



## The Golf Chronicles

*For more than 60 years, golf has been the sport of champions at Furman.*



After a promising start in 1930, golf became a popular sport at Furman. Coached by Dizzy McLeod (far left) the 1931 team included (left to right) Bob Fiser, William Williams, Harold Seigler, Ben Ashcraft, manager Frank O'Kelley, and Raven Mc David.

Before the bulldozers started to grade Furman's new campus in the early 1950s, President John L. Plyler liked to walk around the 750 acres at the foot of Paris Mountain and plan the location of buildings and other facilities. A baseball player in his youth, he was convinced of the value of athletics and wanted students to be able to enjoy sports on the remote new campus. As he paced across the gently sloping hills west of the main campus, he decided that this would be the perfect place for a golf course.

"It was his dream to have a golf course," says Francis W. Bonner, vice president and provost emeritus who was then dean of the Men's College. "He thought it would be a good way to use some of the land.

"Dr. Plyler and I would often get out and walk. There was a little log house where the pro shop is now, and Dr. Plyler said, 'This is where the first hole should be.' We actually laid out the first three holes. He also said we should dam up the stream that ran nearby and make a water hazard, and that's how the pond at the third hole was created."

Plyler consulted architect General Robert Dean of Boston, Mass., and landscape architect R.K. Webel of Long Island, N.Y., who were collaborating on the design of the campus. They agreed that it would be possible to build a golf course, and Webel retained the consulting services of Walter Cosby, who was superintendent of grounds and greens at the posh Greenbrier Hotel in White Sulphur Springs, W.Va. Webel and Cosby designed the course as

they walked the land, staking out the holes and greens locations.

According to Tyler Seymour, former golf course supervisor who became Furman's superintendent of buildings and grounds, the concept for the design and construction of the golf course was determined by the need to keep costs down. Using earth-moving equipment, the men building the course simply "pushed up" dirt to form greens that were sloped and elevated enough to allow for surface drainage. The course was built without an irrigation system or underground drainage.

The greens and tees were sprigged with Tifton 427 hybrid Bermuda, and the fairways were later overseeded with common Bermuda. The first nine holes opened for play in the spring of 1956, and the back nine was finished in 1959. Although the course was primitive by today's standards, it was a great asset to the university at a time when few other colleges had courses.

Thanks largely to Dr. Plyler's dream of building a course, golf at Furman has flourished and brought more national attention to the university than any other intercollegiate sport. Over the years, the men's and women's programs have attracted a great many talented players who have put Furman on the map in college circles. Many alumni have gone on to make a name for themselves - and Furman - in the world of professional golf.

Men's golf began humbly in the early 1930s. During those difficult Depression years, enrollment at Furman declined steadily, and many students who enrolled could not pay their bills. After missing two faculty payrolls, the administration initiated a number of austerity measures. The football coach and one assistant coach were dismissed, and all athletic scholarships were eliminated. The president urged an emphasis on intramurals and less expensive spring sports.

As one of those "less expensive spring sports," men's golf - which had been first played at Furman in 1930 - was made a varsity sport in 1932. The first team won half of its matches, and the 1934 and 1935 teams won the state championship. Although the team played some matches at the Greenville Country Club, scheduling and coaching problems, as well as the lack of a home course, plagued the team in its early years.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, male students were rapidly called into military service. By the spring of 1943, enrollment of men at Furman was only 40 percent of normal, and the board of trustees approved a recommendation that all intercollegiate sports be abandoned for the duration of the war. The golf program was discontinued until 1949.

Coached by Bill Young, the head football coach, and later by former Furman golfer Bentley Hines, the team began rebuilding in the early fifties and showed gradual improvement. Led by Captain Jack Buice and freshman Heyward Sullivan, who would become one of Furman's star golfers, the team achieved a 12-2 record in 1956. One year later, with Walter King as captain, the team scored 17 victories and lost only two matches.

