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## the accidental golf pro

**Macalester College's golf coach Martha Nause didn't know what to do after college in the late '70s, so she decided to give the LPGA a try.**

**BY TAD REEVE, Pioneer Press**

Martha Nause spent 22 years playing professional golf, but even now she can't walk by a basketball gym without wondering what might have been.

Nause, 50, was a natural athlete back when young women were expected to be cheerleaders. There were no team sports for girls when Nause attended Sheboygan North High School in Wisconsin. But that changed in 1973, her senior year, on the heels of Title IX legislation.

"One day, the P.E. teacher came up to me in the hallway and said the school is starting a girls basketball team and I was going to be the point guard," Nause remembered. "Our uniforms were T-shirts that we magic-markered our numbers on."

Nause continued her fledgling athletic career at St. Olaf College in Northfield, where she played on the basketball and volleyball teams.

"Looking back on it, I guess you could call us the pioneers," said Nause, who in 1990 became the first woman inducted into the St. Olaf Sports Hall of Fame. "We were finally starting to get some opportunities, but it was all pretty primitive. We wanted to play, to compete, to have instruction. And all we had available to us for coaching was someone who threw a whistle over their neck and didn't know anything about what we were doing. It was frustrating.

"If I had my choice of all the sports out there, like the girls do today, basketball would have been my game."

Instead, she chose golf, which, along with tennis, was the only professional sport available to women.

Nause became a professional golfer almost as accidentally as she did a basketball player. St. Olaf started a women's team her junior year, and she played in "maybe five one-day meets over two years," she said.

A biology major who didn't know what to do with her life, Nause was chatting with a classmate one beautiful spring day her senior year.

"She said, 'So, what are you doing today?' I said, 'Pretending I'm a golf pro,' " Nause said. "Then she said, 'Well, don't pretend; do it.' And the seed was planted."

Six months later, Nause went to LPGA Tour qualifying school and earned her tour card.

"I had no idea what I was getting into," she said. "My first year on tour, I made \$1,800 and that was just enough to keep my card. It took me six months to make a cut and back then making the cut didn't guarantee you made any money.

"My first check was for \$220. I still have a picture of it. I laid the check on the grass and took a photograph. I didn't know how long I was going to last, so I had to savor every moral victory."

Nause lasted 22 years.

From 1978-99, she won \$1,390,171 and three tournaments, including the 1994 duMaurier Classic, which was an LPGA major at the time.

She shot a final-round 65 to win the 1988 Pat Bradley Invitational, then holed her approach shot on the final hole for an eagle 3 to win the 1991 LPGA Chicago Sun-Times Shootout by one shot.

During the bulk of Nause's two decades on tour, home was a travel trailer she pulled behind her automobile. "I spent two months every winter living in Orlando," she said, "but the rest of the time, I lived in that trailer, which I dragged around all over the country."

She made the Twin Cities her permanent home 12 years ago and lives now in Inver Grove Heights.

Nause still plays a pretty mean game of golf, but limits her competitive rounds to the Women's Senior Golf Tour, which is trying to extend the careers of former stars like Amy Alcott, Patty Sheehan and Kathy Whitworth the way the Champions Tour does for so many former PGA Tour players.

Nause has been a regular on the fledgling tour since it began in 2001, and she ranks 14th on the career money list with \$87,315. She was second to Marilyn Lovander, a Willmar native, at the 2003 Hy-Vee Classic in Johnston, Iowa, and third at the 2001 Great Lakes Classic in Green Bay, Wis.

She and Lovander will be partners at the BJ's Charity Championship, a two-player team competition next weekend in Quincy, Mass.

But what keeps Nause busy these days is her role as men's and women's golf coach at Macalester College, where athletics take a definite backseat in a challenging academic environment.

"When I started, we had more casual golfers. It was basically free golf for whoever wanted it," Nause said. "At first, I had to basically beg people to play. But I'm more competitive than that, and now so is the team."

The Macalester men's team finished seventh in the 10-team Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference tournament this year, the first time in a decade it wasn't dead last. The women's team was eighth in an eight-team field, "but we were last by a million shots in 2004 and last by just a few shots in 2005," Nause said. "So we're making a lot of improvement."

Recruiting "is brutal," Nause said. That's because what she's looking for are good golfers with an average SAT score of 1300 and the ability to pay \$36,000 in annual tuition, room and board.

And golf is never the first priority. Macalester player Kylie Thompson will miss next season to spend the academic year studying at the London School of Economics. Jesse Hollander will take next season off to prepare for dental school. Grace Arnold will return to the team but expects her game to be a bit rusty after a summer internship in China.

"One of the reasons I like working with the kids is because they are all so brilliant," Nause said. "When I'm talking to them about different golf issues, like the physics of the swing, they understand. They're fun to teach because they get it right away, at least intellectually."

## Macalester men get life lessons as LPGA caddies

Martha Nause has spent her five years as coach of the Macalester College men's golf team telling her players what it takes to play at the highest level. After 22 years on the LPGA Tour, she should know.

That doesn't mean her players understand. "They're all used to just playing and not thinking about what they're doing," she said.

But two of her players got to experience some of Nause's life lessons firsthand, serving as caddies on the LPGA Tour for seven weeks this summer.

Eric Kelsey caddied for Marilyn Lovander, who grew up in Willmar, Minn., and Ben Finkenbinder caddied for Sherri Turner, a former Twin Cities resident who helped Nause coach the team last fall.

Nause's attempts to raise her players' games — she emphasizes yardage books, concentration exercises and the ability to make 50 3-foot putts in a row — have been met with groans of resistance.

"I make them get into their head, and they don't always like it," she said.

But as Kelsey and Finkenbinder saw this summer, that is exactly how Annika Sorenstam, Lorena Ochoa and Paula Creamer play the game.

"All the things I've been trying to teach the team, all the little things that make you play better, those guys saw that's what they need to do," Nause said. "They said, 'Martha, all that stuff you've been teaching us, they all do it out on tour.'"

"It was probably one of the best things that could happen for our team. I told them, 'You need to bring that back and share it with the rest of the team.'"

It's a start. But even Nause admits playing smart can take her players only so far, especially in the competitive Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, where Gustavus Adolphus, St. John's and St. Thomas are among the best NCAA Division III programs in the country. Gustavus won the national championship in 2004.

"I always try to coach my kids to play smart golf," Nause said. "And they are listening. They do say to me, 'We're playing so much smarter than these other teams, we're making better decisions on the course, but they're still beating us.' "

— Tad Reeve

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