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LET IT GO

Golf helps Tyson Schmidt find new identity

St Andrews, April 2019

“I felt there was a higher calling, I always wanted to serve... You get out what you put in... I got everything I expected out of military service. I busted my ass from day one”.

Tyson Schmidt joined the US Navy in 2009, taking on the role of a cryptological technician. He spent three years on the USS Robert G Bradley FFG49 out of Mayport, Florida, before taking on a MOSAP internship through the NSA. This led to the Africa Partnership Station, part of US Africa Command's Security Cooperation Program. “I went all over

the west coast of Africa and all through the Mediterranean – Crete, Sicily, Spain, Malta, Libya”.

Tyson was medically retired in 2017 following a leg injury. He suffered from Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, leading to multiple surgeries and hours of physical therapy. He was told he would never run or walk again. “I hit rock bottom. I was done. I packed up everything, called my parents and told them I was going to kill myself”.

The Center for the Intrepid in San Antonio

provided two more years of medical treatment and therapy but eventually the leg was amputated. “I tried to rediscover my identity. I did multiple sports. I ran, I worked out. I thought: who the fuck am I now. Golf was part of me essentially being able to find my new identity. It is very therapeutic and recovery based”.

In Scotland, Tyson found out that American golf is different to links golf. “In the US you get under it, make solid contact. Here, you don't need the crazy, high, flamboyant shots; you get it forward and let it go”.





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INTO ACTION

It was good to be out there: Gideon Providence

St Andrews, April 2019

Gideon Providence joined the army in 1989 at the age of 17, straight from high school. "I wanted to be out of Brooklyn...the gangs, drugs. Some friends were killed... I had some scholarships but my parents couldn't really afford college. I intended four years and it turned out to be 21. I wouldn't trade any of the 21 years I've done".

Gideon was deployed to Mosul in 2005 and also served overseas in Germany, for three years, and twice in Korea. The



first of his family to enlist, Gideon was followed into the military by his brother and now has a son in basic training.

The service took its toll, with Gideon developing back and shoulder issues, needing a new left hip and a right knee replacement, and having a total of 13 surgeries, ten of them on his right leg.

Golf came into his life in 2016. "I saw it as a silly sport. I always played running, but I played one time in Fort Lewis,

Washington, and it was good to be out there. It is something I could do even though my body isn't what it used to be: I can't chase my grandson about... but no matter your level of physicality, this is something you can still do". Gideon's favourite shot of the week came at Balcomie Links, Crail, hitting into a strong wind to two feet. "Even out there freezing, I was still enjoying it. I was thinking; this wind is just cutting through me, this wind is crazy – but we're going to do the back nine!"





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GET BETTER

Can enjoy golf from three to 90: Young Min Kim

St Andrews, April 2019

“I’m spending as much time as I can with my two daughters. They are 7 and 11 years old. I missed birthdays and Christmases with deployments, training, field exercises. If they have something going on at school, I go”.

Young Min Kim joined the US Army in 2001, planning to complete a four-year contract and get the education benefits. “But then 9-11 happened...I stayed in and extended my contract”.

Young was deployed to Iraq in 2008 as



part of the motor transport operation. “I was always outside the wire, with combat convoys or delivering to posts. That first tour I felt lucky”. In Afghanistan in 2009-2010 things were different. “It was so bad. Almost every mission we were being attacked”. In July 2009 Young’s truck was hit by an IED and there was a rocket attack when they were down. Young suffered permanent nerve damage to his left hip and a TBI.

“I wanted to stay in. I tried to tough it out for 20 years but I was medically retired in

July after almost 17-and-a-half years. No longer deployable. First six months all I did was play golf. I started school, went to college. I’ve been in fourth year of college for the last ten years!”

Young has persevered with golf despite a first experience that left him unhappy. “I was so horrible that first time, I got mad at myself. I was too proud to learn it the right way...this is something to enjoy with my two girls. I want to be involved with them...you can enjoy golf from three to 90”.





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STILL SMILING

Kenneth Fischer:
It's been absolutely
mesmerizing

St Andrews, April 2019

“I wish we were stuck in a time-loop and it would start all over. My cheeks are sore from smiling so much”. Kenneth Fischer had a great week in Scotland, making new friends, improving his game, getting a first ever three-shot birdie on the twelfth hole of the Old Course...and wearing the kilt at Kingarrock Hickory Golf Course. “It's been absolutely mesmerizing, something I'll never forget”.

Kenneth joined the Marines in 2003: “I enlisted in a time of war. I knew what we were getting into... this trip is the first time I've left the US and not



gone to a combat zone”. He was in Iraq in 2005 and went on to serve two tours in Afghanistan. In 2011 he was injured when a 200lb explosive was detonated only 50 yards away. He took a large piece of shrapnel from a car, entering his right side from behind between the shoulder blade and the plate carrier. It had to be surgically removed from the front. It took only three days to get him evacuated and back to the USA. Unfortunately, the injury led to medical retirement in 2014. “That was really rough. The Marine Corps was all I had done since out of high school, I felt I had no purpose. The War on Terror, the battles... I was making a

difference in the world”.

