

OTTAVIO COPPOLA

**Golf Manager,
Argentario Golf Club, Argentario Golf Resort & Spa**

Interview with M. James Ward

Background

Born in Naples, Ottavio Coppola has worked in golf for almost 20 years after a lifelong love of the game, which he played for fun from an early age. His first role in golf was at the Toscana Golf Club, just north of Argentario, where he was involved in the marketing of the resort and as Golf Club Manager for over seven years. The 56-year-old then moved to the Argentario Golf Resort & Spa in Monte Argentario, where he has been the Golf Manager for almost 11 years.

At Argentario he oversees the golf club and course and looks after club partnerships with other clubs and companies and corporate memberships. A member of AITG (Italian Golf Managers Association), he organises over 110 amateur tournaments and four proams every year at the Argentario Golf Club. Just recently he signed a 10 year cooperation agreement with The PGA. This agreement is the starting point to develop a new Golf Academy and to adapt the Argentario Golf Course to PGA standards.

The Coppola Story

Formerly I've been involved in other golf clubs, always looking after both the technical aspects and the sales and marketing activities of the club; everything was rolling smoothly but after a few years I felt like I was missing something, until I met and got in touch with Mr. Augusto Orsini, the owner of the Argentario Golf Resort & Spa and President of the Argentario Golf Club. They were looking for a new Golf Manager, I was looking for a new challenge, so we actually found each other.

Over these nine years spent at the Argentario Golf Club I've had the proof that this place is an endless source of new activities and new perspectives. No day is the same as another, and this peculiarity is the main reason for me to never get bored, and to find out day by day a new boost to keep on committing more and more.

You wake up in the morning - what's the driving passion?

Maybe it sounds obvious, but golf is and has been my main passion for more or less the whole of my life; finding the way to combine work and passion is actually the biggest opportunity I could ever have wished for.

For many international visitors Italy is not known as a primary golf destination





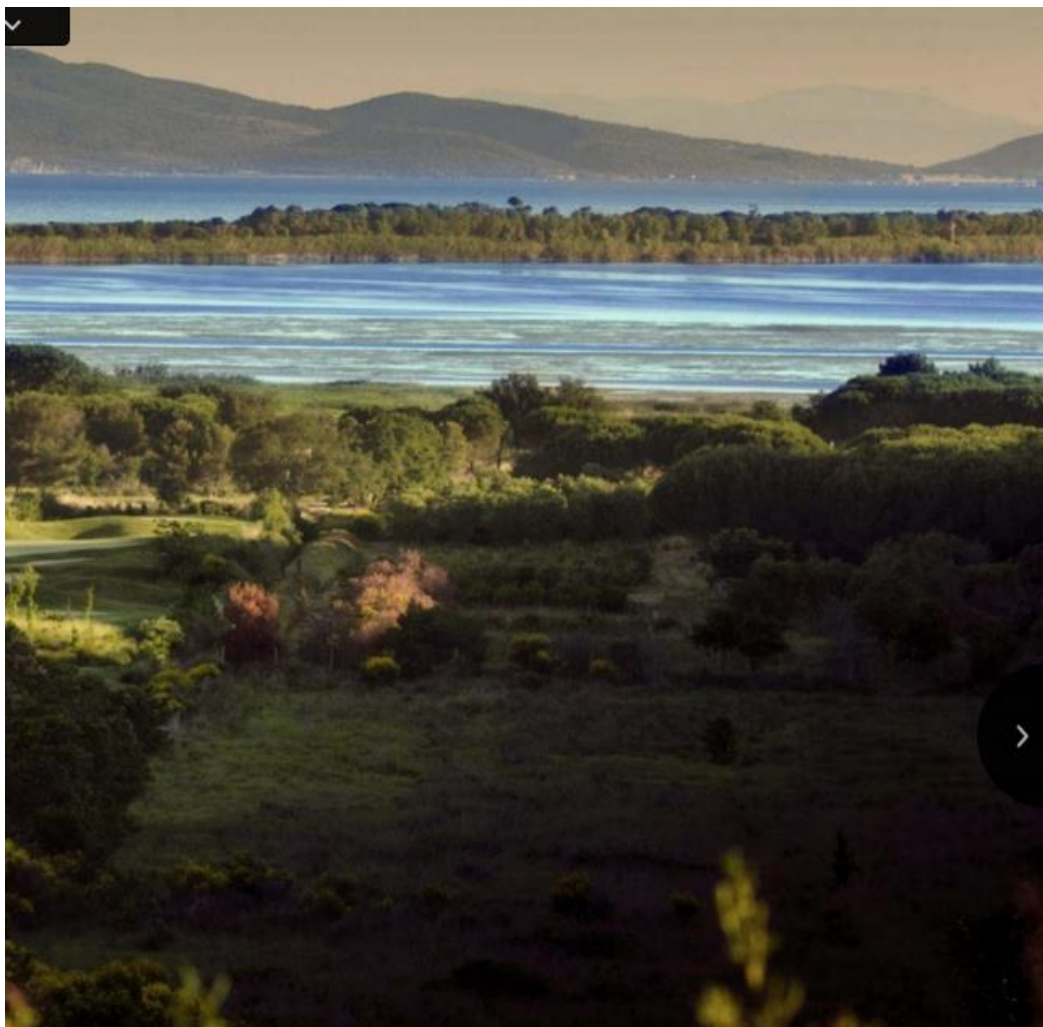
- how are you and others within the country changing that perspective?

