

meet the pro

BUDDY SASS, PGA

interviewed by: Delaney Cha



How long have you been playing golf?

I'm 61 now, and I've been playing since I was 10, so about 51 years.

What made you interested in the sport? Who got you interested in the sport?

My dad was a golfer and my parents bought a beach home in Ocean Pines in 1969. Just about the only thing you could do in Ocean Pines in those days was play golf. We would go to the beach during the day, then at night we would come back and I would play golf until I couldn't see until it was too dark to play anymore. That's how I started, and I wanted to be good enough so I could play with my dad.

Was your father a good golfer?

He was a pretty good golfer. He wasn't a scratch golfer, but he was a 7-10 handicap and he liked to play on the weekends. My goal for me was to be good enough to play with him on Saturdays.

What's your favorite course that you've played?

There's a course in Scotland called Kingsbarns, which is just around the corner from St. Andrews course. Old Head in Ireland would be a close second. Kingsbarns is like the 18th hole of Pebble Beach on 10 holes. They have many holes right on the water similar to Pebble Beach and it is very cool. Old Head was similar as well, with it being right on the water.

When did you receive your PGA Certification?

I went to High Point University and played golf for them and stayed at the local club there which is now called High Point Country Club. I worked there for about six

or eight months when I first got out of school. From there, I went to Cary, North Carolina and worked at a course called Lochmere and Wildwood Green. I came back to Ocean Pines in 1987. That was the year that I became a Class A Professional. I was an assistant pro but I was fully certified working for Hunt Crosby at Ocean Pines.

What's a brief timeline of the courses you worked at?

In 1987 and 1988, I worked for Hunt as an assistant at Ocean Pines. Then in 1989, I moved and worked with Frank Scott and built the Beach Club. I was a construction manager there and that opened in 1991. Hunt ended up becoming the Pro at the Beach Club and I became the Pro at Ocean Pines. I was at Ocean Pines from '91 to '96. I then moved to Green Fields Golf Park which eventually became Deer Run and I was there in '97 and '98. Then in January of '99 I came to Ocean City Golf Club and I have been here ever since.

What would you like to see more of in the sport?

I think golf is doing great. What I really like to see and what I really think is healthy and good for the sport, and makes me happy is all of the things that are going on for kids. When I was a kid, you had to search to find tournaments and things and not necessarily easy to get into. It was kind of a niche thing that your dad did. It is much more mainstream now and I think the opportunities for kids is great, and I hope that continues. It is extremely healthy for the sport. I don't think it's really anything new, but I'm just amazed at this area for the opportunities. As a kid growing up playing golf in Ocean Pines, I would have to travel to Dover, Chestertown, or even across the bridge to find tournaments to play in. Now there's tournaments everywhere, the high schools have strong golf programs and so do the middle schools.

What is the most impactful lesson that you have learned in your time in the industry?

In all my time, and I've been in it for a long time, the most apparent is that I get this unique opportunity to see 2-400 different people everyday. It gives a perspective on just seeing them, getting to them, and about

their lives, get to know a little bit about them. What great people we have on the Eastern Shore, just the goodness of the humanity. For every difficult customer that I have, I have a hundred that are easy, and great, and have wonderful stories. To be able to know a little bit about them and their lives and the stuff that goes on, and every good thing that they do. It's wonderful to see the goodness of the area in the people.

What's your vision for the club over the next few years?

What I see for the club is a kind of renaissance. The club in the past couple years and what I see for the future is a very broad membership, with a lot of people. We are up to around 3,000 members. We have a great large group of people who are like a family, and call this place home. We refurbished the building, we're doing work on the golf course. We're remaking ourselves and I think our root has always been a place of membership where people can come together. By Ocean City Golf Club focusing on being a melting pot, we are able to do a lot of upgrades. The course has never been better, and we have been doing a lot of upgrades. New building, new kitchens, new everything. I feel like after 62 years, we're ready for another 62 years.

Why do you think mentorship and leadership is instrumental to the sport?

Golf is one of the few sports where you have a student and a coach. It might be dad, it might be mom, it might be an instructor, but whatever it is you always start with someone showing you how to play, that's teaching you the ropes. The fact that this is one-on-one in golf, it's a close relationship. If you're coaching a large football team, it's one coach to 10 or so kids, but golf tends to be one-on-one. I think values, right practices, etiquette is taught early on. It's a game of integrity and you learn to keep your own score at a young age. You call the penalty on yourself. I think because it is one-on-one, it provides a great atmosphere for mentorship, and the opportunity for leadership. It further creates an atmosphere where the game improves, cause you have experienced people helping inexperienced people which help bring the values of the game along.