

Tom Cade: Hello, this is Pod for the Course, and I am Tom Cade, the senior director of communications for Washington Golf. And today we have with us, Cathy Kim. Cathy is originally from Bellevue, Washington, and she played for four years on the women's golf team at Western Washington University. She is now a dual member of the PGA of America, as well as the LPGA. She was recently named the best young teacher by Golf Digest for 2020 and 2021. And Cathy, thanks so much for taking the time to be with us today.

Cathy Kim: Oh, hello. Thanks so much for having me.

Tom Cade: So Cathy, where are you based out of right now? I know you're not in the Northwest anymore. Is that correct?

Cathy Kim: That is correct. I'm based out of Dulles, Virginia at the 1757 Golf Club.

Tom Cade: How long have you been there?

Cathy Kim: It's been a little over two years since I've relocated. I actually moved from the Pacific Northwest to Las Vegas, and then from Las Vegas to Virginia.

Tom Cade: Let's take a walk back in time here for just a little bit. You grew up in the Bellevue area outside Seattle, is that correct?

Cathy Kim: I did. I moved to the Bellevue area when I was a sophomore in high school. I was in the Bay area in California prior to that.

Tom Cade: How did you get into the game of golf? When did you first pick up a club and who taught you; who brought you to the golf course for the first time?

Cathy Kim: My dad was the first one in our family to pick up golf. And shortly after that, he discovered that there were junior golf camps at the local muni that he started golfing at. So really by means of babysitting, he threw me into a PGA-run golf camp, and that's how I got introduced to this sport. And from there, a PGA instructor, a PGA member at the time, he actually offered me free golf lessons. I'm not sure what he saw in my swing, but he definitely wanted me to keep playing. So I was able to start golf lessons and this was probably around age 10, right in there. And then of course, parents being parents, they hear that their kid has some sort of prospects for golf, so they threw me into tournaments right away. And I've been playing golf ever since.

Tom Cade: So you moved to the Bellevue area when you were a sophomore in high school. Was that a difficult move for you? Sometimes it is when you're in high school.

Cathy Kim: Yeah, it was very difficult, mainly because we just didn't know what the junior golf scene was like. And for my parents, English being a second language, it was actually quite difficult to even figure out where I was supposed to be and what tournaments I was supposed to be playing. So I initially ended up missing out on one full year of junior golf when I first moved. That was actually quite difficult in a sense, because that was right

around the time where college coaches start looking at their potential students, or their potential athletes. So it was pretty tough. The transition from one school to another was also pretty tough, considering, by the time you get to that age, you've established your group of friends that you grew up with. And so, yes, it was hard, but golf was really kind of my saving grace. I went to the golf course pretty much every day after school, and it was kind of the only thing that was familiar to me.

Tom Cade: What golf course did you start playing at up here in the Bellevue area?

Cathy Kim: Bellevue Municipal was my home course, and then we lived near Newcastle Golf Club, so I was able to go practice up there because the putting green and the pitching area is complimentary, and they didn't mind having a kid over there, just hanging out for the day. So it was kind of a nice way, when I wanted to go play golf, I would go to Bellevue muni. And then when I wanted to practice, I would go up to Newcastle. And then my home course for my high school was Plateau Club, so during season that's where I would practice.

Tom Cade: What high school did you go to?

Cathy Kim: I went to Skyline High School.

Tom Cade: Skyline High School up in Sammamish.

Cathy Kim: Yes.

Tom Cade: Did you get recruited by Western Washington University? Is that how that worked? Did you get a scholarship there?

Cathy Kim: Yeah. My then golf coach, his name is Joe Thiel. He used to teach down in Olympia, Washington.

Tom Cade: Yeah.

Cathy Kim: And he was the one that kind of suggested that I take a look at Western Washington University and see if I could initially walk on. So the story was I reached out to them, Dean Russell was the golf coach at the time. We kind of saw where the first quarter was going with my golf game. And then after that, he offered me a full ride. So kind of an unconventional way on getting a scholarship, but I managed to pull it off. I'm very grateful to Dean Russell.

Tom Cade: So you played all four years in school, yeah?

Cathy Kim: I did. I did, yeah.

Tom Cade: How was that experience, the collegiate experience, playing on the team?

