

Entrepreneur Devotes Full Time to Golf Instruction Method



New Jersey Golf News photos — RICHARD SKELLY

By Richard Skelly
For New Jersey Golf News

Like so many longtime golfers, Alan Martin of East Windsor came to a crossroads with his progression in the game. He was in his late 30s in the early 1990s. A talented football kicker and dedicated athlete in his younger years, he was ready to quit golf altogether back then.

Then he had a revelation one day at Springdale, his home course in Princeton.

"One day it dawned on me on the 15th hole, a par 3, 126 yards," Martin explained at a recent meeting at Applegarth Golf Center in Monroe. "There I am, I've got this wood in my hand, and I sat on the tee and said, 'If I have to hit this club, I'm going to give the game up.' I'd better learn to hit my irons again."



Frustration with his game led East Windsor's Alan Martin to market the 'Thumbs Down' method of swinging the club.

This was the genesis of Martin's "Thumbs Down" method, which he has since parlayed into a successful website, e-book and two books available for sale from the website.

His future plans for his instructional methods include a DVD and video release. The essence of Martin's golf method — which is designed so golfers can teach themselves — is for the golfer to turn down his strong hand thumb through impact with the ball.

"This is the way many inventions get done," Martin said while hitting balls at Applegarth, "they're the result of self-preservation and fixing your own problems. Having been told I have a talent for marketing, I came up with the idea of a book." Martin added it took him nearly five years to finish his book, complete with illustrations, and to make the language simple and direct enough that golfers anywhere in the world should be able to apply his instructional concepts.

Martin's side business has turned into his main business, and he left a software sales job at the end of March to devote his full attentions to selling his instructional books, available through his website www.thumbsdown.info for a nominal fee.

Martin, who plays to a 7 handicap at Springdale, was raised in East Meadow, Long Island and majored in business at SUNY, Albany, where the football team needed a field goal kicker. Right around the time he was graduating in 1976, he tried out as a field goal kicker for the New York Giants and the New York Jets. He began playing golf when he was 10, in 1964, when everyone was focused on what Arnold Palmer was doing in televised professional golf.

"I finally realized it wasn't meant to be, but I tried," he re-

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called of his career as a football kicker, "then I went into sales for the next 25 years."

Martin worked for Lanier Word Processing systems in New York's financial district for a number of years, and moved to East Windsor in 1981. More

recently, he's been involved in sales and marketing for high-tech software.

He joined Springdale Golf Club in Princeton in 1984.

Springdale, he argued, "is absolutely the best walking course around, and that's an attractive part of it." Martin's booklet, called "Thumbs Down, Teach Yourself, A Golfer's How To Guide for

Better Ball Striking," includes endorsements from Dan McCarthy, the head professional at Springdale and from Dan Pasternak, formerly of Springdale and now of Panther Valley Golf Club in Hackettstown.

At the range at Applegarth, Martin demonstrated his technique, created by armateur, for fellow amateurs.

"I don't have to take a big swing, but concentrate on keeping the thumbs down, and suddenly, I'm striking the ball better," he said, adding, "I'm not doing anything radically different, just letting the club do the work and keeping thumbs down." For the right handed golfer, this means focusing on letting the right thumb point at the ball through impact.

Martin said the genesis of his instructional method and subsequent small business began in the late 1980s, when his golf game began to go south for no apparent reason.

"I was beginning to lose my swing, and what used to be a power fade was turning into an awful slice," Martin said, adding, "I spent about three years losing yardage and slicing even more. I could-

n't hit my irons and was losing 20 to 25 yards on my shorter irons."

Back then, he observed, finding a 12-wood was no easy feat.

"This was always a side business," Martin explained, but with his recent departure from his most recent job in software sales and some crafty investing through the years, "now, all the pieces have fallen into place where I can give this a full-time effort." So far, his golf instructional business involves a monthly e-newsletter, an Internet blog, an e-book available from the website, and two books, "The Front Nine," and "The Back Nine." The essence of his thumbs down method is explained most fully in "The Back Nine," Martin said. "The Back Nine" is still being written and designed, but should be available before the end of this year.

"A second edition, 'The Back Nine,' is a drills edition, and that shows you what to do at the practice range," said Martin, who is a three time winner of Springdale's President's Cup.

"Now there's an infrastructure in place to keep selling and marketing the books," Martin said, "so there's more information out there. Yesterday, I got an order from New Zealand for the e-book."



Alan Martin practices his follow through.