

# Martin marches forward

By Nate Oxman  
Staff writer

**A**lan Martin had been turned away before. This was different. There was a chance this was going to be by more than 90 million people all over the world.

Was hearing a "No," on such a big stage going to finally force Martin to give up on his product?

No way. He believed his "Thumbs Down" method works.

It was just over a year ago when Martin was selected as one of 103 people out of the over 1,200 inventors who auditioned to be selected to compete in the Golf Channel's new series, *Fore Inventors Only*.

Martin, an East Windsor, N.J., salesman and a single-digit amateur golfer, had first come up with the idea back in 1995. Three years later he began writing his instruction book detailing "Thumbs Down," which teaches amateurs how to use their hands and wrists to get the club into the correct position at impact in order to promote better ball striking.

After nearly a decade of unrelenting dedication and \$15,000 of his hard-earned money, Martin had made modest gains. He wanted more.

"It was in December of 2006 that the Golf Channel ran its promotion for a new series it was going to run and they were going to hold auditions," said Martin, who plays out of Springdale Golf Club in Princeton, N.J. "Right there on the screen it said, 'Do you have the next big idea in golf?' And I looked at the TV set and I said, 'You've got to be kidding me,' because it was right around the end of the season when I started thinking about what I was going to do for next year. I wanted the next year to be the year when I started to get exposure. So it felt like the Golf

Channel was talking directly to me. Do you have the next big idea in golf? I think I do."

After passing on auditions for *The Big Break*, which required long-distance travel, Martin saw that auditions for *Fore Inventors Only* were going to be held locally in the New York area.

"It turned out to be a hotel at the Newark Airport," said Martin. "I said, 'Here's my crossroads. Here's what we kind of wait for in life. Put up or shut up. What the heck? Let's go for it.'"

Martin filled out an application and attended an audition on Feb. 1, 2007 where he pitched his invention to a producer and a cameraman.

"They said that they would let you know in a couple of weeks if they would let you know at all because there were so many people who went through," said Martin. "On March 1, I was saying, 'I'm not hearing anything,' and I'm getting all of this self-doubt. I happened to be at Springdale when the phone call came."

"They said, 'We like your invention. We'd like you to come down on the 25th and then started giving me all of these details and my mouth was just wide open. I couldn't believe it. I was part of the top 100. Immediately, I said to myself, 'I won. I'm a winner. I can't lose here. I challenged myself and the biggest authority in golf went for it. It was an absolute thrill to say the least.'"

A little more than three weeks later, Martin made the trip to the Golf Channel studios in Orlando, Fla. on March 25 where the 103 contestants would be whittled down to five. Viewers would then vote on one winner who would receive shelf space at Golfsmith for one year, a fully-developed infomercial and \$50,000 worth of commercial and promotional air time on the Golf Channel.

"Well, everybody from the Golf Channel came out and congratulated us," said Martin. "They made us feel



Alan Martin, an amateur golfer from East Windsor, N.J., has received national attention for his "Thumbs Down" instruction method.

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like kings. Then, they introduced the panel: Bill Harmon, Fulton Allem and Stina Sternberg. I had never heard of Stina Sternberg, but I had heard of the other two. They were both pros. And it turned out Stina, who is the editor for Golf For Women magazine used to play on tour. So I thought, 'Great, I've got three pros, one of whom has never been an amateur.' You think Billy Harmon thinks like an amateur?"

Golf professionals have been Martin's roadblocks ever since his mission began. They've told him that his method is correct in principle, but that's its something that has been taught for a long time. There wasn't anything new about it.

"I've had that validated a few times along the way," said Martin. "I put my arm around the guy next to me, gave him a little pat and said, 'It was nice knowing you,' because I'm not going any further, I'm done. I knew it right there. I was finished."

Martin was interviewed by host Vince Chellini before entering the audition room and that lifted his spirits, briefly.

"I get 30 seconds into my presentation after all of the friendly hellos," said Martin. "I started talking and all of a sudden Fulton Allem just interrupts and says, 'Wait a minute. What are you saying here? You're doing this. I don't get it. That's what I do. What's so new about it? Where is the invention here?' In comes Billy Harmon, 'I was looking through this book and fundamentally, that's how I teach, but I'm agreeing with Fulton. What's new about this? This isn't new. So all of a sudden, 30 seconds into this I'm in a defensive mode."

