



JB KIM

from South Korean Military Special Forces to Midwest Section PGA Teacher of the Year and More...

by Ann E. Butenas, contributing writer



JB Kim (on right) has been honored as the Midwest Section PGA Teacher of the Year for 2018 and 2020. His list of achievements continues to grow. Kim credits much of his success to his boss, golf professional Curt Nelson, general manager (on left) of the Overland Park Golf Division, who continues to serve as Kim's mentor.

It's been said discipline is the bridge between one's goals and one's accomplishments. Midwest Section PGA member JB Kim has been a bridge for many aspiring golfers, most notably in the junior arena. Upon first meeting Kim, if you sense a driven, dedicated, inspiring, and goal-oriented individual, then please don't abandon that initial conclusion.

Kim, a native of South Korea who served in the South Korean military for three years in Special Forces, brings his own unique force to the game of golf, propelling him to greater heights within the industry. Kim's resume is peppered with a host of esteemed accomplishments that immediately set the stage for respect, integrity, and trust. He became the first PGA Certified Instructor in the State of Kansas; the students he has coached in the past five years have gone on to win 30-plus junior tournaments; and his notable certifications include SNAG Certified Coach, First Tee Certified Coach, U.S. Kids Golf Certified Coach, PGA American Development Model, TPI Junior and Golf Mechanics Level 2, and AimPoint Certified Coach.

Kim has also been honored as the Midwest Section's Teacher of the Year for 2018 and 2020. His list of achievements continues to grow, but what is expressly unique about Kim is his unwavering passion and love of the game, which truly makes him a standout on the course. As a Class A PGA Certified Head Instructor, Kim most recently took first place at the Midwest Section PGA Senior Championship. True to his heart of service, Kim donated his winnings to the Midwest PGA Foundation.

"Fellow Section member Randy Towner and I actually tied in this event, and we both decided to donate our winnings," recalled Kim.

Impressive as that is, it is the path that Kim has traveled to get where he is today that truly crafts his story. Until age 25, golf was not even on his radar. When he was young, he was quite athletic and excelled in myriad sports, including baseball, tennis, and ping pong. However, fate entered the picture when Kim was in his mid-20s. He was in Jupiter, FL, at the time and met Warren Bottke, PGA Master Professional and coach to American professional golfer Brooks Koepka.

“Bottke coached Brooks as a young kid, and he taught me how to teach the game of golf,” said Kim, who, when he began his adventure on the greens, impressively managed to score in the high 70s. Fast forward several months, and Kim realized he was on to something.

“I knew I wanted to be in golf and knew I could teach the game to others,” he explained.

Kim worked tirelessly to get to where he is today. In the beginning phase of his journey, it was common for him to hit upwards of 400 golf balls a day. He became a Section Associate in 2000, at which time he began teaching at Sykes/Lady Overland Park Golf Club. He was hired by then Head Pro Tim Ellison to teach kids ages 8-17. Over the years, Kim has been a strong influence on the success of his students, which include the following front runners:



Above photo (on left) is Ryan Lee as a University of Chicago freshman with his 2020 Midwest PGA Student Athlete award. In the photo on the right is Lee’s golf instructor JB Kim. Lee was also the AJGA Champion (2020); 5A MO State Champion (2021, 2019); Midwest PGA Junior Champion (2021); Kansas Junior Amateur Champion (2021).

Above photo on right is Claire Sullivan, an Olathe Northwest High school sophomore with her 2022 Midwest PGA Student Athlete Award. Her instructor JB Kim is on the right. Sullivan is also a five-time KCJT/KJT winner (2022).

It is Kim’s innovative style to which students and their parents are drawn. His expectations are high, almost military-like in his methods. Discipline becomes a lifestyle for his students. It’s all about consistent practice.

“Aspiring young golfers need to do this to be successful,” he advised.

The passion Kim brings to the game is palpable. A student at heart, he claims he is still learning more each day, and that is how it should be.

“I’m still figuring out my own game,” he said. “I am blessed to learn a lot from my students, too.”

To that end, Kim’s daily calendar is full of opportunities for learning and growth for both coach and student alike.

“I taught 2,200 lessons last year [2022] and usually teach over 2,000 lessons a year,” said Kim, who does coach groups of kids, but much

prefers one-on-one coaching, as that is when he really gets to impart his wisdom, both from the game and from life, upon his students.

“Golf is something you can enjoy by yourself,” he said, smiling. “You can play alone or with anyone and have a good time. It is also a contact sport, in that it is a great way to network and meet people. It is more than just the game. It is about life.”

One item in particular that Kim has taken to heart and has learned from his students is the world of social media. Most recently, Kim, on the advisement of one of his junior students, created his own Instagram account: [@jbkimgolf](https://www.instagram.com/jbkimgolf). He enjoys using this platform to share his knowledge and interview famous golfers to share their insights, such as legendary golfer Nancy Lopez.

“My job is to educate,” Kim reflected. “History is such an important part of my life, and I believe the history others share with us is so important.”

Kim also tips his hat to golf professional Curt Nelson, Kim’s boss and General manager at MGMCO, Inc, dba Overland Park Golf Division, who serves as Kim’s mentor.

“Curt is a big part of my success, encouraging my continued learning and always supporting me with what I want to do to improve my knowledge of the game,” explained Kim.



Off the course, Kim enjoys time with his wife and two kids, who are, of course, his main source of inspiration.

Kim has definitely written some amazing chapters in his life, creating his own book of history from which others can learn. Kim is well on his way to penning quite the page-turner, not only for himself but for those he coaches and inspires. Many of his students stay with him for many years. However, what he imparts upon them undoubtedly stays with them for a lifetime. ✍️



Ann Butenas is a contributing writer for the Midwest Section PGA. For more information about the Midwest Section PGA, call 816.229.6493 or visit www.midwest.pga.com.