



with Charlie Epps

TALKIN' GOLF

Nothing beats a buddy trip

There's one thing for sure. The only way you're going to become the golfer you want to be is through practice and goal-setting.

In 1978, as the golf professional at Houston Country Club and member of the PGA of America, I wanted to participate in—and more importantly win—all of the major championships in the Southern Texas PGA section and in the nation, too.

Sports psychologists would call that goal-setting, but I just knew that being a good player would benefit my career as a golf professional and teacher.

So here's what I want you to do this year. Set a goal to play in the Puerto Vallarta Pro-Am the first week of December. Why, you ask? Because every time you head out to practice or play a round of golf, I want you to think about winning the Puerto Vallarta Pro-Am (puertovallartaproam.com) with your buddies and a PGA professional. Having a mindset of preparing for a great event like this at the end of the year is a great example of goal-setting. Practicing and playing with an end goal in mind will also help you win your club championship, whatever flight you're in. It's all about winning and preparing to win.

I've played golf all over the world on all the great courses. When you talk about Bucket List items, I've already filled up one bucket and I'm working on my second bucket.

So I can tell you this: It doesn't get much better than playing December golf in Puerto Vallarta. In fact, the only thing better is playing in a professionally run competitive tournament on spectacular courses in the best weather conditions.

That's exactly what you get in the Puerto Vallarta Pro-Am. It's 72 holes of best-ball stroke play for teams of five—four amateurs (your buddies) and a PGA pro. My longtime friend Billy Sitton and his group have been putting on this great event for almost a quarter of a century. Everything is first class, and it's a very affordable trip.

The courses are scenic, fun and challenging. There's the Marina Vallarta Golf Club, just steps away from the hotel. It winds through a historic neighborhood before jutting out to a point along the Gulf of Mexico. You'll also play at least two rounds in the mountains. Just a 20-minute bus ride takes you to Vista Vallarta Golf Club, home of two championship courses designed by Jack Nicklaus and Tom Weiskopf.

I've played in this great event 10 times since 1996, including last year and the year before that. Puerto Vallarta is the safest city in Mexico, far removed from the crime and violence in the border towns. We all stay at the Casa Magna Marriott, which is a fantastic resort hotel (casamagnamarriottpuertovallartaresort.com). With four restaurants, three bars, a huge swimming pool and an award-winning, full-service spa, you don't have to leave the resort for anything other than the golf.

There are nightly activities and plenty of down time to enjoy the accommodations. It all makes for the ultimate buddy trip, but it can be whatever you want. Many golfers bring their wives or girlfriends along with them for the trip. The women seem to love the spa and pool area, which is right next to the beach and Gulf of Mexico. And it's a short and safe cab ride to the historic downtown shopping area.

Maybe the best part is the weather. While Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth gets hit with chilly temperatures and rain (like it was in early December last year), it's post-card-perfect 75 degrees and sunny nearly every day in Puerto Vallarta.

I want you to commit to playing in this tournament. Get your buddies to commit, too. To prepare, you should commit to at least six lessons with your PGA professional this year. Get your pro to join your team. I promise you'll have the time of your life. I'll even buy you a margarita when we get down there.

To register, go to puertovallartaproam.com. **TL**

Known as "The Golf Doctor," Charlie Epps has been one of Houston's most respected PGA golf professionals for more than 30 years. In 2012, Charlie was inducted into the Texas Golf Hall of Fame and recently joined Arnold Palmer and Jim Nantz as an official spokesman for Insperity. Listen to "The Charlie Epps Golf Show" 8-9 a.m. Saturday mornings on 1560 AM in Houston and YahooSportsRadio.com everywhere else.



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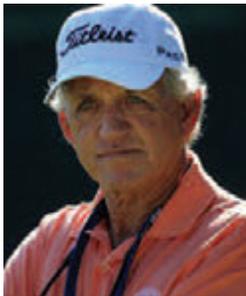
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