That's when Martin went to plan b. "My plan b was that I had a method that turns into a legal training aid," said Martin. "I brought three competitive training aids with me. I had parallel sticks that you could put on the ground when you practiced, but not when you played. I had another thing that hinged my wrists that you could use only while practicing and I had a set of shoulder pads. I was going to show him how ridiculous some of these training aids were. Well, I eventually put on the shoulder pads."

"I got three thumbs down really quick," said Martin. "Even Billy Harmon made it a point of saying, 'I'm

going to give you a thumbs down for your 'Thumbs Down,' but I like your method.' I was out."

The Golf Channel taped nearly 10 minutes with Martin, but he never heard how much would eventually air. He got his first glimpse on the promo, which showed Martin wearing the shoulder pads and telling the panel that they could either wear things like these shoulder pads or use his method and go "Thumbs up, thumbs down."

"I was watching the episode and I'm thinking, 'They're running out of time. When are they going to show me and when are they going to show the people who advanced? If they aren't going to show them, they're not going to show me.' Well, they showed me, but instead of having five seconds like on the promo, I had 10 seconds. First they showed me with these shoulder pads on saying, 'Well, first you make a thumbs up.' Nobody watching knows who I am or what I'm doing and the people who were watching to see me said, 'What's that?' His thing is 'Thumbs Down.'" Then they showed Billy Harmon saying, 'I got nothing wrong with the method, but what's new about it?'

Martin was bummed. Although the Golf Channel owned all of the rights to the footage, Martin used his experience on Fore Inventors Only to open more doors with the media. That June, he landed a spot on CNS's Your Morning discussing golf and business and later made appearances on "GolfStyles Live" with Tony Leodora.

Last November, Martin appeared on Inside Golf on Comcast SportsNet. He used his "Thumbs Down" method on producer and host Ken Adelberger before taping the segment and Adelberger's slice, much like Martin's when he first discovered the method, turned into a hook. With little time to spare, Martin made a slight adjustment to Adelberger's grip there it was: the contact Martin was looking for.

The video of Martin's appearance on Inside Golf can be found on his website, [www.thumbsdownmethod.com](http://www.thumbsdownmethod.com). By signing up free of charge you gain membership and access to the video along with Martin's entire media center. All three editions of Martin's "Thumbs Down" book are available for purchase as well. Customers first receive an online version via e-book while they wait for the hand-

book to be shipped. The Front Nine edition provides the fundamentals for better ball striking. The Pro edition combines the Front Nine with a Back Nine version and provides amateur golfers with instruction in simple, easy-to-understand language that will allow them to teach themselves using highly effective drills. Customers also receive a one-on-one virtual 30-minute demonstration with Martin himself where the author and inventor uses online virtual meeting software to show you how to use his product.

"I want to make sure people can use this properly," said Martin. "I don't want to take it for granted that it's so easy you can teach yourself. It is that easy, but I really want people to be successful with this."

The Pro-Plus edition includes everything in the Pro edition, in addition to the "Teach Yourself Coaching Program," which includes three hours of one-on-one coaching with Martin. All three editions also include "The Cardkeeper," a clear, highly visible pouch for your "Thumbs Down" book that can be clipped onto your golf bag like a bag tag. All three are great gifts for corporate outings or for tournament goody bags as well.

"I'm very excited about the future," said Martin, who acquired a publisher last year. "My goal last year was to get out of the closet, get some publicity, try to get published and continue the valida-

tion. Validation was very, very important. The more people I could see that I could just teach it to like that, the more they helped validate the fact that it's not a gimmick. I got a lot of those things out of the way."

This year, Martin has reunited with one of his first students, Michael Mastoris, owner of Alstarz Sports Pub ([www.alstarzsportspub.com](http://www.alstarzsportspub.com)), on Route 130 South in Bordentown, N.J.

"He changed my golf game from a major slice to a very tiny slice in one lesson," said Mastoris. "He really made a big difference and I've never been a big golfer. After he gave me that lesson, my drives are longer and straighter than they have never been. It's a definite fact. Even my mother is doing it."

Martin has opened the Alstarz Golf Center at Alstarz, where he will teach his "Thumbs Down" method, along with several other training aids, including The Net Return, a multi-use practice net and the Hill Shot Golf trainer, which allows golfers to simulate all combinations of uphill, downhill and sidehill lies. Hill Shot Golf finished second in the Fore Inventors Only competition.

Martin hopes that could lead to another giant leap forward.

To contact Alan Martin, send an email to [ajm.ME@thumbsdowninfo.com](mailto:ajm.ME@thumbsdowninfo.com) or visit [www.thumbsdowninfo.com](http://www.thumbsdowninfo.com).



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