a living was how tough the lifestyle would be. Traveling every week, living out of hotels and suitcases with no social life outside the ropes was a little more than I'd bargained for. I loved playing, but I disliked tour life. After seven years, I decided I should take my career in another direction. I had loved being a school teacher but hated the bureaucracy and stodginess of the system. I loved golf but disliked the travel and social isolation. Maybe there was a way to combine the good parts of both.

My first job as a golf instructor was at the TPC Golf Schools, where I worked alongside Jay Lumpkin, one of the gurus of the modern game. Watching him teach was like watching Mozart compose a symphony. It was another lesson that would serve me well as my career progressed.

The reason why I teach golf is more than anything, I love it. I wake up every morning and I can't wait to get to the Academy to help my next student. Maybe it's just my nurturing nature or the fact that I always wanted to be a teacher. Whatever it is, I love what I do. I love what I do. I came to the game late in life; played golf competitively for seven years; and learned to teach from some of the greatest instructors in history. But above all, I do it because I can't imagine doing anything else.