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The will to succeed

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Furmanathletics

The will to succeed

Hanna takes charge of Lady Paladin golf program

If you want to be sure that Jen Hanna, the new coach of the women's golf program at Furman, gets something done, then tell her she can't do it.

Consider her golf career at Furman. When Hanna joined the Lady Paladin program in 1994, she routinely couldn't break 80. She was offered only a partial scholarship to attend the university, and to make matters worse, she read in the media guide that Coach Mic Potter didn't expect his freshmen to contribute to that year's team.

All of which caused Hanna to turn up the intensity on her desire to make an impact. "I don't like to be told I'm going to be sitting," she says, "so I started working my tail off."

That first year, despite Potter's predictions, Hanna managed to qualify for seven tournaments, playing primarily in the No. 5 spot and earning Southern Conference Freshman of the Year honors. By the next season she was the team's No. 1 player, a spot she would occupy for the remainder of her time at Furman.

Her career highlights include being named first-team All-America, establishing the school record for single-season stroke average (73.6), and winning two conference Player of the Year awards as well as three team Most Valuable Player awards. In the spring of 1998, her final season, she placed in the top 10 in every regular-season tournament and was named Furman's Female Athlete of the Year. She would later be inducted into the university's Athletic Hall of Fame.

"I worked hard on my golf swing, but I also had the mindset that I wasn't going to be the caboose on the team," Hanna says. "I wanted to be the leader, and that's what I want all my players to think. Everybody should believe they are good enough to be the No. 1 player on the team."

Although Hanna, who had been playing on the LPGA Tour, is new to coaching and admits she has much to learn, her primary philosophy for helping others achieve their potential is born out of her experiences as a player.

"I can help the girls with their swings, but I also want to teach them how to play," she says. "When you are out there on the golf course, you can't worry about mechanics. There are golf swings that aren't perfect, but they get the job done. Your mindset has a lot to do with how successful you are. That's what I want them to realize."

Hanna was named the Furman coach last summer after Potter became women's coach at the University of Alabama,



Jen Hanna earned a degree in health and exercise science from Furman.

ending a highly successful 23-year run at the Furman helm. She says that she had thought about becoming head coach of the Lady Paladin program, but she admits she didn't expect the opportunity to come so soon.

"I had always told Mic I would be interested in the job if he ever left, but I thought it would be another five or 10 years down the road," says Hanna, who still holds non-exempt status on the LPGA Tour.

Although All-American Jenny Suh and sophomore Sarah Sturm followed Potter from Furman to Alabama, plenty of experience remained on campus in senior Connor Atkinson and juniors Monique Gesualdi and Theresa Paik. In addition, freshmen Kathleen Ekey and Blair Lamb, two of the most highly recruited players in the nation, joined the program this fall.

"I feel like we have a team that has the talent and the skills to go to every tournament and compete and win," says Hanna, who earned her first victory as coach in October at the Lady Paladin Invitational. "But I don't have any expectations as far as tournament finishes are concerned. All I ask is that the players work very hard. I'll never be disappointed with them if they do that."

Which leaves only one question unanswered: Who's going to tell Hanna she can't win?

— Vince Moore