



# Medinah's DeAngelo Champions 'Golf for Life'

It's a busy Saturday morning at your local club as the starter sends an endless stream of foursomes to the tee, and you're up next.

What often happens here is practically ritual: All four of you, regardless of differences in ability, play from the same set of tee markers. Perhaps one of you shoots in the high 70s, another in the 80s, one in the 90s and another in the low 100s. If the game is measured against par, the group lost heavily. That's without mentioning the 350 or so combined strokes you needed, making for a long day of waiting on other foursomes doing the same thing.

Sound familiar? To Marty DeAngelo, it sounds like unnecessary carnage.

"We want our members to be making pars, birdies and the occasional bogey," says DeAngelo, the director of golf at the renowned Medinah Country Club outside Chicago and developer of the "Golf for Life" system. "We want to bring them back to the course without using handicaps. If I tee it up with you, we're both aiming to shoot 72."

To attempt such a vast cultural change at one of the most recognized private clubs in the country, DeAngelo sells his members with science and a venue that embraces

the philosophy of going low. He is a prime example of the modern PGA professional, a brave soldier tasked with finding creative ways to attack golf's critical barriers: time, difficulty and money.

First, the science. Improving your short game may be vital, but statistically speaking, no other factor lowers scores faster than cutting the length of the course someone plays, DeAngelo says. A player shooting 85 from the back tees *can* challenge even-par scores if he changes how far his average approach shot into the green will be.

Second, the facility and system itself. Medinah's No. 2 course reopened in June after a \$3 million Rees Jones-led "restoration" that added more than 50 percent more fairway acreage and gave the venue seven different tee boxes on each hole. It's the first course at Medinah to have wall-to-wall cart paths, and the bunkers were built without lips so that players could hit their ball out more easily. More than 600 trees were removed.

From the shortest tees, Medinah No. 2 now plays at 1,978 yards, setting a new standard for accessibility on a regulation course. The longest it can play is 6,408 yards.

The Golf for Life system starts with each member coming to DeAngelo's golf staff for an evaluation so they can be assigned to one of the



seven tee boxes. Recommendations for improvement (and reaching the next set of tees) are given. There's a graduated skills program for beginner golfers that has them start with three holes and gives them the chance to progress to six, nine and eventually 18 holes.

Regardless of skill level, scorecards are turned in after each round so evaluation can continue.

"It's an education process for existing golfers to understand the appropriate tees and (for us to) scientifically prove it to them," DeAngelo said. "We're confident it will bring new golfers as well. It's a philosophy we're investing in from an instructional side and an events side."

The early results of the program, which began in earnest earlier this year, are encouraging. At a recent "Nine and Dine" event that takes place the first Friday of every month, 88 players finished nine holes in two hours while 35 percent of them shot par or better.

"The men in particular (played tees that) were much more forward

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on average," DeAngelo said. "Everyone felt pretty good about themselves."

And that, DeAngelo argues, is what golf needs right now. Golf for Life offers the goals of Topgolf while maintaining the framework of a normal round. It's not only an extension of the Tee It Forward campaign, it's also a system that incentivizes getting better and spending more time on the links.

In highlighting the system, we should highlight its developer as well. After attempting a professional playing career, he has spent the past 25 years dedicated to the game with a notable 18-year stint at Isleworth Golf & Country Club in Windermere, Fla., before moving to Medinah in January 2013.

Golf for Life partially came out of a junior development program DeAngelo had while at Isleworth. It focused on graduated skills and making kids of all skill levels feel welcome, a sentiment he now wants to implement with people of all ages.

Could DeAngelo be onto something big here? As he collects data from the scores his members have shot in 2017, a Golf for Life package other facilities can use may be coming in the future.

For now, the focus will be on having fun with low scores. ●

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