The highlight of Sullivan's college career came in 1959, when he won the Southern Conference individual championship at Mid Pines Golf Club in Southern Pines, N.C. Former president of Hales Jewelers in Greenville, Sullivan never turned professional but is well known in amateur circles. He won the South Carolina Amateur title in 1967 and, in 1996, reached the finals of the U.S. Senior Amateur at Taconic Golf Club in Massachusetts.



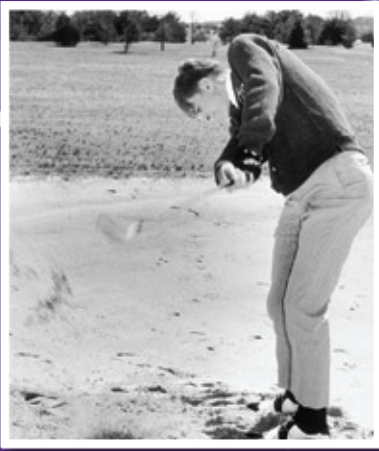
Built in the late 1960's as shown above, the Furman Pro Shop has been expanded twice to include offices and locker rooms.



With 17 victories and only two losses, Furman's 1957 team enjoyed a winning season. Players included (front row, right) Heyward Sullivan, (back row, left to right) Walter King, Robert Dacus, Richard Smith, Jack Runion, and Ben Padgett. Former basketball star Neild Gordon (front row, left) was the coach.

# F

## Golf History Timeline



David Strawn won the Southern Conference championship in 1969 and 1970 and reached the finals of the U.S. Amateur in Toledo, Ohio, in 1973.

In 1961, the transition to the new campus was completed when the last of the women moved on campus. By this time, the golf team was practicing on Furman's course and playing home matches at the nearby Green Valley Country Club. In 1962, the team began to play its home matches on the Furman course.

During the early sixties, the men's team enjoyed several winning seasons, placing third in the Southern Conference in 1960 and second in 1962. In 1962, Walt Smith won the Southern Conference title. In 1965 and 1966, Furman basketball legend Frank Selvy, then an assistant basketball coach, coached the golf team.

Bob Hitch was hired as golf course director in 1966, and he later served as coach. The first thing Hitch did was to build a pro shop, which provided a place to greet prospective players and also allowed the university to open the course to the public. He built a driving range and a cart shed, and purchased several carts. As more scholarship money became available, he urged that the golf program be upgraded.

Under Gary "Doc" Meredith, who served as men's golf coach for nine years, Furman golfers reached new heights. In 1969, the team won a record 19 matches and placed second in the Southern Conference. In 1970, the team

finished first in the Southern Conference tournament in Pinehurst, N.C. David Strawn, an outstanding golfer, won Southern Conference individual championships in both 1969 and 1970. Now an attorney in Charlotte, N.C., Strawn made national headlines when he reached the finals of the 1973 U.S. Amateur at Inverness in Toledo, Ohio.

Led by such strong players as Tommy Gaul, Bo Leslie, Frank Ford, Ken Ezell, and Keith Storms, Furman continued to dominate the Southern Conference throughout most of the 1970s. Ezell won the league's individual title in 1975, 1976 and 1977. In 1977, the team competed in the NCAA Championships in Hamilton, N.Y., and finished in 18th place.

The 1970s will always be remembered as the time when women's golf started at Furman. Not only did the Lady Paladin golfers compete for the first time in 1972, but in their first season of play they became a national contender. The women won all of their 11 regular-season matches and then went on to place eleventh in the National Intercollegiate Women's Golf Championship in Las Cruces, N.M.

Ruth Reid, former chair of the health and physical education department, says that the first team was organized mainly because of the interest of two women: Gwen Hyatt, a junior, and Beth Solomon, a high school student who wanted to come to Furman. "Gwen had played competitive golf through her country club, and her mother was a golfer," says Reid. "Beth was impressed with our beautiful golf course. Her father was a golf pro, and he owned a golf course."

Reid set up some matches and recruited several other Furman students who had played at country clubs to make up the rest of the team. She found a little money in the physical education budget to pay the team's travel expenses.

