

*Life in*  
**DAVENPORT**

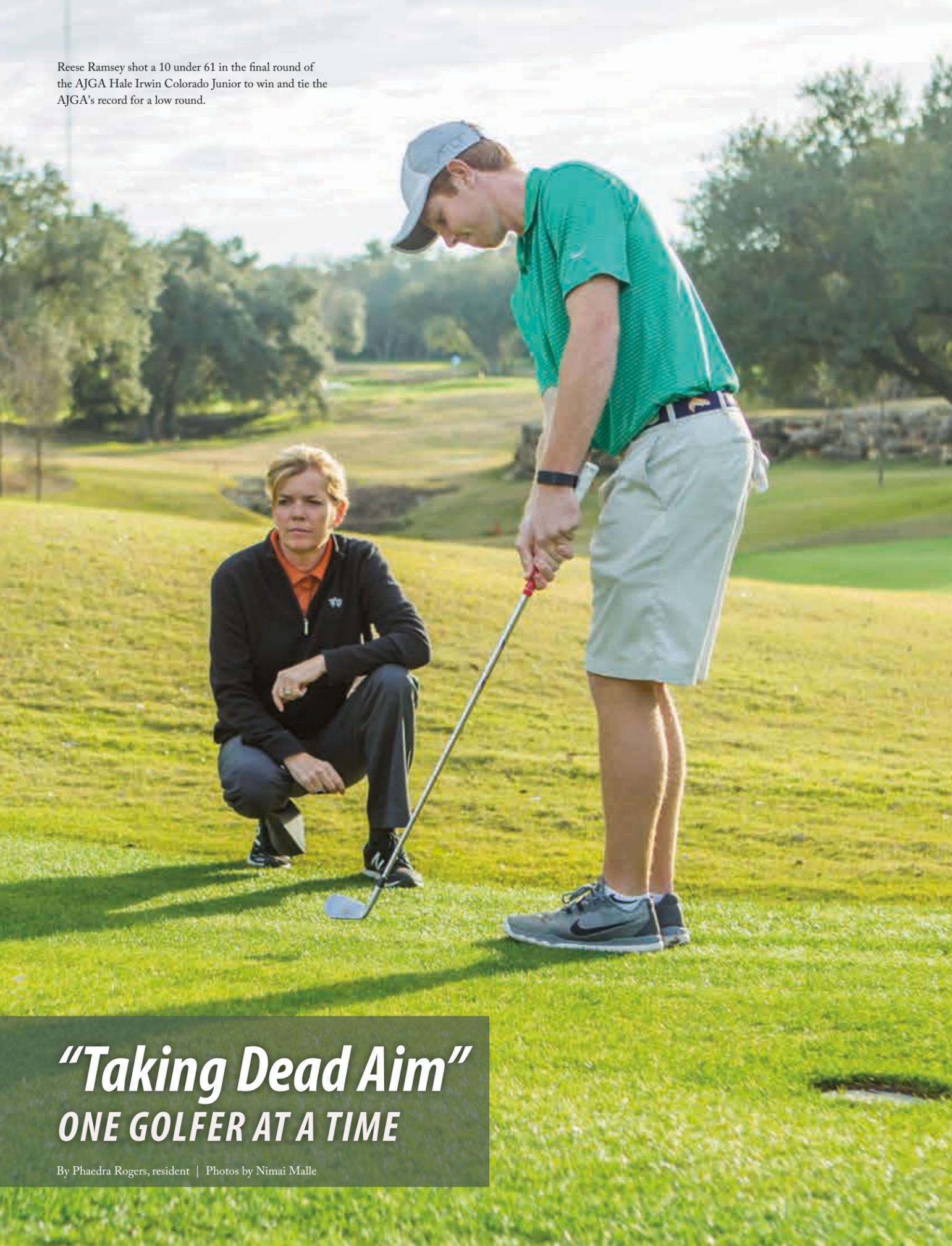
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Meet Ann Marie Gildersleeve.

Reese Ramsey shot a 10 under 61 in the final round of the AJGA Hale Irwin Colorado Junior to win and tie the AJGA's record for a low round.



## “Taking Dead Aim” ONE GOLFER AT A TIME

By Phaedra Rogers, resident | Photos by Nimai Malle



Given the supercharged interest in golf lately, I felt fortunate that Ann Marie Gildersleeve, Director of Instruction at Austin Country Club, carved out some time to meet with me. Her plate is full. She's been named the Southern Texas PGA Section Harvey Penick Teacher of the Year, U.S. Kids Master Teacher, and is also a four-time Southern Texas PGA Western Chapter Harvey Penick Teacher of the Year winner. Not that she's one to boast. She's grateful to have received such recognition, but to Gildersleeve, it's the mementos from her golfers that mean the most. Artwork from young students, photos and signed golf bags are proudly displayed in her office.