Kenneth was a dog-handler, “that was my calling”. He brought his last dog to America. “My dog Drak, he broke his hip and lost his tail. I adopted him. He lived for another three years and died of cancer. I had him in both deployments in Afghanistan. I still miss him”. He drove from San Antonio to Chicago to get another Belgian Malinois to replace him. Jasmine, named by his daughters, is now 10 years old – “I'm going to get a new puppy when I get back. It will be called Sarge, after my last ranking”.





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BEST THING

Golf better than therapy or meds: Tony Akers

St Andrews, April 2019

It was Tony Akers who stepped up on behalf of St Andrews Legacy to receive a cheque for £500 from Charlotte McCluskey of the University of St Andrews Ladies Golf Club. The occasion came at Kingarock Hickory Golf Course after a day spent on the unique layout a few miles south of St Andrews. Tony praised the women for their generosity and goodwill: “they’re really supportive”.

Joining the Marines in 2003, Tony has taken on a number of roles including police work and explosives detection. He went to Iraq

for the first time in 2005, returning in 2007 with 2/5, working with Navy SEALs. He needed extensive surgery on his entire left side, leading to a forced retirement in 2010. In 2013 Tony returned to Iraq on a civilian contract with the Department of Defence, and he went to Afghanistan in 2016 with the Department of State. But then his seven-year-old daughter asked a big question. “She said, how come I’m always gone. I had only been with her two years out of seven. Then everything started to tumble. I ended up homeless with four kids and basically not

wanting to be here anymore”.

Golf has become important to Tony during the past few years. “Kenny Fischer took me out. It helped, taking out a lot of frustration on the course. It’s better than therapy, anyone I was talking to, or any meds”. As for the trip to Scotland: “I was not expecting this. I haven’t smiled for a picture since my daughter was born. I haven’t laughed this hard for years. You’re still a human being, you can still move forward. It’s going to be easier to transition back home and get out of what I’m in”.





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HIGH ENERGY

Here, you see the best in people:
Robert Apodaca

St Andrews, April 2019

Robert Apodaca joined 82nd Airborne as a seventeen-year-old, continuing a family tradition that saw both grandfathers serve in World War Two, one at Pearl Harbour. He did his time, which included getting on the boxing team, and became an emergency medical technician and a firefighter. He re-enlisted after 9-11, going in as military police. During a 12-month deployment to Iraq starting in 2004 he got hit by two IEDs and picked up severe injuries, including a TBI. He required three surgeries on his face and others on a shoulder and

knee. He had paralysis from nerve damage on his left side. There are upcoming surgeries for his shoulders, both knees and his back. The back surgery was rescheduled to allow him to come to Scotland.

“A lot of my buddies are disabled and they golf. It’s one of the social things I do. My wife and kids, we all golf together”.

The social side of golf provided the best moments of the St Andrews Legacy trip. “In combat, we see the worst in people. Here,

you see the best. That’s the highlight, the hospitality we received in Scotland. The people really made it”.

It wasn’t an easy week for him. “Sometimes I had to take a break. I never walk a course and I use a cane. I had to use meds, which I hate, but it was the only way I could get through it. But it shed some light. I walked two courses here and it’s nice to know physically I can do more, even though my body says no. The group kept the energy levels high. We all fed off that energy”.





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100 NOT OUT

Steve Verch: a century of service to Canada

St Andrews, July 2019

There is a century of service to Canada standing behind Steve Verch. Both grandfathers fought in World War I and his mother and father each enlisted.

Steve was born in France and was raised a "military brat", mainly in Ontario and Alberta, before joining up in 1979: "Thirty-five is the magic number, but I'm a 40 year man! They gave me a retirement date of 2021".

Starting in the Royal Canadian Regiment, he moved on to the Canada Airborne Regiment

and then to Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. He was stationed in the Balkans and was based in Sarajevo as well as in Macedonia and Serbia: "the bullets came pretty close to you – we had people killed there".

In the last few years Steve has been instructing colleagues and writing manuals. It is testimony to his expertise that he spent last autumn in the Amazon leading a training course.

Steve began his golfing life in Alberta, playing with his father, and got more serious about the

game when he was in Edmonton working as a jump instructor. There is a golf course on the base. "I started golfing every day. Sometimes golf can be frustrating but it helps me. I can practice my breathing; it helps me to relax. If I hit a bad shot a good one more than makes up for it".

Steve's favourite round of the week was at Balcomie Links, Crail. "I was playing with two guys from Scotland, one had a prosthesis but he has such a beautiful swing. He can carry on and do his thing".





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GIVING ALL

Alain Grenier finds the discipline to heal

St Andrews, July 2019

Alain Grenier joined the Canadian Military Police in 2004 at age 42, following a decade of civilian duty. "I am thankful for the freedom we have in our country. I wanted to serve and to give, to give back to our country. It was another chapter. The Canadian Forces is one big school of life".

After six years Alain suffered training injuries and had to retire. "I'm passionate and intense and emotional. I don't give 100 per cent: I give my 200 per cent. I overrated my limit and paid the bill. After my release I found the discipline

to work on myself, to heal physically and mentally. Between 2010 and 2018 I had no contact with the army or veterans.