Cathy Kim: Yeah, it was very different. I would definitely say that I wanted to, at the time, experience more of being just a regular student. Western Washington at the time, we were pretty high up there in Division II golf. We were usually a top 10 in the country, so we were very blessed with having a pretty big budget. And the upside to being a Division II school in Washington state was that we would travel out of state all the time to go play golf tournaments. The downside to that was that on the academic side, unfortunately, a lot of our professors, or a lot of my professors didn't really... They weren't very lenient.

So it was a little bit of a juggle to kind of be able to handle both, but it definitely was worth experience to be able to learn, to travel with other players and kind of have a working schedule, so to speak, as a golfer, which is obviously new to somebody that just played junior golf. So it was a pretty awesome experience overall. I would say that if there was a little bit more leniency, academic-wise, it would have been really awesome.

Tom Cade: At some point during your college years, you must have thought, "Well, gee, this golf world is something I might want to do for my career in some form or fashion." Did that start to gel in your mind a little bit, or how did that come about?

Cathy Kim: Honestly, it was just kind of a, I think... I don't know. As a collegiate golfer, you definitely consider becoming a professional golfer, and it was just more a natural path for me to give it a try. And that's also something that my parents wanted me to do, as well. I learned very quickly that my game was not nearly where it should be to play on that high of level. So it was definitely a learning process, especially being in your early 20s. I didn't have a big financial backing, so that was kind of a big issue. Number one, because they just cost so much money for women's professional golf at the time to be even on the mini tour circuit. And then on top of that, really, just kind of evaluating what my five-year plan is, what my 10-year plan is.

And once I turned professional, I was playing in a couple of mini tour events. I tried Q school a couple of times, I was working at Sahalee Country Club part-time, and I was also helping out at Bellevue Municipal with a couple of the junior camps at the time. And that's where I really started to find my love for teaching. It was just as natural of a transition it could have possibly been for somebody who was playing and trying to make a living out of playing. And then all of a sudden just realizing, "Wow, I get so much more satisfaction out of watching somebody hit a ball up in the air for the first time." So it was a matter of, I don't know, three, maybe three or four years where I decided, "Hey, I think I'm just going to... I really love to teach, so I need to figure out what the best route is for me to go that direction."

Tom Cade: You started out at Sahalee doing some of this work. When did you enter the PGA Section program?

Cathy Kim: Yeah, I started the PGA program, I think back in 2013, 2012, maybe right in there. And then shortly after that, I moved to Las Vegas, Nevada to work as an assistant professional at TPC Summerlin.

Tom Cade: Okay.

Cathy Kim: I wanted to finish out my program there. TPC is known for its rigorous assistant training, so it was a little difficult to get through my books. But in the middle of being at TPC Summerlin, I started to notice that my teaching book, my schedule book was getting fuller and fuller and fuller. And so eventually I ended up transitioning from assistant professional to director of player development, and I worked just to teach full time. And so that was kind of where I ended up transitioning.

Tom Cade: Explain to me the difference between being a PGA member and an LPGA member.

Cathy Kim: These are two very different programs that you go through. For me, I went through the PGA program first because the Pacific Northwest recognized PGA members a little bit more than the LPGA members. From what I had known at the time, Florida, for example, was a great place for LPGA members. Washington state was a great place for PGA members, so I started my PGA program. It's very heavy with management skills and just learning the overall operation. Teaching was a segment of the books and learning and all of that, but it wasn't the main focus. The biggest difference that I noticed between the two programs was that LPGA was very teaching heavy. So it was almost opposite, it was more teaching heavy and then operations second, whereas PGA was operations first and then teaching was kind of like a branch that you would filter into.

Tom Cade: And so they are entirely different programs from each other. Did you do them concurrently at the same time, or did you do first one, and then once that was done, then you started the other program?

Cathy Kim: I finished up the PGA program, and then the LPGA program actually has a really nice perk where, if you completed the entire PGA program, you can actually take an exam and skip straight to level three seminars. I'm not sure if that's the case now, because I did hear that they kind of rebooted. But it was a really nice way to be able to obtain both memberships, mainly because you didn't have to go through all three levels of LPGA. You were able to just skip straight to the third level.

