

**The United States Blind Golf Association  
is proud to recognize and induct  
Al Balukas  
into its 2012 class of the Hall of Fame.**



Al Balukas was fortunate, growing up in Brooklyn, NY, to have a father who encouraged him to learn how to play the game of golf (instead of baseball). He also learned that the game could be played by anyone regardless of age, ability, or even disability.

Al arrived at Edgmont Country Club, located just outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in February of 1969. His intention was to become a member of the Professional Golf Association. Tiny Pedone, who, along with Nazz Mariani, owned Edgmont Country Club and was the resident golf professional, was very involved with blind golfers. Tiny challenged Al, "If you can give lessons to a blind golfer and keep him playing the game, you just might be able to make a living giving golf lessons."

Al gave his first lesson to blind golfer, David Kriskoff, and embarked on a 44-year (so far) association with blind golfers. Most of the blind or vision impaired golfers have been members of the Mid Atlantic Blind Golf Association (MABGA). Al helped to get the first fund raising tournament organized for the MABGA in the late eighties. That tournament continues to be held every year. The funds enable the MABGA to host about 25 tournaments annually. Al conducts clinics several times a year and lessons whenever possible. His love of golf is contagious. Because of his patience and encouragement, many of the blind golfers have become better and better at the game. Some have even gone on to qualify to play in the United States Blind Golf Association (USBGA) National Championship.

With Al's encouragement and the support of Pam Mariani (Nazz's daughter and present co-owner of Edgmont Country Club), the USBGA National Championship was held at Edgmont in 2010. It was the second time the nationals were held at the club which prides itself as the "home of blind golf". Of course, Al was seen throughout the event doing whatever needed to be done!

In recent years, Al has become involved with The First Tee and is very active with junior blind golf clinics. Many Philadelphia area golf pros and blind and vision impaired kids have benefited from Al's dedication to teaching blind golf. He has made sure that the opportunity to learn golf is possible for anyone of any age, despite any vision loss. His time and talent, which he has shared with blind golfers throughout his career, should be awarded with a place in the USBGA all of Fame – Friend of Blind Golf category.

Below are the names of five USBGA members who have worked with Al Balukas and played in the National Championship:

- Bob Allman
- Frank D'Ottavi
- Jim Ganter
- Sheila Drummond
- Bennie Pearlman
- George Pilz