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Coach Hardy helps SMC Golf Program Excel

By Dean Okamura



Campo grad Dan Cone now plays golf for SMC Photo Tod Fierner

The St. Mary's Men's Golf Team is quickly becoming the Cinderella story in our backyard. Since 2000, Coach Scott Hardy has committed himself to building a winning culture and those efforts are paying off big.

Ten years ago the Gaels were ranked 270th out of 300 Division I schools. Last year they ranked in the top 30. This meteoric rise has given several standout players the confidence to play professional golf.

Moraga Country Club is the home practice area for the Gaels. They are welcomed to course and driving range access. In return, the membership can enjoy watching the players' skills and get to know them while they practice. It is a common site to see a friendly tip being offered to a less skilled member or a lesson provided to an aspiring youngster. The players remain approachable and polite even when the pressure of preparing for a tournament is foremost on their minds.

It has long been held that golf requires a high level of civility. "I think 50 / 50," says Hardy when asked if it is his team's culture or the nature of the sport that compels his players to be model citizens.

In 1999, Hardy was a new St. Mary's grad who worked in the billing department of a law firm. "I knew pretty quickly that I really wanted to stay involved with golf," Hardy says with a smile. After a quick season under then Coach Randy Kahn, who was also Director of Golf at Moraga Country Club, Hardy was given the reigns.

Learning quickly was nothing new to Hardy. He came to St. Mary's to play baseball, not golf. He didn't even take up the game until he was 16. "I really liked the longevity of golf," Hardy states as he looks back on his decision to drop baseball for golf. "I ended up trying out for the golf team and the coach let me stay and work on becoming a better player."

Hardy can now reflect back on two semifinal appearances in the USGA Mid-Ams (2006 and 2007) and an Invitation to the Jones Cup, an impressive resume that puts him among the elite in amateur golf.

Hardy relates well with players and spends hours recruiting for his team. "You just never know for sure," how a kid will react when he gets to college, says Hardy. "You can spend hours watching a kid play, but in the end you aren't sure if he's playing for his parents or himself," he says, adding that he thinks the risk of signing a player goes up with the level of scholarship money provided.

Current Gaels to look for include Robert McRae, younger brother to Mike, and Dan Cone, a Moraga product and graduate of Campolindo.

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