"Our team wiped everybody out," she says. "Because of the type of school Furman was, we attracted girls who had played competitively at the country club. So we made a big splash."

**The early 1950s** – President John L. Plyler decided that the new Furman campus would be the perfect place for a golf course.

**1955** – Carl Clawson, Furman's new resident engineer and manager of the physical plant, and a construction crew made up mostly of Furman employees began to build the first nine holes.

**Spring of 1956** – The first nine holes opened for play.

**1959** – The back nine was finished.

**1975** – O'Neal Owen, a certified golf course greens superintendent, was hired to bring the course up to USGA standards. He redesigned some bunkers, added others and built new tees on several holes to lengthen the course.

**1977** – The tees and greens were irrigated.

**1985** – Furman brought in a turf grass specialist to assist with the conversion of the greens to bent grass.

**1988** – Furman installed an irrigation system that provides water for the entire course.

**1995** – Betsy King, Beth Daniel and Dottie Pepper contributed \$25,000 each toward building a new practice facility and the REK Center for Intercollegiate Golf. The practice facility features a putting green, chipping green, fairway and greenside bunkers, and a covered, heated tee area. The REK Center, also funded with a gift from an anonymous donor, contains locker rooms, coaches' offices, a meeting area, and a lobby. The lobby is dedicated to the memory of Connie Timmons, longtime hostess of the Furman Pro-Am breakfast.

**2008** – The Furman Golf Club was renovated by Kris Spence. This most recent renovation encompassed redesigning all of the green complexes and changing from bent grass to Champion Bermuda, repositioning each of the fairway bunkers to bring them into play for the modern era, and adding approximately 200 yards to the championship layout. Spence, who has renovated several Donald Ross designs in the Carolinas, added many Ross characteristics to the Furman course.

**March of 2012** – An extensive renovation of the REK practice area began. Four new Champion Bermuda grass greens were added and the existing bent grass was reconditioned, as well. The approximately seven-acre area, which was designed by Scot Sherman, provides players with multiple short game practice possibilities and an opportunity to play multi-directional par-3 holes.



photo by Scott Halleran/Getty Images Courtesy of LPGA

Beth Daniel, whose total LPGA earnings exceed \$8.4 million, has won 32 professional victories and two U.S. Amateur Championships.

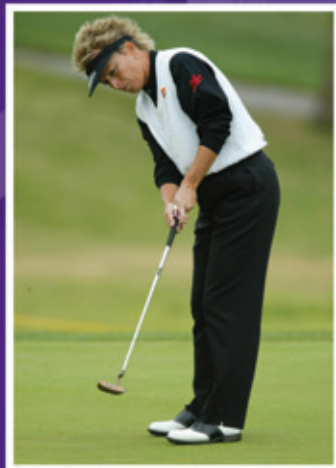


photo by Donald Miralle/Getty Images Courtesy of LPGA

After graduating from Furman in 1987, Dottie Pepper established herself as one of the top stars on the LPGA tour, then retired and began a career as an analyst with the Golf Channel.



# FURMAN

## The Golf Chronicles

*Few colleges have produced as many prominent professional golfers as Furman*



That was just the beginning of Furman's meteoric rise to success in women's golf. By 1974, Betsy King of Reading, Pa., and Beth Daniel of Charleston, S.C., had joined Solomon, Cindy Ferro and other talented players to strengthen the Furman team. In June of that year the women traveled to California and finished third in the National Championships at Singing Hill Country Club in El Cajon. In 1975, the team finished fifth in the nationals in Tucson, Ariz.

In 1976, Meredith took on the additional responsibility of coaching the women, and Sherri Turner of Greenville joined the team. After winning the Michigan State Invitational and two other tournaments, the Lady Paladins captured the AIAW National Championship in East Lansing, Mich., in just their fifth year of play.

