



COURTESY ALOHA SECTION PGA

Ko Olina Golf Club was well represented at the Hawaii Golf Ho'olaule'a Awards ceremony. Kevin Shimomura, from left, was named Teacher of the Year, Katie Manlolo won the Bill Strausbaugh Award and Rich Sung received the President's Plaque.

Ko Olina grows the game

By Ann Miller
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Dean Wilson's humble beginnings at Pali Golf Course highlighted the 11th annual Hawaii Golf Ho'olaule'a Awards early this year. The soft-spoken PGA Tour winner became the 74th member of the Hawaii Golf Hall of Fame.

On the same night, Hawaii's five major golf organizations honored players, volunteers, superintendents, merchandisers and all those involved in a game with infinite components.

The Aloha Section PGA gave out a jarring 16 awards.

More jarring, Ko Olina Golf Club pros claimed a quarter of those, in the vital area of growth of the game.

The home of the LPGA Lotte Championship turns 30 next year, but will probably perpetually look 29. It was named one of Golf Digest's Top 75 Resort Courses in the U.S.

Based on its Ho'olaule'a haul, its popularity has as much to do with the people working on it as its Ted Robinson design.

“We have a GM who creates a culture of excellence. Greg is the engine of Ko Olina.”

Katie Manlolo
Ko Olina Golf Club head pro, on General Manager and Director of Golf Greg Nichols, right

“I think that with any award winners, you have to be very much invested in what you do,” says Kevin Shimomura, Ko Olina's Director of Instruction and Player Development. “Whether it's teaching and coaching, operations or community involvement, it all plays a part in growing the game and growing as a PGA Professional. This past year, we had four dedicated golf professionals who did that.”

Shimomura, the Aloha Section's 2014 player of the year, is now its teacher of the year.

“Kevin's friendly and low-key personality was formed growing up in Lahaina,” says Ko Olina General Manager and Director of Golf Greg Nichols. “His strength as a teacher is being patient and constantly encouraging to his students.”

“Greg is an extremely hard game and as one of our Aloha

Section's finest players, Kevin understands what it takes to play golf at a high level but also has the humility to remember the many hours of practice and coaching he received along the way to become that great player.”

Katie (Fuqua) Manlolo, who holds the rare distinction of being a head pro and mother of a 6-week-old child, earned the Bill Strausbaugh Award for her work with fellow PGA Pros. She grew up in Washington, played for Lewis-Clark State and coached at Whitworth before coming to Hawaii.

“I chose this career because I loved mentoring,” Manlolo says. “I enjoy being a part of people's accomplishments and seeing them reach their goals. What meant the most to me winning the Bill Strausbaugh Award is that it recognized what drew me into this in-



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dustry in the first place.”

Assistant Pro Rich Sung, whose website bio is written in English and Korean, claimed the President's Plaque Award for “extraordinary and exemplary contributions and achievements in the area of player development.”

He volunteers with Ho'okipa I Po'okela Junior Golf — Ko Olina's non-profit program with Nanakuli schools — and is in charge of the course's Kidz Club. He specializes in beginners and munchkins and recently created a program called Mini-Kidz Club for those between the ages of 3-6.

“It is the sweetest thing in the world to see Rich literally down on his hands and knees helping coach these kids on the game,” says Nichols, whose hiring priorities include passion for the game. “I promise you he is having as much if not more

fun than the kids.” Nichols came over from Waialae Country Club in 2002. The Hawaii State Junior Golf Association co-founder was a “military brat” growing up and moved to Hawaii for college in 1971.

This year he added the Patriot Award to his long list of PGA honors, for Ko Olina's continuing commitment to raising funds for Folds of Honor. The national program provides post-secondary educational scholarships for children and spouses of military service men and women killed or disabled.

Sung says he has learned more from Nichols than he did in college and Manlolo traces Ko Olina's embarrassment of award riches back to the boss.

“Greg is not afraid to lead and it shows,” she says. “He is a leader to leaders and you can see this in the legacy he has left by how many head professionals on Oahu have learned under him.”

“We have a GM who creates a culture of excellence. Greg is the engine of Ko Olina. He desires and inspires greatness from all of his employees. I would not be where I am today if it were not for him.”