Tom Cade: For much of your life, most of your life, it looks like you've been sort of a West coast person. You grew up in the Bay area and then moved to the Seattle area, and then worked at TPC Summerlin in Las Vegas. And now you're on the East coast in Virginia at the 1757 Golf Club. How has that transition been for you?

Cathy Kim: Well, it was kind of difficult at first, mainly because of how much faster paced it is over here. But yeah, it's been a nice transition. I really enjoy the membership here, I enjoy the people around me. The weather has been the biggest difference for me, and it's actually been quite a challenge during the summertime because it gets so humid here and so hot. And then during the winter time it snows, so that's quite a transition as well. So I've been trying to figure out the best way to teach in all elements because it's 20 degrees outside and people still want to come and take lessons.

So as long as my students want to show up, then I'm showing up as well. And I just need to figure out how to stay warm during the time that I'm here. And the same thing during the summertime, I just need to figure out how to stay cool and not pass out from the heat. So I would say definitely the pace of the city here, just kind of, I don't know. Maybe it's just kind of where I'm located near DC and everyone has just a much faster pace here, you have to be way more on point. And just the weather. It's always the weather with golfers, I feel like.

Tom Cade: In 2018 you were named one of the top 50 teachers by U.S. Kids Golf.

Cathy Kim: Yes.

Tom Cade: Do you have a preference for age groups that you like to work with, or for this U.S. Kids program, what did you particularly enjoy with that aspect of it?

Cathy Kim: Yeah, so when it comes to junior golf, I think what I enjoy most is being able to help young ladies grow. When you're at about, anywhere from age seven to age 13, sometimes it's hard to make friends, right? It's hard to kind of figure out who you are and you're still figuring out who you are at that age, but it's kind of an uncomfortable age. And for me, and I still do the program here at 1757 Golf Club, just having girls programs have been so much fun to be able to connect similar aged girls together through the game of golf. And they're able to really find some confidence, they're able to be themselves and have fun and learn golf along the way. So golf for the level one and level two programs, typically aren't too golf specific, per se.

It's almost like we talk about current events, we talk about what goes on in school, especially now with the pandemic and how they've been adapting to virtual learning. And it was really no different at that time too, where it's really important to kind of keep them in check on who they are and how to help them grow and be comfortable. And so I think for me, that little sweet spot was definitely from age seven to age 13. And just watching them, and some of them want to go play tournaments, great. Some of them don't, that's fine too. But it was really just a matter of kind of getting them to learn how to cultivate relationships and being comfortable

Tom Cade: For that age group of young golfer, do you have much interaction with their parents? In other words, do the parents come to you and say, "Gee, I've got my 10 year old daughter here. I'd really like to see if she can get some lessons. And what do you recommend?" So in other words, how is that for you working? How is that kind of dynamic working with parents as well as the kids? Just because I'm sure there must be some interaction there.

Cathy Kim: Yeah, yeah. That's a great question. Definitely, parents are involved as much as they want to be. And I know that for every instructor, it's a little different when it comes to the parent/coach dynamic. But if a parent comes to me saying, "Hey, my daughter, we want to be pretty serious about this, and I want her to play in golf tournaments and this and that." We sit down and we talk about what some of those goals are, and I make sure that the student has input. So it's not just the student that's just sitting there

listening to the parents tell me what the student wants. It's making sure that she is involved as well, or he's involved as well. And some parents, they just are happy that their kids are out doing something.

So if that's the extent of it, then that's fine, too. And those kids tend to stick to more of the classes, the group classes, it's more for the social aspect of it. But if there is a student that comes to me and they want to start playing in some U.S. Kids events, or they want to go into AJGA, then we sit there and we kind of figure out a plan. And I'm always kind of fixed on making sure that that's what the student wants. And we all have to be in agreeance with it, it's not just the parent that's involved.

Tom Cade: How large is the 1757 Club? How many members are there?

Cathy Kim: We are a semi-private club. We have way more public than private. Our junior academy is massive. I'm actually not involved in the summer camps, but I think they end up with about 200 kids a week or something like that during the summer camp. Some absurd number of kids. When it comes to my classes, I fill anywhere from six to eight kids per class, and that's week in and week out. And I teach about anywhere from three to six classes a week.

Tom Cade: Okay.

