

# A Fresh Perspective

Taking the reins of social media at TPC Sawgrass has provided Alex Abbruzza a unique way to grow the game

By Ryan Adams, PGA

Not long ago, the words Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat were a foreign language to most, if not all, PGA Professionals. Social media was looked at as a side note, something that really couldn't grow the game or create a revenue stream.

Times have certainly changed, and so has the viewpoint on social media. Perhaps no one knows that better than Alex Abbruzza, PGA assistant professional at world-renowned TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida.

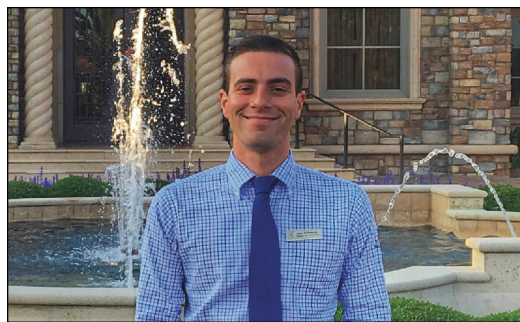
Abbruzza (*pictured*) has taken ahold of the TPC Sawgrass social media accounts and turned them into key promotional tools that provide a neat perspective of the facility.

"When I became an intern at TPC Sawgrass, golf was just getting on board with social media and no one really watched over the accounts," says Abbruzza, a native of Seattle who graduated from the University of Idaho PGA Golf Management University Program in August 2014. "One day, I said 'Hey, I'd like to try managing the social media,' and they gave me the reins. It was really a great way to make a name for myself as an intern."

And that he did. Abbruzza turned TPC Sawgrass' social media channels into a fresh way to market one of the most famous golf courses in the world by combining an interest for photography, a GoPro camera and some stunning scenery (*pictured*).

"Photography, golf courses and social media all mix really well," says Abbruzza who recently became a PGA Certified Professional in Golf Operations. "So much of a golf course is about the scenery, and to be able to take photos of such a well-known course is really something I've quickly enjoyed."

Abbruzza began his pursuit of a career in golf at the University of Idaho PGA Golf Management University Program in 2010. There, he met Program Director Cole



Mize, who told Abbruzza to "shoot for the stars" for his last internship.

"Being from Seattle, I had never been east of Denver," states Abbruzza. "Cole was a big influence and one day we were talking about internships, and he said, 'Hey, what about TPC Sawgrass?' Sure enough, it worked out. I'm really only here now (at TPC Sawgrass) because of the program."

And since Abbruzza started at TPC Sawgrass in 2013, his impact has certainly been noticed. Along with developing incredible social media content, Abbruzza became revenue manager on staff and also created a PGA Junior League Golf team, where he is co-captain and promotes the team on Instagram.

"We pride ourselves on hiring the very best and we certainly did exactly that when we brought Alex on as one of our assistants," says Bill Hughes, PGA general manager at TPC Sawgrass, and the national recipient of the PGA's 2015 Bill Strausbaugh Award. "We knew from his time here as an intern that he would be a perfect fit for the demands of this operation. I am very proud of Alex and look forward to his future success and development as a PGA Professional."

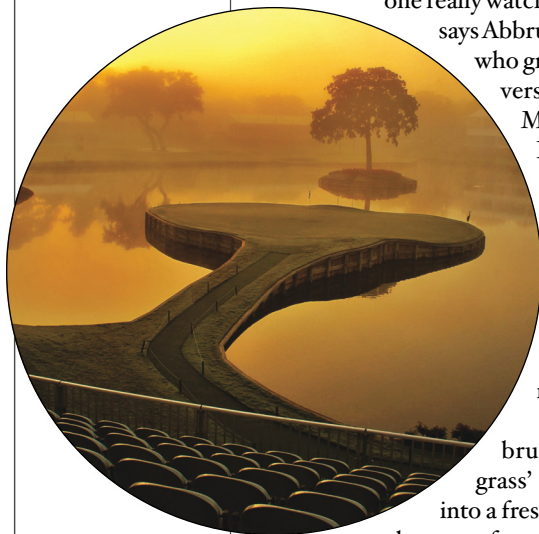
When producing social media content, Abbruzza has always kept two goals in mind that have really helped guide him to success with the TPC Sawgrass accounts. So much so that some of his content has been reposted on the *Golf Digest* and PGA Tour social media sites, as well as a time-lapse video that was featured on PGA.com.

"One, you must be aspirational," says Abbruzza. "Frankly, a lot of the content we post is nice pictures of the golf course with the hope being that our followers see the photo and say, 'Someday I want to play there.'"

"The second goal is to utilize tools like a GoPro and target the younger audience. The hope is they see the photo and say 'I want to go to The Players or, more importantly, 'I want to go play golf now.' Instagram is great for that."

Ultimately, Abbruzza hopes to work his way up and become a general manager within the TPC network. At TPC Sawgrass, his work with social media has made him stand out – something he believes all PGA Professionals need to do in this day and age.

"It's important for PGA Professionals to have a strong knowledge of marketing," says Abbruzza. "Knowing how to manage an Instagram or a Facebook account and finding ways to promote through them can really separate yourself from others." ■



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