

## Remember 1-Irons?

To golfers of a certain age, the names are like old friends: MacGregor, Spalding, Toney Penna, Ram, and Powerbilt – brands popular in the 1970s and '80s. But they haven't gone away completely thanks to **Cory Crelan**, who is giving new life to those persimmon woods and forged blade irons relegated to the garage, attic, and bargain bin once the technology revolution arrived in the 1990s. His latest venture, **Retro Golf Club** supplies classic clubs for outings that turn back the clock post-hickory and pre-titanium.

Crelan, a PGA professional, former account executive, and current sales director for Weatherman Umbrella, has been working on the concept for the better part of three and a half years in his spare time.

"I've been competing a little bit less than I had in the past, and it's interesting to me and a lot of fun to get immersed in these older clubs," he says. "It's still kind of shocking to me that they're just very overlooked and have very little value on in the marketplace. But it made this entirely feasible for me to undertake."

Crelan began acquiring clubs when he bought up a large collection off a friend of a friend's father-in-law who had passed away, driving to the Lower East Side of Manhattan from his home in Connecticut and filling his Mercedes sedan with 40 sets of irons, 60 persimmon woods, and "a slew of putters." The \$200 price tag made it a bargain.

At the time, Crelan had no idea what he was going to do with them before his business sense kicked in. At that point, he found two more sellers in North Carolina to expand his inventory, one of whom had been a pretty good amateur player with an old-time club repair shop.

"It had cobwebs in the corners and hadn't been cleaned in probably 40 years," Crelan says. "But he had a lot of these old clubs, and I was very, very familiar with them. A lot of these people unarmed a bit when they find out that it's my intention for them to be used again, and that I'm not 'flipping' the clubs."



Crelan has curated the collection and placed them in Jones Sports classic carry bags with vintage head covers. He has regripped every club and sandblasted many of the faces so that they are in "very playable shape."

His vintage equipment provides an alternative experience to hickory events. The difference is that these clubs are more familiar to hit and don't require a swing adjustment.

"I'm kind of putting the stake in the ground and saying that there's this middle, second era of golf equipment," he says. "For whatever reason, people have been led to believe that this era of equipment is unplayable, and that you'd have to be a single digit handicap. I'm a big car enthusiast. If I threw you the keys to a 1980 911 Porsche, you would take it for a ride. You wouldn't be scared away."

"It would be absurd to think you have to be a racecar driver in order to drive that car," he adds "Sure, the equipment is less forgiving, and there is a loss in distance, but there are very much some positives. The equipment is just simply beautiful, the same way that a 1980 911 is prettier looking than a current one."

Wound balata golf balls and polyester Sansabelt slacks are strictly BYO. ■

## Lifesaver

**Julio Ugaz** was just doing his job, just as he's done at Tamarack Country Club in Greenwich, Conn., since he began there in 2007. But one Sunday last November, the 62-year-old member of the kitchen staff performed the ultimate act of kindness.

Ugaz was replenishing the buffet table when he felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned around and saw a member pointing to her throat.

"She looked very scared, and I was very scared," Ugaz says. "I knew she was in trouble and what to do."

Immediately, Ugaz spun her around and performed the Heimlich maneuver. In an instant he dislodged the mini meatball in her throat, and the crisis was averted. They were the only two people at the buffet table at the time, so Ugaz's timely intervention was critical. The member, who wishes to remain anonymous, is a former nurse who was fully



trained in life saving measures.

"She said it was as perfect of a Heimlich she's ever witnessed or done," GM Brian Gillespie says. "She's had to do it multiple times herself, and he just sprung into action and did it on the money. She said she knew better than to go and try to take care of it herself. But we were talking about how dangerous that can be. Usually a person gets embarrassed when that happens. They might

go into the bathroom to take care of it themselves and ended up passing out. She kept saying how incredible Julio was."

Ugaz had never performed the maneuver before – "That's why I was so scared," he says – but relied on the lifesaving training the club provides for the staff through the Greenwich Fire Department. It was the second time the training proved invaluable. About four years ago, Gillespie's assistant GM performed the Heimlich on a member who was choking while

sitting at her table.

Ugaz simply carried on after the incident as if nothing had happened. Gillespie didn't find out about it until the following Wednesday, and when he went into the kitchen to talk to Ugaz about it, none of the other staff knew about it, either.

"He didn't go back there saying, 'Hey, I just saved somebody's life,'" Gillespie says. "He's just very humble and soft-spoken. But you can see the pride. I mean, he's been sending all of my LinkedIn posts [about it] back to his mother in Peru."

Gillespie brought Ugaz into a board meeting, where he was given a standing ovation. In addition, the Metropolitan Golf Writers Association is honoring him with its Mary Bea Porter Award at its 2023 dinner in October. The award recognizes an individual or organization in golf who, through a heroic or humanitarian act, saves or better the lives of others.

"I'm honored by everything," Ugaz says. "I don't think I'm a hero," I just did what I was supposed to do." ■