Future head golf pros in our midst
Randy Kambic, Special to Coastal Life 12:20 a.m. EDT July 11, 2015

Behind the well-run programming at our courses, hands-on grooming of future supervisors of premium quality golf experiences goes on with Spanish Wells Country Club in Bonita Springs serving as one of many vivid examples.

While Kristina Carvalho and Daniel Herrman, first assistant golf pro and assistant golf pro, respectively, aid head golf pro and director of golf Matt Oakley in organizing and conducting lessons, clinics, other events plus myriad other duties, they’re also making career advancements with his full support.

“Each person I recruit and train is moving forward and wants to eventually be a head pro,” said Oakley, in his third year at the club. “Everyone I have needs to be an expert in all aspects of operations,” which follows a progressive program so there’s “a lineage of success in each position so if one of us isn’t here, all of the details are recorded.” “I’ve learned everything from him, especially the importance of details,” said Carvalho, who moved from Connecticut to first work with Oakley when he was head golf pro at The Dunes Golf and Tennis Club on Sanibel in 2011 and then stayed with him in moving to Bonita a year later. “We go over checklists daily to ensure the success of every tournament,” including many men’s and women’s member-guest and couples events.
Carvalho, who played for St. Leo University near Tampa, completed the three-stage PGA program and became a full PGA member in June 2014. “I want to hear her say she’s going to Augusta!” exclaimed Oakley.

Herrman, a native of suburban Chicago, graduated from the Keiser University College of Golf in the fall of 2013. He then directly joined Spanish Wells and took the first step in becoming a PGA pro by passing the Playing Ability Test at San Carlos Golf Club last April. He echoes Carvalho on Oakley’s attention to details.

“It’s all about preparedness. We also hold post-event meetings so we know everything,” said Herrman, adding he plans to become a PGA pro by the end of 2016.

“They work long hours,” said Oakley. “When I ask them to set up the driving range or drive the carts, I want them to know the goal (becoming a head pro) is always there.” The assistants also gained experience in developing unique and creative events recently. Instead of the traditional birdie-a-thon to raise funds for the Southwest Florida PGA chapter’s annual campaign for PGA Charities, a volunteer team predominantly of Spanish Wells employees washed about 70 member golf carts in NASCAR team-style last February, raising $1,700 and earning a fifth-place award out of 100 clubs. In May, a surprise 100th birthday party was held for club member Fred Thompson, who made a hole in one last year, right before he went north for the summer. Carvalho took photos that she emailed to all members.

“You could see the joy on his face,” she said. “Matt has helped both of us to think outside the box in ways to serve members.”

Herrman added, “Matt takes pride in teaching and training. He has a true passion for caring for his assistants.”

Minneapolis native Oakley was first an assistant golf pro at the TPC of Myrtle Beach in 1995, then TPC Summerlin and TPC Canyons in Las Vegas, learning “much of my teaching philosophy from the late Jim Flick,” before spending a season at the Doral Golf Resort and Spa. He became a PGA member in 2005 and joined The Dunes three years later. He has earned multiple PGA Teacher of the Year nominations and was a 2011 Southwest Florida PGA Merchandiser of the Year finalist.

He’s proud that all of his assistant pros have obtained PGA memberships and ultimately become head pros after apprenticing with him. “I want them to have a template for achieving success on their own someday.”