

## **Paul Ryiz Inducted Into the Connecticut Section PGA Professional Hall of Fame**

By: Russ Held, November 21, 2016

Paul Ryiz has made the hard (work) look easy.

The New Britain native has spent more than 40 years in the golf business, establishing himself as one of his profession's top players and club professionals. And he's done both simultaneously.

"I've always worked hard, full-time, and made time to play as much as I could," Ryiz said. "And I've enjoyed both."

And his efforts and performance have not gone unnoticed as he is one of five inductees headed into the Connecticut Section PGA's Hall of Fame. Ryiz will be honored along with Tony Rowe, the late Bob Bodington and father and son Stan and Ted Pisk.

Connecticut Section PGA Executive Director Tom Hantke welcomed each into the Hall of Fame.

"This year's class of inductees represents a broad cross section of the Connecticut Section PGA's golf professional heritage, both in terms of generational era and service to the game of golf," Hantke said. "The Stan and Ted Pisk father to son passing of the torch begins during WWII and spans through the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

"Bob Bodington was the consummate golf professional of his time during the 1960s and '70s, and a leader of the section in the formidable developmental years of the organizations growth, whereas the careers of Tony Rowe and Paul Ryiz represent a parallel of the golf professional's evolution of as mentor, promoter, statesman, teacher and player."

The ceremony – billed as the Hall of Fame and Champions Tribute - takes place at Lake of Isles in North Stonington on November 28.

"I probably won't be saying too much," Ryiz joked of the induction ceremony. "My father (Paul Sr.) always told me that if you have to tell people how good you are, you probably aren't that good."

Ryiz has been more than good, particularly as a player.

He has played in three major championships – the 1987 PGA, 2001 Senior U.S. Open and 2002 Senior PGA – and narrowly missed advancing through final-stage qualifying for the PGA "Q School" and Senior Tour.

"There never really came a time when I had to," Ryiz said of a decision to transition from hopes of playing at a high level to becoming a full-time club pro. "I always did both. I'd play more at the end of the season and during the winter. It wasn't until I got to Chicopee (Country Club) that I really started settling in as a (club) pro."

Ryiz, 66, began his career as an assistant under Ken Lang at Westwoods Golf Course in Farmington and later on staff at Wethersfield CC.

His first head pro opportunity arose in 1980 at Chicopee CC, 15 minutes north of the Connecticut border.

After a decade there, he spent the next 12 at Royal Palm in CC in Naples, Fla. His career also brought him back to Western Mass. to The Blandford Club and Ledges Golf Course in South Hadley. He has spent the last nine at Brownson CC in Shelton.

“The Brownson members have just been fantastic,” Ryiz said. “They like to see me play, I like to get out to play with them. It’s a great situation for everyone.”

Ryiz said he’d like to be best known as “an honest, hardworking man of his word. A fierce competitor, someone who doesn’t like to lose but it not a bad loser.”

At the golf course, Ryiz said his skill set is pretty balanced.

“I feel like I am a very good teacher, a good communicator and I’ve been very successful at all the golf shops I’ve been,” Ryiz said. “I’m a people person.”

The Hall of Fame honor surprised Ryiz a bit and he’s called it his biggest accomplishment in golf.

“I was wonderously surprised,” Ryiz said. “I guess I started to think over the years that I might have chance to get in. It’s really quite an honor and I am humbled by it.”

Ryiz was also active with the Section on its board of directors

His roots in the game date back to learning the game from his father, playing at Stanley GC in New Britain.

He won the city championship in junior high school, and played one season in high school before being recruited at and playing for Central Connecticut State College. His collegiate success included being named captain, an All-American as a senior and helping the team win the New England and Connecticut tournament championships.

Ryiz lives in Shelton with wife Judy. The couple has three children - Paul Jr. who lives in Atlanta, Lindsay in Hawaii and Krystee in Boston.

“With Lindsay coming home for Thanksgiving, she’ll be staying a couple of extra days to be here for this,” Ryiz sad. “That’s pretty special to me, to have everyone here.”