



GOLF Pro putter rakes in national honors

Public Opinion Online
By ED GOTWALS

Sports editor

In his real career, he is Dr. Lloyd-Braden Lebo, a dentist in Shippensburg.

But on most weekends between March and October, he changes into a polo shirt, hops into his car, drives south for a few hours and becomes ... Brad Lebo, professional putter.

While we can't quantify how he is as a dentist, it's a fact that Lebo is one of the very best pro putters in the United States.

Since 2004, Lebo has taken first, second and third in the Professional Putters Association (PPA) National Championship, was named the 2006 PPA Pro Player of the Year, won the 2008 PPA doubles title and 2007 PPA Southern Open (a major), won the 2006 U.S. Pro MiniGolf Association (USPMGA) U.S. Open and 2008 Masters and has collected numerous other tournament titles and state tour awards.

"Starting in 2004, it kind of burst open for me," Lebo said. "I've been able to stay highly competitive."

When pressed, Lebo admits that he's probably in the top five nationally, and at times has been considered the player to beat.

This weekend, he's in Chicago competing in the USPMGA U.S. Open Championship, a tournament he won in 2006. He will play six rounds on Saturday and two more Sunday.

"Hopefully, I can have the two biggest trophies of that tour at the same time," said Lebo, who won the USPMGA Masters last October.

At some point, you may be wondering: What exactly is professional putting?

The U.S. has two main tours -- PPA and USPMGA -- in addition to about five regional tours. The PPA plays all of its events on regulation Putt-Putt Golf Courses, while the USPMGA plays its events on more conventional miniature golf courses.

Putt-Putt courses all use the same carpet and have standardized aluminum rails. Mini golf courses have various types of carpet and use brick or cement walls.

Lebo plays on the PPA Tour and until 2005, those players could play only in PPA events. That has changed, allowing the top pros to compete for more titles.

"The scoring is different, too," Lebo said. "In the PPA, the concentration is on making many aces and no bogeys (all holes are par 2). In USPMGA

Advertisement

TARGET WEB COUPON
EXPIRES 2/27/10

25¢ each

with purchase of twenty-five
4x6" Kodak instant prints



This coupon is intended for use by the original recipient only and is void if copied, scanned, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. Limit one offer per transaction. GiftCards and tax will not be included in determining purchase total. No cash value. Offer available at Target One Hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One Hour service limited to machine capacity.




9856-0113-1882-4674-0306-4005-84

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™



events, scoring is generally much higher and the focus is on course management, patience and making the deuce putts."

As an example, Lebo sites these statistics:

In last year's PPA National Championship, he played 12 rounds (18 holes each) and was 146-under par for an average score of 23.9 strokes per round. That's a lot of aces. But he still lost by two strokes.

In last year's USPMGA Masters, which he won by two strokes, Lebo was "only" 36-under par for 12 rounds (33.0 average).

At Putt-Putt course No. 3 in Richmond, Lebo holds the scoring record with a 19 -- that's 17 holes-in-one and one par 2. His one mini golf course record is a 26 at the Hawaiian Rumble course in North Myrtle Beach, which means he had 10 aces.

How Lebo got started in this sport was "purely random," he said.

While he was in dental school in Philadelphia in 1988, the Emmaus native was with some friends and they happened upon on a Putt-Putt course. Lebo noticed that the course had weekly tournaments, so he went back the following week.

"I had played golf in college (University of Pennsylvania), and putting was always the strength of my game," he said. "Once I played in

that first tournament, I realized that it was a different animal."

But he met some pros at that course and got interested. He remained an amateur until he finished dental school, then turned pro in 1991.

Lebo said, "What I found out was that these events are very well-run and the competition is intense. I could see there was a lot to learn, but I got hooked on the competition."

Between then and 2004, Lebo had some high notes. The best was probably in 1997 when he won the Putt-Putt Skins Game on ESPN and earned \$5,500.

With his success between 2004 and now, he's pushed his career earnings to over \$99,000.

