

From Body Guard to Club Fitter of the Year

Bob Vansweden was born in St. Petersburg, FL in 1967 where he still lives today with his family. Growing up Bob played other sports like soccer, boxing, and skateboarding. Bob's first career choice came in 1986 where he started working in the music industry, more specifically on tour with rock bands. Bob had the privilege of traveling all over the world working with the likes of Roxx Gang, Megadeth, Judas Priest, Bryan Adams, and Extreme.

It wasn't until 1991 when on break from touring that Bob picked up golf as a sport. Two years later after playing every day, Bob gave up the Rock-n-Roll life to settle down and start a new career. Bob's first job in the golf industry was working in a small town in an equally small golf shop, where he picked up a few club repair skills along the way. Bob soon got the hang of club repair but was always striving to improve his craft, so he went to his first club repair school in 1992. That soon followed with an advance club repair and custom fitting class. In 1993 Bob opened what would later be the first location of The Golf Repair Center in a 10 x 20 room in the back of a Play It Again Sports store. One year later Bob moved into Proline Golf of St Petersburg, a 20,000 square foot golf retail store. The owner Jeff Jones, who hired Bob as the store's club repairman,



leased a 1,000 square foot space in his store. It is here that Bob would stay and work with Proline Golf for 8 years.

In 2001 Bob moved his store to 9th Street taking over a store front that at the time was called the Golfer's Attic in St. Petersburg --this location lasted for 2 years. Then Bob was approached by Jim Smith, owner of the Missing Links Driving Range in Largo. Jim asked Bob to take over the pro shop at the driving range. Bob opened his doors on Feb 1st 2004 at the Missing Links Driving Range. For the past 6 years Bob has worked to become one of the top custom fitters in the nation. He has won custom fitting awards every year from golf companies like Titleist, Cobra, and Ben Hogan

TaylorMade-adidas Golf Company named Bob VanSweden from Golf Repair Center in Largo, Florida the "2009 Club Fitter of the Year," an honor that recognizes individual retailers who share TaylorMade's values and are relentlessly committed to fitting their customers into the best performing golf products for their game. This is his second time having the title, 2007 was his first.

"I can't think of a more deserving individual to be TaylorMade's Fitter of the Year than Bob VanSweden," said David Abeles, TaylorMade's senior vice president and general manager. "Bob's talent, dedication and enthusiasm for fitting have helped hundreds of golfers hit longer and straighter shots and enjoy the game more. Besides being great at what he does, he's also a great friend, and we're extremely proud to honor him."

"Outside of my son being born and standing on the stage at Wembley in London, this is the biggest honor I have ever received," VanSweden said. "I never dreamed I would rise to the top in a second career."

VanSweden was selected through a nomination process that starts with the local TaylorMade sales rep identifying an individual from their territory who is

respected by their peers, has mastered the craft of club fitting, yet seeks to continue to grow his skill and knowledge of the club fitting process. After being identified by the local sales reps, the nominations are submitted to the regional sales manager to identify the best candidate from



each of the four TaylorMade sales regions in the United States. The four regional Club Fitters of the Year nominations are submitted to a committee at TaylorMade HQ to identify the National Club Fitter of the Year.

Bob says, "I try everyday to fit players the best I can. Weather they are a touring pro or a weekend player. When I see them coming in weeks later after being fitted and saying to me they dropped strokes off their game because of my help, it makes all the hard work and long hours worth it. I have one of the best jobs in the world." 🏌️

