



BACKSPIN // BY MIKE CULLITY

Pulz shaped by triumphs on and off the course

At her golf academy near Phoenix, two-time LPGA winner Penny Pulz coaches golfers on how to achieve peak performance using an approach that trains the body and the brain simultaneously.

The 58-year-old Australian's journey to her current vocation began with two significant events 25 years ago. The first came in March 1986, when she won the Circle K Tucson Open, coming from seven strokes behind with a final-round 64. And the second came later that year, when she embarked on a life of sobriety.

Her performance in Tucson—where a barrage of back-nine birdies and a last-hole eagle at Randolph North GC vaulted Pulz past two future Hall-of-Famers, Pat Bradley and Betsy King—forged a memory of the type of high-level athletic achievement that Pulz has subsequently sought to understand in hopes of helping others attain it.

"I saw everything totally clearly," she recalls. "When they talk about being in the zone, that was me."

Through her studies with Dr. Les Fehmi, a Princeton, N.J., psychologist, Pulz has developed a teaching approach she calls "mental athletics" that emphasizes awareness of attentional styles as a key to peak perfor-

mance in sport and life. "It's how you pay attention to your attention," she says.

Pulz works with a wide variety of students, including aspiring tour players, seniors and those dealing with chronic pain. She runs a golf program for children with autism and next month plans to launch a program for soldiers returning from Afghanistan, using golf to help them resume their lives at home, she says.

A Melbourne native, Pulz came to the United States in 1974, qualified for the LPGA on her first try and won the 1979 Corning Classic. But while attaining success, she struggled with addiction. "I didn't know how to relax without drugs or alcohol," she says. She started trying to change her life in January 1983 and has been sober since November 1986, she says.

Pulz retired from the LPGA in 1992 and now lives in Sun City, Ariz., near her golf academy at Sun City CC. Although she cherishes memories of her victory in Tucson, she is most grateful for her sobriety.

"I wouldn't have the life, I wouldn't have the academy and I wouldn't have the ability as a coach and trainer if it wasn't for being in recovery," she says. **GW**

TIME CAPSULE



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