The Furman women also won a host of individual honors. Daniel won the U.S. Women's Amateur Championship in 1975 and 1977, competed in the Curtis Cup in 1976 and 1978, and in the World Cup in 1978. King placed eighth in the U.S. Women's Open (she was also low amateur) in 1976, and Turner was named first-team All-America in 1979. Four members of the 1976 team - Daniel, King, Ferro, and Turner - went on to play on the LPGA circuit.

Brad Faxon of Barrington, R.I., who would become one of Furman's most well known players and a PGA celebrity, joined the men's team as a freshman in 1979. Pacing the team for the next four years, he won 11 individual championships, including the Southern Conference title in 1983. He also played on the U.S. Walker Cup team and received the 1983 Fred Haskins Player of the Year Award, which is given annually to the top college player in the country. He was

twice named to the National Golf Coaches Association All-America first team.

Two talented players - Jack Kay (Canadian National Junior Champion) and Steve Serotte (Junior All-American) - joined the team in 1982. Led by Kay and co-captain Eddie Kirby, the men's team won the Southern Conference Championship in 1984. Kirby, who won the Southern Conference individual title that year, joined the PGA after graduating from Furman.

The team also finished first in the Southern Conference in 1985, 1986 and 1988. Todd White a sophomore from Spartanburg, S.C., won the individual title in 1988. Willie Miller, who coached the team after Meredith's departure, was named Southern Conference Coach of the Year five different times, beginning in 1983.

The women's team also enjoyed considerable success in the eighties. Although the women did not capture another national title, they finished ninth in the NCAA Championships in 1983, third in 1984, fourth in 1985, and second in 1987. Captain Cindy Davis placed second in the NCAA in 1983.

Dottie Pepper, who joined the team in 1982, placed second in the NCAA Championship at Cape Cod, Mass., in 1985. She also competed in the Curtis Cup that year and played in the U.S./Japan Cup competition in 1986. She was named to the NGCA All-America first team in 1986. Besides Pepper, other players from the eighties who have played on the LPGA tour include Melissa Whitmire, Joan Ellis Delk, Denise Baldwin Killen, Sara Anne McGetrick, and Maggie Will-Halpin.

From 1990-2010, the men's team finished in fourth place or higher in every Southern Conference tournament but one. The Paladins placed second in 1990 and 1991, and they won the championship in 1993, 1997, 2004, and 2010. Nick Cifelli won the individual title in '93 and was named Southern Conference Player of the Year, while Jordan Byrd took medalist honors in '97 and Matt Davidson finished atop the leaderboard in 2004. Austin Reeves captured the 2010 SoCon Individual Medalist honors in 2010.

Coached by Mic Potter from 1981 until the summer of 2005, the Lady Paladins won the Southern Conference team championship every year but one from 1994, when the first

tournament for women was held, through 2009. Caroline Peek won the individual championship in 1994 and was named Southern Conference Female Athlete of the Year. Other strong Furman players have included Dagmar De Vries from the Netherlands, who competed in the World Cup in 1990; Kristel Mourgue d'Algue, who was on the French Amateur Team in 1992; and Dawn Turner, who won the individual Southern Conference title in 1995 and 1996. Jen Hanna, who coached the Paladin team from 2005-2012, was named Southern Conference Player of the Year in 1995-96 and 1997-98, and was a first-team all-America selection in '98. In 2001 Jennifer Perri earned All-America status, followed by Brandi Jackson in 2003, and Sarah Johnston and Jenny Suh in 2004. In 2005, Suh again



*Brad Faxon, who won 11 individual championships during his college career, received the coveted Fred Haskins Player of the Year at a Furman football game in 1983.*

earned All- America status. Stefanie Kenoyer was honored as a Golfweek All-American in 2010, followed by Laura Wearn in 2013.

Through the years, Furman has continued to improve the golf course. Now a semi-private facility, the Furman golf course has almost 300 members who share the course with the Furman teams.

