

Magnificent seven notch it up a level

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Seven PGA Professionals are celebrating after becoming the first in the UK to complete a Level 4 Certificate in Coaching Golf.

The dedicated group notched up the achievement while combining busy day to day roles and reflects the ever increasing coaching standards among PGA pros who fulfil a range of coaching commitments from grass roots through to European Tour and world level.

The seven in question are Greg Brodie (Foxhills, Surrey), Ben Knight (Chartham Park, Sussex), Alex Sarry (West London Golf Centre, Middlesex), Steven Orr (Cranfield Academy, Sussex), **Rick Valentine, pictured**, (Loretto School, Musselburgh), Sam Johnstone (Tidbury Green, West Midlands) and David Brooks (Warren GC, Essex).

The PGA launched the UKCC (United Kingdom Coaching Certificate) endorsed qualification in conjunction with the University of Birmingham aimed at developing coaching expertise and specialist knowledge and skills.

Reflecting on the experience, the seven all described it as a highlight and had further fuelled their passion for coaching.

Brodie, a PGA Advanced Professional who is also a county coach with Surrey Ladies and U17boys, described it as a wonderful experience.

“I’ve been coaching for 15 years and was already extremely passionate about coaching but this has definitely enthused and excited me,” he said.

“The process has enabled me to underpin the work that I have been doing at the coalface with theory. It has helped me make sense of my world.”

Knight, also a PGA Advanced Professional, revealed it was a massive challenge, but one worth embracing.

“What we learned at Level 4 can be applied across the spectrum - from four to 90 year olds,” he said.

Saary, a PGA Advanced Professional, and head county coach for Middlesex and England U16 coach for the south region, added: “One of the biggest things I’ve learned is the importance of getting to know the pupil at a deeper level, understand where they are coming from and understanding their world more thoroughly and in the process giving them a programme more bespoke to them.”

Orr, a PGA Advanced Fellow and director of coaching at the Cranfield academies based in Sussex where he is responsible for 18 coaches, has been spurred on to take a PhD.

“It’s probably the best thing I’ve done. I think the reason for that is that it caused me to step back and look at my coaching and look at it as a whole, how I make decisions and why I do what I do,” he said.

Scotland-based Valentine, a PGA Advanced Professional and director of coaching at Loretto School and Scottish Ladies Coach, revelled in meeting other coaches from different sports.

“The course was not sports specific, there were a lot of different sports among lecturers and those on the course and we learnt a lot from them from what they did in their sport.”

Johnston, an England Golf regional coach with U16 girls and U18 mixed, rated it tough but enjoyable.

“It’s easy to carry on in your own bubble, but the course forced you to step out of your own comfort zone. It looked outside of golf as well, learning how other sports work was great and invaluable.”

Brooks, a PGA Advanced Professional and lead coach with Essex Golf Union and England regional coach for West Midlands Boys U16 echoed many of the sentiments of his colleagues.

“Coaching for me has always been about making informed decisions and the more you can make those decisions when they are informed by research and experiences, the better,” he said.

On the back of his Level 4, Brooks has gone on to complete his Masters in Sports Coaching on developing mental toughness in young golfers.

PGA members interested in finding out more about the Level 4

** To register interest in either the Level 3 or Level 4 qualification, contact The PGA Coaching Department through coaching@pga.org.uk or call 01675 470333