



Kay McMahon : eduKAYting Golfers in Our Area

By Jennafer Maselli | Photos by Angela Mia Photography and Contributed by Kay McMahon

If there is any story to prove that hard work, determination, and a playful, creative mind can lead you to accomplish your dreams, Kay McMahon's is undeniably the one.

Kay grew up in a neighborhood, in Hopkins, a suburb just outside of Minneapolis, MN, quite similar to our own. The community was full of children and they played everything they could think of including tennis, softball, basketball, golf, badminton, kick the can, board games, and even skating, and when they ran out of ideas, they made up games to play. "I loved to play and play and play some more," Kay recalled. Kay continued to play sports such as tennis, softball, and volleyball throughout her high school and college years. Such an active childhood was formative for Kay and when she got to college, she began to see how it could become a career choice as well.

Upon entering college at University of Minnesota Duluth, Kay originally intended to major in mathematics. She had always found that logic, reasoning, and analysis came easily to her, and helped her better understand the world around her. Those very skills were the same ones that made her so interested in health, physical wellness, and education. When Kay thought more about it, a degree in this major made a lot of sense for her. "I kept finding myself in the physical education department and even then I was doing the same thing I did as a kid, still playing," Kay laughed. "So the transition was very natural." For Kay though, the interest went beyond her love of athletics and extended to her analytical

mind. The degree path included courses on anatomy and physiology, and most interesting for Kay kinesiology –the study of the mechanics of the body. These classes on "movement education," Kay explained, came naturally to her, and once understood, the concepts became easy to apply to the sports that she so enjoyed, especially tennis, volleyball, basketball, and softball.

After college, Kay found herself doing as she always had, still playing sports with her friends. She and her other softball buddies watched her friend's brothers bring home exciting prizes like televisions, silverware sets, and big fancy trophies from their golf tournaments while softball was only offering small plastic trophy cups. Her competitive, lively spirit led her to thinking that a challenge like golf sounded more exciting and profitable, Kay explained with a laugh. Until then, Kay had only played golf as a leisure sport now and then with her family. She fondly recalled her childhood days in the neighborhood where her father had set up a three-hole miniature golf course with flower pots for holes in their yard. It was a penny for the neighborhood kids to play and a penny for the club. There was no way Kay could have ever imagined that those penny-driven games of golf would become such a huge part of her career. When Kay began playing golf more consistently, she and her handicap improved quickly.

At her first tournament, the Minnesota State Publinks Championship, Kay impressed even herself when she won it. "So then I thought,



“Okay, I can do this,” Kay smiled. The win was motivation enough to encourage her to enter in more tournaments throughout the following year and proved her skill with identical results. A whole year later, she won the Minnesota State Publinks Championship for a second time. While the success came easy for Kay upon launching her golf career, she knew there was a lot of work she had done before she had ever even considered the idea that was contributing to her talent on the course. Her years as a multi-sport athlete gave her physical strength and stamina, and her physical education degree taught her how to understand the movements that matter for her golf swing.

From there, Kay took a risk, hoping that it would pay off later. She purchased a Volkswagen van, remodeled it, and drove out

to California. “My mother cried that I was giving up my four years of a college education,” Kay recalled. “But my goal was to become famous and get on the LPGA tour, and eventually, turn that into a teaching career.” Kay knew she was pretty good at golf from her quick success, and believed she could make this dream a reality. She began working toward this goal, by attending qualifying schools—four-day-long tournaments, hosted twice a year, that qualified a person to play in the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA). She attended nine qualifying school tournaments, coming so close and missing by a single shot three times. Playing in a qualifying school meant that you were technically not a professional and could no longer compete in amateur level golf tournaments, and still had not been one of the few accepted to

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play on the LPGA tour. The result was a large group of new professionals that had very little competitive opportunities to play in until the next qualifying school. At this time, another professional golfer in the same position, Eloise Trainor founded the FUTURES Tour to fill this very gap, and would go on to run this tour for the next 20 years until it was purchased by the LPGA, now known as the Epson Tour, and is now used as the organization’s development tour. In that time, she and Kay became close friends.