I believe that the best way to establish Italy as a primary golf destination is to develop strong cooperation between clubs located in the same area, highlighting several aspects of our country, such as the Italian climate which is one of the most favourable in Europe. And to remind people Italy is probably the most endowed country in the

world for artistic and historical heritage, so overseas visitors can have an incredibly varied and enriching travel experience. Last, but not least of course, is the longstanding tradition of the Italian hospitality, backed up by wonderful food and wine.

Most of your European visitors come from what areas?

Actually, our foreign visitors come from all



over Europe: from Germany as well as from France, Sweden and Finland; and over the last few years, the number of players from the UK and Ireland has increased a lot.

You've been involved with past clubs - what was the tipping point prompting you to take on the position at Argentario?

Actually, you're right: I spent many years involved in golf, and the choice to move

from my former workplace to Argentario came from the demanding targets and the work challenges that the position I'm holding here offered me.

Of what overall significance is the 10-year agreement recently signed between the facility and the PGA?

No doubt about it, it is the positive image and associated prestige that will create

great returns for Argentario as well as a greater visibility for our new Golf Academy, which is currently in the making, through all the European golf professionals. I think it's also a very important starting point for us to work harder and harder to maintain the high standards that we have in our golf resort.

The Ryder Cup will be in Italy near Rome in 2022. What kind of impact do you see the matches having on Italian golf?

The main goal would be to increase the number of Italians playing golf. Here in Italy we have a very good climate that permits golf to be played all year round more or less all over the Peninsula, a whole host of amazing golf courses and of course great golfing champions - the recent great results and achievements of Francesco Molinari is the proof! I hope the Ryder Cup matches will be the showcase for all these aspects that will definitively raise the number of Italian players.

If you could change one thing in golf unilaterally - what would it be and why?

For the most of the Italian population, the golf environment is still seen as a sort of niche phenomenon limited to old and extremely rich people. Probably overcoming this prejudice would be the starting point for a new growth of golf.

The major golf organisations globally - USGA, R&A, PGA of America, PGA Tour, LPGA - are all seeking ways to attract Millennials, women and minorities to the sport. If you were counselling them, what would you advise be done?

Probably the best way to spread this amazing game would be to create targeted campaigns showing how far the reality of golf is from the stereotypes often linked to this world. For example, in Italy, as I told you, golf is still seen by the majority of people as an elitist and old environment, where women and kids are kept on the sidelines. In order to demonstrate that this point of view is simply not the case, the Italian Golf Federation, supported by the Italian golf clubs, has started to promote several activities dedicated to bring kids and women closer to golf and, I am pleased to say, with quite good results.

The biggest challenges facing Argentario - short and long term - is what?

Every day is a challenge, if you are passionate about what you do! Above all, after signing this agreement with The PGA, we are really focused on boosting and perfecting all those aspects of the club and the golf facilities that we are already very proud. We have started with big works both on the course, which already was in a very good shape, and on the Golf Academy that will be the flagship of the club.

Best advice you ever received - what was it and who from?

The best advice I've ever received? I don't know, maybe it's still to come.

For more info go to:

www.argentarioresort.com





*Above: The dramatic entrance to the Argentario Golf Resort & Spa.
Below: Argentario golf course.*