Cathy Kim: So we have a pretty active junior presence at our club, as well as adults. And we're kind of known to have a big academy. We have 10 instructors at our facility, so our academy is pretty large for our area.

Tom Cade: What drew you to the 1757 club? I mean, there must've been something appealing about that offer to get you over there to the East coast. And it sounds like you've done well since you've been there because you won this, you've been named this best young teacher by *Golf Digest* this year. And so something is working for you there. What in particular do you think that is?

Cathy Kim: I actually ended up moving to Virginia after I got engaged to somebody that lived in the Virginia area. So it wasn't necessarily by choice.

Tom Cade: Okay.

Cathy Kim: But nonetheless, I ended up moving over here. And because I had worked in the private circuit for the most part, I wanted to give the public circuit a try, just to see what high volume was like. And honestly, I wasn't even sure if I was going to like it because I was more into cultivating relationships. And I was really enjoying the fact that I could see the same person almost every day, come to the golf club and you're saying hello, you're asking how their kids are and you know their kids and blah, blah, blah. When it came to high volume, I wasn't really sure what to expect, and definitely, it is very, very high volume here at 1757. I absolutely love it.

I love the fact that there is no restriction on who can come here to get lessons and who can't. I firmly believe that golf should be an equal access sport to everybody, and that it's definitely moving in that direction where golf is becoming a little more affordable, and it's becoming more accessible to anybody that wants to play. And our facility is exactly that, which is what I love. And that's what initially drew me to the facility. And then as far as programming goes here, TPC Summerlin was nice enough. Mike Messner, who's the head professional over there, he just let me kind of do my own thing. And he was able to just say, "Hey, go ahead and create the program, do what you need to do."

And 1757 has been the same way. They've been allowing me to get creative with what I want to do. And I'm able to test out different programs and test out different curriculums to see what works and what doesn't. And I definitely attribute my success to my bosses, for letting me do what I do and letting me find what I'm comfortable with doing.

Tom Cade: Well, Cathy, this has been really great. Any last comments about young people who want to get into this game and maybe are a little bit intimidated, or maybe their parents are not sure what to do, or maybe their parents are too aggressive and pushing them in one way or the other? Any particular little nugget of advice?

Cathy Kim: Yeah. If you're intimidated on getting into the game, and this is for adults as well, by the way. I get emails all the time from people asking, "Hey, what's the first step?" And the first step really is to reach out to a PGA or LPGA professional, because you want to get as much information as you can before you dive in, which is totally understandable. So I would definitely say research somebody that is nearby you, or just go ahead and Google, "PGA professional near me, LPGA professional near me." And see if you can just have a conversation with somebody and figure out what you need to do to take that first step to get onto the driving range or onto the golf course. Most of the time, like for me, for example, when I offer group classes, you don't even need golf clubs. I can supply golf clubs for you.

So if it's an equipment problem, always ask and they should always have loaners available for you if you want to come take a class. When it comes to a junior who maybe feels like they're being intimidated by parents, gosh, I would hope at that point you already have a golf instructor or a golf coach. Talk to the coach and make it clear on what's going on internally, because we all know as golfers, whatever's happening internally, it often shows up on the golf course and in our game. So just talk to your coach if you don't feel like you can talk to your parents, which often is the case, unfortunately. But it is and you want to just talk to your golf coach about that. And then if the parents who want to take their kids to the next level, same thing, talk to a PGA professional and talk to an LPGA professional and come up with a game plan. A good coach is always going to be willing to sit down with you and figure out a good game plan on how to get your child or yourself to the next level.

Tom Cade: Excellent advice. Cathy Kim, thank you so much for being with us today. Cathy, again, was a four-year player at Western Washington University. She competed in two Washington state women's amateur championships, which our office conducts. She's

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worked as a PGA professional, LPGA professional at Sahalee Country Club, at TPC Summerlin, and now at 1757 Club in Dulles, Virginia. She has been recently named to the Best Young Teacher list by *Golf Digest* for 2021, and it looks like 2022, as well. Cathy's website is [cathykingolf.com](http://cathykingolf.com). And Cathy, thank you so much again for joining us. This is really great stuff.

Cathy Kim: Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

Tom Cade: Okay, bye bye.

Cathy Kim: Bye bye.