

Carrie Vaughan

When Carrie Vaughan arrived last July at the Sun Hill Golf Club near Seoul, Korea, she didn't expect a breakthrough performance. However, she did perform an international breakthrough: Vaughan was the first American female to compete in a qualifying tournament for the Korean Ladies Professional Golfers Association (KLPGA) Dream Tour. "You could say I was an instant success—without even swinging a club," says Vaughan, who went back to the game after a seven-year hiatus. "I even had a film crew doing a documentary on me. I just smiled and said how much I love Korea. Everyone there seemed to appreciate my willingness to come overseas to play golf."

So what happened?

She says that she played surprisingly well on the first day, shooting a 74, which rocketed her to the top. She ranked 11th out of over 230 golfers. However, overconfident with two more rounds to play, she "tripped over her own ego" on the second day. "All the media frenzy and that blonde-babe celebrity golfer stuff really distracted me," she adds. She says that experience taught her not to get ahead of herself and to concentrate more on her strong mental and physical routine. She will again take up the challenge of the KLPGA Dream Tour in March 2006. "I can't wait to go back to Korea where women's golf is more popular than the men's game," she laughs. Vaughan's return is predicted to be an even bigger sensation than last time.

This still-unfolding Far East journey began for Vaughan at the age of fifteen when she was named one of Washington State's top junior golfers, only a year after starting golf. Now, at the age of 30, she says her ultimate goal is to compete at the highest level. She has finally realized this goal and continues to work hard.

Vaughan excelled academically at the highly ranked Seattle Preparatory High School (Seattle Prep) in Seattle, Washington. She was committed to her studies and graduated as a member of the National Honor Society. She also made a name for herself as Seattle's High School Individual Golf Champion for three years in a row (1991-1993). She says one of her most memorable golf moments was "When I came from five down off the front nine with the five-time Washington State Amateur Champion to win the match and tournament. I played the back nine 3-under par to go to the nineteenth hole." In 1993, Vaughan finished in the Washington State Amateur Top 10 and was a quarterfinalist in the PNGA. Coaches and teachers attest to Carrie's exceptional concentration, maturity and competitive nature on the course and in the classroom.

In search of a top-ranked golf team and a challenging education, Vaughan chose to attend the University of Southern California (USC) and study Business Administration with an emphasis on Entrepreneurial Studies. While at USC, she was able to combine her love of golf with her interest in business. Vaughan was a four-year member of the Women's NCAA Division I Golf team and was the first entrepreneurial student ever awarded the Top 10 business plan twice for fall and spring competitions.

Vaughan was given a great opportunity to play in the prestigious "Topy Cup" in Tanagura, Japan, where she finished 26th individually and helped the team finish 2nd overall. "As for the tournament, I played really well as a college golfer, and I proved myself against qualified competition." Vaughan also enjoyed the culture of Japan and found it "very crowded and bustling in the city." At the course, outside the city, she found the tranquility and formal setting very appealing. She said, "It was so modern, but had a sense of history."

After graduation from USC, Vaughan traveled throughout Europe and then returned to the States to settle in Los Angeles. Her entrepreneurial skills lead her to found several successful product development firms, and she worked in medical sales where she was consistently ranked in the company's top 10% nationwide and was the top sales representative for 4 consecutive months.

Vaughan's passion for golf is intense and she recently returned to the game to further combine her golf and business interests. Currently, Vaughan is a Level III certified member of the United States Golf Teachers Federation (USGTF). She has worked at the renowned Big Canyon Country Club in Newport Beach, California as a PGA Apprentice Professional. Vaughan also has been an instructor of the After School Programs for Total Golf Adventures. Her advice to her students, and more importantly to their parents, is "Keep It Fun." Vaughan has other golf tips for both beginning and experienced golfers, including a "no pouting rule" on the course, which she says is geared especially towards men.

There are many golfers that Vaughan admires but top on her list is Sam Snead. She says that he was a natural athlete and could have played any sport well and "that's why it was so fun to watch him swing." John Daly is also on her list because of his casual, unorthodox approach to the game. Even with all the chaos, critics and personal battles "he still shows up to win." Vaughan likes the "buzz" about Michelle Wie and thinks it will be interesting to see how her game develops. She thinks Michelle can promote the image of the LPGA just as Tiger did for the PGA.

Vaughan says she has always been a "feel" player where her nonchalant manner might "confuse" the competition. Her style has been compared to Columbo. Although seemingly absent-minded and not obvious as to reason, she is proven to be a clever strategist in the end, much like the TV detective. She says she has a true "sense of home" when playing on the golf course. Vaughan believes imagination is one of her greatest strengths. She can visualize, map out and create new shots. She loves to experiment around the greens. In spite of her relaxed attitude, she still feels that "winning is the best part of the game."

Vaughan is enjoying a career that is remarkable in many ways. When asked if she feels increased pressure due to being a female golfer, she says that "pressure is individualized and there are too many variables to calculate so I really don't bother to think about it." In her easy going style she adds, "there is certainly enough pressure to fill everyone's cup and I don't feel it's due to gender."

Vaughan's next stop on the journey back to Korea will be Phoenix, Arizona in January 2006. She will join The Cactus Tour, a new Women's Professional Golf Tour in the Valley of the Sun. The first event will be held at Arizona State University's Karsten Golf Course and others will be held in the greater Phoenix area. Vaughan is looking forward to fine-tuning her skills to prepare for her return to Korea in March 2006.

"My ultimate goals are to compete at the highest level in golf and then I want to make a double eagle. This is an achievement my grandfather made. It won't be easy, but he set the standard high enough for me to want one too." She holds strongly to this quote by Kobi Yamada, "Listen to your dreams—those are the sounds no one else can hear." Vaughan is focused, resilient and competitive. That double eagle might finally be a reality at the next Dream Tour--for Carrie Vaughan.***

*** Los Angeles-based Asia Sports & Entertainment (ASE) manages Carrie Vaughan. ASE (www.asiasports.us) provides Athlete Representation, Event Management, and Consultation Services that are focused on opportunities in the fast-growing Asian sports and entertainment markets, particularly China, Japan, Korea, and India.

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