While Kay never made it to the LPGA tour by means of the qualifying schools, at the time a very disappointing reality, looking back, she truly believes that her career went exactly as it should have. Kay’s career was full of tournament golf, including three USGA Women’s

as both Vice President and President of the LPGA Western Section, before becoming LPGA Professionals National President in 1998. While it was something Kay never intended to accomplish, she enjoyed being able to service the organization that she had made her career in. In 2010, Kay had the honor of being inducted into the LPGA Professionals Hall of Fame, and was presented the award by her long-time mentor, Shirley Spork, one of the original founders of the LPGA. To have her greatest mentor be the one presenting her induction was a surreal, high point of Kay’s career.

Although playing was what started her career, the other key component for Kay’s success has been her role as an educator. Once she had been deemed a professional, Kay was able to become a club pro and educator by the LPGA. The extensive process consists of apprenticeships, certifications, and written tests. Kay always knew she wanted to teach golf, and she was able to do just that. Her degree in physical education and her love of the sport made her a natural teacher. She and Eloise Trainor created their own golf instruction company, eduKaytion Golf and developed Golf 8.5 - Simple Steps to a Classic Swing, the basis for how they teach golf with the goal of making it simple to understand for everyone. From beginners to pros, Kay loves teaching players of all levels, and making it as clear and accessible as possible has always been her goal. “People always say to me, ‘But Kay, that sounds too simple’ and I say, ‘Well I can make it more complicated, but why would I want to?’” Kay laughed. She firmly believes golf doesn’t have to be hard and can be a sport that anyone can enjoy; her favorite moment is seeing her students accomplish something they

Professionals National Teacher of the Year and in 2016 through 2022, she has been listed as one of the LPGA's Top 50 Teachers, a very elite class out of the 1,800 certified instructors worldwide.

It was Eloise and eduKaytion Golf that brought Kay right here to the Capital Region. After selling the FUTURES Tour in 2000, Eloise returned to her hometown in Upstate New York and the duo founded eduKaytion Golf. Upon moving to the area, Kay connected with Jay and Gloria Jevons, owners of the Mill Road Acres Golf Course, and they welcomed her with open arms, offering her the opportunity to teach there. Kay is grateful to have such a friendly partnership at a course that offers great learning opportunities for her students and loves being able to share Golf 8.5 with her new students here. Now a local, and a total foodie, Kay also enjoys exploring the area and trying out all of the great restaurants that it has to offer.

eduKaytion Golf and Golf 8.5 have also offered Kay the opportunity to utilize her creative skills that she so enjoys. Many of her projects include her own photography and videography, two of her favorite hobbies and the project has made her an author too! Most recently, Kay has launched her new YouTube channel series It's OKay... to Talk Golf and she is eager to continue developing the series and bring tips and tricks to an even greater audience.

Being a golfer, the warmer seasons have always been an exciting time for Kay, and she is looking forward to everything she has coming up in the next few months, right here at home. Kicking off the summer on June 7th is International Women's Golf Day, a favorite event of Kay's. In July, Kay is gearing up to show her support for the young professionals on the rise at the Twin Bridges Championship, a tournament on the Epson Tour, being



hosted in Albany at the Pinehaven Country Club, and later in September she as Honorary Chair will be conducting the Clinic at the Links to Leadership Charity Golf Tournament open to the public at the Albany Country Club, with proceeds going to the Women's Employment Resource Center (WERC)

As summer quickly approaches, I hope that we can all carry with us a bit of Kay's spirit and zeal for all things active, creative, and playful. Whether that be accomplishing a new goal or trying out a new sport, or even picking up a golf club, Kay reminds us not to complicate life more than necessary; an important reminder for all of us to have fun and enjoy the process. And as Kay always says "Keep your head up... It's all in the attitude!"