



## The Greenbrier Golf Academy

# It's a Whole New Game



Call Billy Winters the “Miracle Worker.” That’s what I do.

My assignment for *The Greenbrier Magazine* was to write about the Greenbrier Golf Academy, where Billy is the director of instruction. What I didn’t expect was that I, Mr. Two Left Arms, would walk away with some semblance of an honest-to-goodness golf swing.

Golf is one of those things that in forty-five years I never got around to doing. Truth be told, after a certain age, I was too intimidated to try to learn.

There’s a spell about the game, though, especially at a place like The Greenbrier, where three historic championship courses compete with extraordinary scenic beauty for one’s attention. I spent many a wistful hour strolling those courses, secretly wishing I knew how to play the game.

Sure, I could have taken a lesson, but I imagined the Golf Academy was where serious golfers went to hone their already considerable skills, things like

dropping lofted shots near the pin from 100 yards away. You know, Tiger stuff.

That’s where Billy set me straight.

One of his favorite things to do is work with novice golfers. “They don’t have any bad habits yet,” he says with a quick and winning smile. “We can help them build a swing base and learn the fundamentals.” This is exactly what they do, indeed.

Starting with the GASP formula (Grip, Alignment, Stance and Posture), the instructors help you build the foundation for a good and proper swing. From there, they watch what the ball does in flight and help you make the corrections.

“We’re here to serve the golfer, not stand on a soapbox and bark out orders. Ball flight is the ultimate instructor, and if we can teach you to understand why you’re slicing or topping the ball, then over time you can learn to make your own corrections,” says Winters.

By the same token, more experienced golfers can

learn from the same basic lesson, without fear of having to reinvent their swing. “We work with the skills you have and then try to enhance them,” Winters adds.

With the Golf Academy a short cart-ride from the clubhouse, you’re also removed from the intimidation factor of practicing in the shadow of both experienced golfers and diners taking in the view from Sam Snead’s restaurant in the upper level of the Golf Club.

In addition to the Academy building, there’s also a practice range, two putting greens and areas to practice chipping and sand wedge shots. For a real lesson in swing management, instructors can videotape your motion and point out exactly what you need to work on. There’s certainly something to be said for watching yourself on a split screen that compares your mechanics to those of a tour professional.

Daily clinics for groups, junior clinics, and private lessons keep the instructors involved in a variety of activities. Novices get extra instruction on rules and etiquette, while more experienced players may choose

to focus on just one aspect of their game. They can also offer consultation for fitting clubs and demonstrate the impressive new Callaway Optifit clubs, which mix and match shafts and heads for more than 800 custom permutations.

So, am I a golfer after one lesson? Hardly. I’m certainly more pussycat than Tiger, but I’ve discovered that that’s okay too. The game doesn’t care what kind of golfer I am. And as Billy says, seeing is believing, and watching that ball sail straight away after my first lesson—well, he made a believer out of this rank novice.

For more information on The Greenbrier Golf Academy, call 800-852-5440. Packages start at \$989.

**Jim Myers** is a nationally recognized food critic and contributing writer for *The Greenbrier Magazine*. Jim was also a first-time golfer when visiting The Greenbrier Golf Academy.