



There's little doubt that Daryl MacLean picked a sweet spot to blossom as a golf professional when he settled in at Cherry Hill Club.

The 33-year-old PGA of Ontario member enjoyed his first taste of cottage club life in 2007 when he arrived at the Niagara area golf club as a teaching professional and has since developed firm roots with members and their children.

MacLean's dedication to the private club that services a membership that is 75 per cent American and his contagious passion for the game has paid off as the winner of both the PGA of Ontario and PGA of Canada awards as the country's Class "A" Professional of the Year for 2015.

"I'm still finding it hard to believe that I have been recognized in this way," says the Burlington, ON native. "When you work hard all summer at a job that you love with a terrific membership and top notch team in the golf shop it doesn't really seem like work, so to receive these honors from the PGA of Ontario and the PGA of Canada is surprising and humbling."

Daryl didn't play his first round of golf until he was 17-year-old when he teed it up on a summer's afternoon with his father at Deerfield Golf Club in Oakville. Soon after he picked up a job in the backshop at Burlington G&CC and there was no turning back. He bought a junior membership for

the City of Hamilton courses at Chedoke Civic GC and King's Forest GC where he played every summer day and won the junior club championship in 2001.

At the age of 21, Daryl turned professional while attending Brock University where he went the unusual route of earning a Bachelor of Business Administration in 2005 rather than applying to a Professional Golf Management program. MacLean turned pro in 2004 and earned his PGA of Canada Class "A" designation in 2010. He worked as an assistant professional at Legends on the Niagara, for the City of Hamilton courses, and Burlington G&CC before taking on a full-time associate position at Cherry Hill in May of 2012.

Founded in 1922 by several Buffalo businessmen, Cherry Hill Club and its Walter J. Travis design, is unique in that its membership remains 75 per cent American. The majority of the 300 members and their families live in the Buffalo area and cottages on nearby Lake Erie, so the cottage course remains busy from Memorial Day to Labour Day. "Most of the members who come out to play are on vacation so it's very laid back and they always have a joke for you or a warm sincere greeting." It's also very much a family club and along with running nine and 18-hole ladies leagues and men's night, Daryl oversees a summer junior program on Tuesdays from 7 am to 12 pm, where the only ones allowed out on the course and practice area are the 100 or so juniors who attend.

"It's a lot of fun, long days. I do it for the love of the game and the great people who you get to meet along the way," says MacLean, who lives five minutes from the course in Ridgeway from April to October and lives with his family back in Burlington during the off-season. "I really feel that I have a passion for the game that is second to none and I try to bring that attitude to the golf course each and every day." His usual work day starts at 5:45 am and goes until dark and he usually drops by the club on his one day off a week to make sure everything is running smoothly.

Golf operations at Cherry Hill Club consists of Jeremy Broom who acts as both the GM and Head Professional, Steve Barkley who is the Professional Shop Manager, Walker Arnott who is looking to play into the PGA of Ontario in 2016 plus a dozen or so backshop staff and starters.

"Daryl is very well liked at the club. His work behind the scenes to prepare for club events is meticulous and he has risen to every challenge presented as his responsibilities have increased as my duties have been expanded in my new dual role," Broom says. "Daryl always focuses on the little things that make the member experience special, he builds personal relationships with all the family members and knows all of their names."

In managing daily golf operations MacLean works with all other departments to ensure events run smoothly. Over the past three years he has played a key role in enhancing the member and guest experience at the club that has resulted in a growth in member participation with increases in professional shop sales, rounds played, guest revenue and cart revenue. Men's night went from 15 people in 2013 to just over 60 in 2015 under MacLean's direction.

MacLean also implemented the return of the caddy program at Cherry Hill after being absent for 10-plus years by reaching out to other area golf professionals and local high school coaches within the community to provide the opportunity to caddy for golf-enthusiastic students. Other highlights include



developing a competitive junior golf team to play interclub matches against other private clubs in the region and he has been a strong supporter of the Niagara Junior Golf Tour, understanding that juniors are the future of golf.

When asked where he would like to be five years from now, MacLean responds that he would like to be a Head Professional at a private club and that's OK with Broom "Cherry Hill is a place where young professionals come to grow and we encourage them to grow as we prepare them for the next stage of their golf career," Broom notes.

Story by Brent Long - PGA of Ontario contributor