Shortly after we sat down to chat, I asked about a large glass vase on her desk filled with golf balls. As if to say, “I thought you'd never ask,” she proudly pulled one out to show me. “These golf balls are from my players' best rounds. They sign and date the ball, then give it to me as a reminder of their proud moment,” she explains. The keepsakes adorning her office seem to tell a story of two-way dedication between player and coach. This sort of devotion isn't freely given; it's earned. It's also visible, especially on the golf course. On any given day, you'll likely see her with a trail of golfers at her heels.

Her extensive approach to teaching is something that Dale Morgan, Head Golf Professional at Austin Country Club, says is making a measureable impact on her students. “Ann Marie has a very rare and special way she interacts with her golfers.

Any coach can teach a swing, but not all take the time to mentor their students on and off the course,” says Morgan. That's no small thing considering many of her golfers train with her for years.

While Ann Marie encourages her golfers pave their own path to success, she'll boldly be the first to go bat on their behalf. She's been known to get involved in the college recruiting process for her high school students, which is something the golfers' families gratefully accept. To that end, Dale also points out that Ann Marie takes coaching a step further by staying in touch with her golfers once they've moved on. As Morgan sees it, “She doesn't just wave goodbye and good luck when they move on to the next chapter in their lives; she wants to see them succeed no

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**You have a vast array of golf students from young golfers to professionals. How do you juggle coaching such different skill sets?**  
 The vast array is what I enjoy most about what I do! Getting to know my students is critical. The best way to help someone achieve their goals is to listen and understand what they desire to achieve. From the young beginner to the tour player, the strongest fundamentals matter most. For example, fundamentals begin with the grip, and then we can begin to develop the swing that best fits them. One of the greatest joys I get from teaching is having a student start with me at very young age, advance to high school, earn a scholarship to play golf at college and then perhaps aspire to play golf professionally as an adult. That is such a thrill for me. Golf teaches great values that we carry with us for a lifetime.

**Harvey Penick's famous phrase "Take Dead Aim" is very personal to you. Please share how it has inspired you.**

It not only inspires me, it's part of my daily life. To this day, I wear the logo silhouette of Harvey, which also states "Take Dead Aim." It's so much more than aiming at the flagstick or target or getting the ball in the hole. The phrase goes beyond the three simple words. To me, it is a way of life. It's shooting for the stars, taking risks, focusing on specific goals, knowing your purpose and going for it all. Take Dead Aim encompasses everything we do! Keep life simple, keep life fun, enjoy the people around you and always help others, even if they don't ask for it. Be thankful for what you have in life and always do your best.

If you want more information about Ann Marie Gildersleeve, please visit her website at <http://www.annmariegildersleeve.com>.

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matter their path." Ann Marie may teach them for a number of years but deeply cares for them for a lifetime.

**Take us back to the beginning. When and where did you start playing golf? Was it love at first swing, or were you slow to warm but ultimately addicted?**

It was love at first swing. I give my grandfather the biggest tribute for introducing me to the game at an early age. My initial excitement about learning golf was getting to spend time with him. When I was just 9 years old, I lost my father to cancer, so spending time with my grandfather were moments I treasured, even to this day. Growing up around golf, my grandfather showed me what golf could do for me not only as a sport but the life lessons it provided. Those lessons impacted my life and influenced my decision to get in the golf business; it molded me into the person I am today.

**Golf legend Harvey Penick was a mentor and role model to you. Tell us how you came to know him and how he influenced you.**

In my early career as a teaching professional, I was fortunate to be a Senior Instructor at the Harvey Penick Golf Academy. It was through Harvey's teaching that I give credit to him for the teacher I am today. Much of his philosophy was based on keeping the game simple, following sound fundamentals and building strong relationships with players.

As the Director of Instruction at Austin Country Club for the past 16 years, I feel so blessed to be living my dream. I proudly

take the responsibility of following in Harveys Penick's footsteps, as I have formed incredible relationships along the way. Most notable are his son, Tinsley Penick, and Dale Morgan, my boss who hired me at Austin Country Club. Dale is a great leader that continues to champion all that Harvey represented at ACC and in this golfing community.

**You're the first woman selected by the South Texas PGA Section for Harvey Penick Teacher of the Year. That's a major accomplishment; what was that like for you?**

To be given such a prestigious award, in honor of Harvey Penick, one of the greatest instructors of all time, is simply remarkable. This was not an award I won on my own, as it took the team effort of many people to accomplish the respect of earning this award. My family, Austin Country Club, and my players — whose trust and willingness to learn — all contributed to this award. To quote Harvey, "and if you play golf, you're my friend," has made an impact on how I approach teaching this great game.

**Given your successful track record, what advice can you offer someone who wants to learn golf but is perhaps intimidated by the game?**

As a PGA professional, I strive to grow the game in our industry. Instrumental to growing the game is making it fun! It's important to me that when someone steps on my lesson tee, we have fun together and we learn together. I'm there to help them find their own love and passion for the game that I have grown to appreciate so much.