Furman's superior course serves as an attractive site for two intercollegiate golf tournaments. Established in 1970, the Furman Intercollegiate is considered one of the finest tournaments for men in the nation and regularly attracts some of the game's best young golfers. Many of the competitors in the tournament have gone on to become outstanding professionals on the PGA tour. Past champions include Curtis Strange, Jay Haas, Mark Calcavecchia, and Brad Faxon.

Since its inception as the Carolinas Collegiate in 1972, the Lady Paladin Invitational has hosted some of the nation's top women golfers. Past winners include Nancy Lopez, Cindy Mackey, Betsy King, Sherri Turner, Dottie Pepper, and other women who are now well-known on the LPGA tour.

Few colleges have produced as many prominent professional golfers as Furman. Faxon, who joined the PGA tour immediately after graduating in 1983, has earned more than \$11 million and become one of the PGA's most popular players, while Matt Davidson graduated in 2004 and immediately earned his PGA tour card.

Furman women have a combined total of more than \$23 million in official, career earnings. King is the LPGA's eighth all-time leader in career earnings, with over \$7.5 million. Daniel is fifth overall with \$8.4 million, Pepper is 10th all-time with \$6.8 million, and Turner has won over \$2.2 million to rank 59th. King has 34 tournament victories, including six major titles, Daniel has 32 career wins and Pepper



*Happy winners of the AIAW national championship in 1976, the Lady Paladins were also the first intercollegiate team at Furman to win a national title. With Coach "Doc" Meredith are team members (left to right) Cindy Ferro, Leigh Coulter, Betsy King, Beth Daniel, Holly Hunt and Sherri Turner.*





photo by Doug Ben/Getty Images Courtesy of LPGA

# Golf has brought more national attention to Furman than any other intercollegiate sport.

Betsy King, who qualified for the LPGA Hall of Fame in 1995, received Furman's Bell Tower Award in 1996 in recognition of her professional achievements and her generous support of Furman.

has 17. Both King and Daniel are members of the prestigious LPGA Hall of Fame. Pepper, meanwhile, was forced to retire from professional competition at the end of the 2004 season, due to a series of chronic injuries. Since then, she has made a name for herself as a golf commentator with the Golf Channel and ABC.

As successful as these golfers have become, they have not forgotten their earlier days at Furman when there was little financial support for golf. Daniel, King and Turner remember when there were no scholarships for student golfers. They also remember when their team traveled to the 1976 AIAW Championship in East Lansing, Mich., without Coach Meredith, because there was no money to send him.

"I remember saying in college, when we were having trouble getting money for the women's sports programs, that I would help those programs if I ever had the chance," says King.

She has more than lived up to her promise. In the early eighties, King convinced President John E. Johns that Furman should sponsor an annual LPGA Pro-Am to raise money for the men's and women's golf programs. She and Daniel organized the Furman Pro-Am, which was held annually from 1982-2005. Most of the Furman players on the LPGA tour took part in the tournament, and Faxon played for the first time in 1997. The Pro-Am also attracted such stars as Kathy Whitworth, JoAnne Carner, and Jan Stephenson and

personalities such as the late Dinah Shore and former LPGA Commissioner Charlie Mechem. During its 24 year history, the Pro-Am raised more than \$2 million for Furman's golf programs. The Pro-Am has transitioned into a College-Am and continues to be a direct fundraising arm for the operating budgets of both Furman golf programs.

When President Plyler first dreamed of a golf course more than 50 years ago, he could not have envisioned the Furman course as it is today, with beautifully manicured greens and long, curving fairways framed by tall trees and flowering shrubs. Nor could he have imagined that Furman would be nationally known for its talented alumni who have achieved amazing success in professional golf. Yet he would surely be pleased to know that his golf course has provided both pleasure and exercise for Furman students and helped to bring fame to the school he loved so much.

*Note: Many thanks to golf historian Thomas Finley, who provided important information for this article*



Furman alumnae who played in the 1988 Pro-Am included (front row, left to right) Dottie Pepper, Joan Delk, (back row, left to right) Melissa Whitmire, Betsy King, Sherri Turner, and Cindy Ferro.

