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# Steffen Perpetuates Rich Baltusrol Legacy

It says a lot about a golf club when it has employed only eight head professionals since its founding more than a century ago. But Baltusrol, the site of this year's PGA Championship, is a special place. And so are the people who have presided over the golf shop and lesson tee at that leafy, Springfield, N.J., retreat.

There was George Low, the noted player, course designer and clubmaker from Carnoustie who labored there from 1903 – when Baltusrol hosted its first U.S. Open – to 1925. Johnny Farrell took on that job in 1934, making the rather bold decision at the time to switch to the more secure and sedate life of a club professional after a very successful run as a tour player that included his taking the 1928 U.S. Open title. And he stayed at Baltusrol for 38 years. The great Bob Ross followed Farrell, holding the head pro job for just more than two decades. Ross left the club after the 1996 season, with his rather sizable shoes being filled by one of his former assistants, Doug Steffen.

Steffen has run the golf program at Baltusrol ever since, taking good care of his members as he also helped the club with the two A.W. Tillinghast courses stage a U.S. Amateur in 2000 and a PGA Championship in 2005. And when

he is done with this year's PGA and sees his golfers through the 2016 season, Steffen will step down, after 20 years on the job.

"I have enjoyed a great run here," says Steffen, who was recently inducted into the New Jersey State Golf Hall of Fame. "But it is time for me to go."

Born in the western Pennsylvania town of Greensburg, just outside of Pittsburgh, Steffen found great refuge in sports as his father's job in the railroad business forced the family to relocate almost constantly. "Our stays in some places were so short that my mother never had time to unpack all the boxes that held our belongings," he recalls. "At one point, we moved seven times in eight years, and I ended up going to four different high schools. But I

was good enough to start on the basketball and golf teams wherever I went, which meant it was not too difficult to make friends."

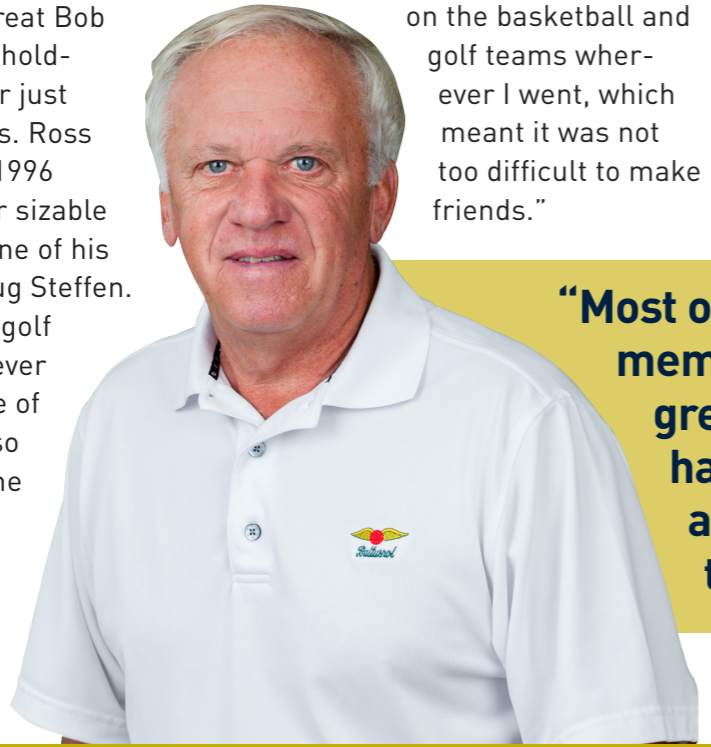
Golf came naturally to Steffen, and he remembers winning his first tournament when he was 13 years old. Eventually, he became good enough to win the New Jersey state high school championship, in 1967, and also to earn a golf scholarship to Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He competed on the golf team for all four years of school, and captained the squad in his senior year.

Steffen tried to qualify for the PGA Tour after college but missed by a shot. He entered a few events on the Mexico Golf Tour and played some mini-tour competitions in the States. "But we were playing for our own money back then, and I never made enough money to cover my expenses," he says. "So, I left the golf business for a while."

First he toiled as a salesman for an insurance company in Des Moines, Iowa, and then as a salesman for General Foods in New Jersey.

But even as he was working those jobs, he was still thinking about golf.

A conversation with one-time



**"Most of all, it's been about the membership. They are really great people, and they have really enjoyed being a part of the history and tradition of this club."**

*Doug Steffen on his time as head professional at Baltusrol*



PGA of America president Leo Fraser, who at the time owned and operated the Atlantic City Country Club, led Steffen to the Jupiter Hills Club in Florida, where he began working in the pro shop. Some time after that, Steffen learned that Bob Ross of Baltusrol was looking for a third assistant.

"Bob hired me in the spring of 1977, and I started in the bag room," says Steffen. "Actually, I think the first thing I ever did was paint that bag room. And by the time that the club hosted the 1980 U.S. Open, which Jack Nicklaus won, I was Bob's first assistant."

Steffen secured his first head professional position that fall, at the Middle Bay Country Club on Long Island, and stayed there for 14 years. That was followed by a two-year stint as head professional at the nearby Fresh Meadow Country Club, after which he returned to Baltusrol to take over for his old mentor.

In his 20 years there, Steffen developed a reputation as an all-around golf professional. He was a good enough player to have quali-

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fied for the 1984 PGA Championship and also the 2000 U.S. Senior Open. He also captured the New Jersey Senior PGA twice and the state's Senior Open an equal number of times. In addition, he distinguished himself as a teacher and merchandiser as well as a mentor to young professionals, with 34 of his former assistants going on to become head professionals. At the same time, Steffen gave back to his local section by serving on any number of committees and boards.

One of Steffen's best moments in golf came after the 2005 PGA at Baltusrol, when that year's champion, Phil Mickelson, gave him a very public shout-out for the local knowledge he provided during practice rounds they had played together.

"I enjoyed that, and all the nice things that Phil said after his win," he says.

"But there is a lot that I have enjoyed about being here," adds Steffen, whose rather hazy retirement plans simply include relocating to South Carolina, where he and his wife, Gina, have owned a home; traveling a bit; and getting in some fishing and golf. "Most of all, it's been about the membership. They are really great people, and they have really enjoyed being a part of the history and tradition of this club."

Clearly, he has, too. ●