

Article published Sep 18, 2007

## Out-of-the-way treasure

### Second year as one of '50 best golf instructors'

While she was driving home to Evansville over the Fourth of July, Fort Wayne golf teacher Suzanne Noblett stopped at a little antique store. Her hobby is collecting golf memorabilia, and she was directed toward a beat-up golf bag in the corner.

"There's junk wood, junk iron and junk putter, and then, 'Oh, what is this?' " Noblett said. It turned out to be a Tommy Armour Blade putter in mint condition. Noblett bought the bag for \$26 and estimates the putter is worth between \$500 and \$600. She knows that some of the best deals can often be found in out-of-the-way places. "That's what's fun about it," she said.

She's sort of an out-of-the way treasure herself. The owner of Noblett Golf Services was recently named one of the country's 50 best golf instructors for the second year in a row by Golf Range Magazine. She was also named the LPGA's Midwest Section Teacher of the Year for 2006-07. A good golf pro might usually be found someplace warmer, but Noblett loves it here.

"I've had friends who are in bigger markets who ask if I'm going to stay here," she said. "I always tell them that Fort Wayne is a great place, the people are wonderful and all you have to do is come and see it. It feels like home. If you are a great teacher, no matter where you are, people will come find you."

Plenty have found Noblett, who estimates she works 70-80 hours a week during the peak golf season and a solid 40-50 during the off-season at Colonial Oaks Golf Course and Bobick's Golf Headquarters on Bluffton Road.

"Most great instructors get their reputations from working with an outstanding player," said Fort Wayne Country Club pro Bill Kratzert Jr., who brought Noblett to Fort Wayne in 1994. "She doesn't have to have an outstanding pupil to be an outstanding teacher. She will devote the same amount of effort to a beginner as she would to a scratch player. She is a passionate teacher." And Noblett prefers to be called a teacher rather than a coach, in part following in the footsteps of her father, a business college president in Evansville who started her on the game when she was 6 or 7. She tagged along with his buddies to caddy.

Noblett developed into a five-time Evansville city champion and was playing on the LPGA's Futures Tour when she realized she'd rather teach than play. "When you are playing, it's all about you, and it better be," she said. "I just felt for me personally it wasn't as fulfilling. I just enjoy helping people. I love teaching everybody else how to play."

All her lessons are customized, to the point Noblett has a storage locker full of gadgets to correct swing flaws or simply teach proper technique. She's always studying the hot new piece equipment and looking for new teaching strategies. That doesn't mean she's looking for more complex methods.



Fort Wayne golf professional Suzanne Noblett, right, works with Huntertown golfer Jim Williams during a lesson at Colonial Oaks, 8218 Huguenard Road.

By Brian Tombaugh of The News-Sentinel

“I’ve found that the best teaching comes from how simple you can make something that is already difficult,” she said. “How can you simplify this game so that it makes sense to everybody? What works for some people doesn’t work for everyone.” One of her professional goals is to be recognized as one of the country’s top teachers by making other lists. That may take some luck, but Noblett is good at making her own luck, such as finding more than 100 pieces of memorabilia she’ll eventually donate. “I’ve been very fortunate to have the opportunities I’ve had,” she said. “That makes me very lucky.” And Fort Wayne is lucky to have her.

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9/19/2007