



**Sarah Novosel and Corbin Ford—
First Tee participants and
Rob Dauphinais, Executive Director**

Golf is more than a game



GNC: “Thank you so much, Rob, for taking time to talk with us about The First Tee Program and the Illinois PGA Foundation. We also appreciate your taking time to introduce us to two of the children who are very involved in The First Tee Program. Can you tell us a little about each of the kids and how you went about choosing them to represent The First Tee and all that the program offers?”

RD: “Sarah Novosel, 16, is a Junior at Gurin Prep High School where she plays on the golf team. She is a six-year participant of The First Tee of Greater Chicago and has progressed to our Eagle Level certification. This year Sarah earned honors as a 2012 R.B.S. Achiever of the Year semifinalist. She was one of ten participants selected from across The First Tee network of nearly 200 chapters. The goal of the award program is to positively impact youth by rewarding participants for exemplifying one or more of The First Tee Nine Core Values™. When we think of Sarah, Perseverance and Sportsmanship are just two of The First Tee Nine Core Values that come to mind.

Corbin Ford, 15, is a sophomore at Lincoln Park High School where he plays on the high school golf team. He has been a participant

Interview with Rob Dauphinais

Executive director of The First Tee and Illinois PGA Foundation
and Cheryl Justak, publisher of Golf Now! Chicago

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PGA

Illinois Section

Foundation

of The First Tee of Greater Chicago since 2008 and has progressed through the program to achieve Eagle Level. Our program director, Cole Hyland, chose him because Corbin shakes his hand every time he sees him and consistently displays Courtesy and Integrity.”

GNC: “Rob, you are the Executive Director of the The First Tee of Greater Chicago and the Illinois PGA Foundation. That is quite a large responsibility. Tell us about your roles in both of these organizations as Executive Director.”

RD: “I’m aware that it is a unique and special opportunity and a role that I take very seriously. Fortunately, I have great teams around me that make it all work – board of directors, committee members and staff that take part in planning and administering our programming and fundraising initiatives. As executive director I am responsible for shaping an annual plan to effectively make a positive difference in the community through golf.

The First Tee of Greater Chicago specifically aims to instill in young people, 7-17, a value system that will help them make healthy choices in their lives and prepares them for success in school and life. The Illinois PGA Foundation is a partner in youth development as well as promoting the goodwill of the game to additional audiences (families, community, industry). I work with our boards, committees and staff to put together the plan, the cost of the plan, and then work with our staff and committee chairs to ensure that the projects and strategies are successful.

We operate the charities as partnering organizations and together collaborate with our allied golf associations on programming that include internships (GolfWorks), junior tournaments (Illinois Junior Golf Association), caddying (Evans Scholars) and special needs programs (Sunshine Through Golf Foundation).”

GNC: “How did you get involved in the organizations and what are the short- and long-term goals?”

RD: “I am beginning my 14th year with the Illinois Section PGA in 2013 and over the years moved up to the executive director role. In that time, the Foundation has maintained a close relationship with The First Tee of Greater Chicago since it was founded in 2000 by KemperSports. The Illinois PGA Foundation has provided the chapter financial and administrative assistance since that time and in 2008 worked with The First Tee home office and KemperSports to develop a new board of directors. I was named executive director and have been working in a dual role ever since.



Immediate goals include:

1) **Continue to build our team** – advisors, coaches and volunteers so that our programs can reach and impact more young people. The Phase IV Goals of The First Tee home office are to reach an additional 10 million young people by 2017. It's going to take a far larger team than what we have today to truly service The First Tee of Greater Chicago's service area: Wisconsin border south to I-80; Indiana border west to I-355.

2) **Be a Promise Place** – Provide our youth participants the fundamental resources they need to succeed in school and in life – a safe place, caring adults, a healthy start, effective education and opportunities to help others. Our entire framework is built on delivering the "Five Promises" and will continue to drill down and review how we help youth in each of these areas."

GNC: *"I'm very impressed with the quality of individuals who are part of The First Tee Program. Tell us why a family should get their kids involved in programs like The First Tee. What are the benefits and what would the kids gain as a result of going through the program?"*

RD: "As the saying goes, 'golf is more than a game' and The First Tee program is more than just a place to learn golf. It's so much more. Golf is the vehicle and through the game our instructors and coaches teach our participants a curriculum based on nine core values and nine healthy habits. They are life lessons that are inherent in the game and taught in a seamless manner. We encourage parents to ask their children about The First Tee after each lesson. Our participants will share the core values discussed that day and lessons learned on the golf course that can also be used in everyday life at home and at school.

Also, parents will be interested to know that as kids stick with the program and certify through The First Tee Life Skills Experience (PLAYer, Par, Birdie, Eagle, Ace) they become eligible for a variety of local and national opportunities that include educational and leadership academies, scholarship programs, golf and special event experiences.

Over the years participants in our program have met President George W. Bush, have spoken in front of members of Congress in the Capitol Building, have traveled across the country for national academies, have played at the Pebble Beach Pro-Am, have been on course reporters at the BMW Championship, have made contacts for summer internships, and one participant earned a full ride scholarship to the University of Illinois. These are just a few of the special experiences that immediately come to mind."

GNC: *"What age can kids start and how long are the programs? Tell us about the Core Values that kids are taught and how that translates over to the Core Values for living your life in general?"*

RD: "The First Tee program is for young people ages 7-18. The Greater Chicago chapter offers Spring, Summer and Fall Sessions that are typically 4-6 weeks long. The First Tee Nine Core Values represent some of the many inherently positive values connected with the game of golf: Honesty, Integrity, Sportsmanship, Respect, Confidence, Responsibility, Perseverance, Courtesy, and Judgment.

The First Tee's programs are designed around helping young people understand and ultimately develop these values. The First Tee's curriculum was developed by experts in the fields of youth development, sport and golf instruction. Golf and life skill lessons are seamlessly incorporated into each experience. The First Tee participants will learn skills that can be used both on and off the golf course."

GNC: *"How does one go about getting their kids enrolled in a First Tee Program, and what are the costs involved?"*

RD: "The first thing to do is to find your local chapter of The First Tee. There are five chapters of The First Tee in Illinois that include: Aurora & Fox River Valley, Decatur, Greater Chicago, Greater Rockford, Joliet and Western Illinois University. Visit the locations page at www.thefirsttee.org to find your closest chapter of The First Tee.

At The First Tee of Greater Chicago, our typical session fee is \$65. We have full and partial scholarships available."