In the week before most events, Lebo will put in about 30 hours of dentistry. He'll leave Shippensburg, where he's lived since 1997, very early Thursday morning and drive to the course -- most are from Virginia to Georgia. Normally, his wife Kathy does not accompany him.

"When I'm there, it's all business," he said. "I put in 12-hour days and there's not a lot for her to do."

Lebo will practice all day Thursday and Friday, then play an event Saturday and another Sunday. Major events are held over two days and Lebo will get there much earlier. Before his 2006 PPA Nationals win, Lebo spent two weeks at the

Advertisement

TARGET WEB COUPON
EXPIRES 2/27/10

25¢ each

with purchase of twenty-five
4x6" Kodak instant prints



This coupon is intended for use by the original recipient only and is void if copied, scanned, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. Limit one offer per transaction. GiftCards and tax will not be included in determining purchase total. No cash value. Offer available at Target One Hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One Hour service limited to machine capacity.




9856-0113-1882-4674-0306-4005-84

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™



course preparing.

"The difference between regular golf and this is that in regular golf, you have to be more creative," Lebo said. "The holes are in different places each time.

"In Putt-Putt, it's all about execution. You play the holes again and again and you learn everything about each hole and know exactly what you need to do. You have to adjust for temperature, humidity and wind, but it's essentially the same putt each time."

In addition, pro putters have to know just how to bank their ball off the rails, using the spin of the ball to produce a certain kick, similar to billiards. The holes may include obstacles, side hills and angles to add difficulty.

"In Putt-Putt, all the holes are aceable," he said. "In mini golf, there are some you have to lay up on."

Lebo owns eight putters that he uses for competition ... but they're all the same model, a Carbite B-One, with the same specs.

"They only manufactured it for about two or three months," Lebo said. "So I went on E-bay and bought all I could find."

He uses a Titleist Pro-V I ball for most events, although in certain conditions he will change.

The pro tours go from late March until late

October and Lebo will play somewhere most weekends.

During the off-season, he will play some regular golf ("just to keep my stroke up") and he also uses what he called his "toys" to practice on his basement carpet. About three weeks before the first event, Lebo will make a few day trips to courses to sharpen his game.

Then it's time to make his weekly change from wearing a dental coat to a PPA polo shirt. Instead of filling cavities, he fills up the holes with golf balls.

Ed Gotwals may be reached at 262-4755 and egotwals@publicopinionnews.com .

Putting machine

Brad Lebo of Shippensburg has been a professional putter since 1991, primarily on the Professional Putters Association (PPA) tour. He's also played in some events of the U.S. Pro MiniGolf Association (USPMGA).

Here are some career highlights:

in career earnings -- \$99,350

in 2006 PPA National Pro Player of the Year

in won 2006 PPA National Championship; placed in top 10 in 8 other years, including 2 seconds

Advertisement

TARGET WEB COUPON **EXPIRES 2/27/10**

25¢ each
with purchase of twenty-five
4x6" Kodak instant prints




This coupon is intended for use by the original recipient only and is void if copied, scanned, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. Limit one offer per transaction. GiftCards and tax will not be included in determining purchase total. No cash value. Offer available at Target One Hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One Hour service limited to machine capacity.

9856-0113-1882-4674-0306-4005-84

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™



and 3 thirds

n held PPA scoring record for 108-hole tournament (142 strokes) for 4 years

n won 2 USPMGA major events, 2008 Masters and 2006 U.S. Open

n has appeared on TV twice - 1997 Putt-Putt Skins Game on ESPN (which he won), and 2003 PPA World Match Play

Advertisement

TARGET WEB COUPON
EXPIRES 2/27/10

25¢ each

with purchase of twenty-five
4x6" Kodak instant prints



This coupon is intended for use by the original recipient only and is void if copied, scanned, transferred, purchased, sold or prohibited by law. Limit one offer per transaction. GiftCards and tax will not be included in determining purchase total. No cash value. Offer available at Target One Hour Photo Labs. Go to Target.com/photo for the location nearest you. One Hour service limited to machine capacity.




9856-0113-1882-4674-0306-4005-84

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™