"So, after eight years I saw Soldier On on a website, that they have activities for veterans, and I received an invitation to go to a golf camp in New Brunswick. I like golf. There is the possibility to rehabilitate... it is nature; it's beautiful. I have the gift to come here and represent Canada and to represent the organization. The military, they give and they give and they give. And they have a big heart".

In looking back at his recent life, Alain is full of praise and gratitude for his wife, Eugenia - "she is the first reason for my healing" - and his mother: "she survived three cancers, such determination and courage".

In Scotland, Alain's favourite shot was a towering 8 iron approach to the 15th on the Kittocks Course at Fairmont St Andrews that led to a birdie three on the spectacular hole, where the green seems to hover above the ocean, and which led to a new nickname: "my Rocketman shot!"





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LIFE PLAN

The military
itself shaped me:
Herb Kenny

St Andrews, July 2019

Herb Kenny enlisted at 17, “when I was hallowed, right out of high school. I saw a recruiter at 15 and he sold me. I wanted to leave Newfoundland, a rock in the Atlantic... It was right after the Vietnam War was over – there were a lot of American draft dodgers in Newfoundland”.

An infantryman, Herb did a variety of tours over twenty years, ranging from Cyprus, to Germany and then Kosovo and Bosnia. One episode in the Balkans left a mark, which was triggered by a seemingly innocuous thing – blue



refuse sacks left on city streets in Canada. Body bags used to store remains from a mass grave he had guarded were the same shade.

“My goal was to do 25 years, and I achieved my goal. I retired at 42. Now I manage a warehouse. I got hired while still in the military. If you don’t have a plan, you’re lost. There can be drugs, depression, drink... Looking back, it was the greatest thing that ever happened to me and I don’t regret anything. I think every individual should serve their country for a year or two. It gives you a real perspective on life.

The military itself shaped me... discipline, timing, looking more than one day ahead. I know what I’m doing for the next six weeks. Civilians think it’s a marvel! My military career has made the second half of my life so easy, for me and my family”.

Golf has helped Herb over injuries to his knees and back. “That’s why I walk... I was in bad shape”. His best shot of the St Andrews trip came at the Road Hole. “Hitting that ball over that building... that was my moment, finding it in the middle of the fairway”.





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QUEL HOMME

A putt for my fallen brothers and sisters: Steven Latreille

St Andrews, July 2019

“We weren’t there to solve the problem, or give our opinion. Part of our mission was to get families re-united, to be able to give back peace to families and give them back the freedom they had before”.

Steven Latreille is looking back on his service in Bosnia and Croatia, remembering how a combination of training and adrenaline kept him going but also a basic purpose of being there.

Family has been his own foundation. Steven’s father served with the airborne regiment for 44



years and his brother also joined up. Between them, they served 81 years in the CAF. Steven, however, insists: “My mother is our rock and still is. She’s the general, really pro-military. Always my dad’s right hand... She encourages us as sons, husbands, soldiers”.

Steven joined the Royal 22nd Regiment in 1987 and is now retired. “If it hadn’t been for physical injuries I’d still be in. It is in my blood ‘til I die. The transition to civilian life was difficult, that’s the hardest part. When I retired, being away from my family brought me to

isolation. That can bring you bad thoughts, with lack of sleep, too much thinking. Thankfully, I find that the best isolation for me was golf”.

Playing from the age of 11, Steven got down to two-handicap standard and once shot a 67 at Valcartier. His best moment at St Andrews was a birdie at the first on the Old Course, giving him the experience of playing the world’s most renowned links under par for a while. “A birdie that I will never forget, that putt was for all my fallen brothers and sisters in arms...oh yeah, and also for me”.





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GIFT OF HOPE

Clearview women
share St Andrews
with Renee Powell

St Andrews, July 2019

In July, for the first time, St Andrews Legacy hosted a group of women veterans. Barbara Hickman, Hollis Burkes, Arlinda Mitchell, Judy Sallerson, Bina McVehil and Melinda Cooper of Renee Powell's Clearview PGA HOPE (Help Our Patriots Everywhere) project, based in Canton, Ohio, and Tiffany Davis of the Women of Color Golf initiative from Florida spent the week in St Andrews. They stayed at Powell Hall, a new dorm for postgraduate students at the University of St Andrews. They played and practised golf at the Links and the Kitting Course at Fairmont St Andrews, met the university principal for tea, and were shown around the R&A as honoured guests. Renee Powell herself accompanied them for two days. Mallory Crosland, executive producer, represented the PGA of America and a CBS news crew led by senior producer Alvin Patrick, and featuring commentator James Brown, recorded scenes from the visit to be broadcast in November.

The women came to the Home of Golf to see for themselves a little of what has made it so special to Renee, who now has an honorary degree from the university and is an honorary member of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club. She also has a fourteen-year long relationship with New Links St Andrews, a charity reaching out to under served youth through golf.

During a fundraising trip to Del Rio Country Club, Modesto, California, in November 2017 Renee called the Clearview HOPE project "by far the most significant and rewarding program I've ever done in my life".



Gathered together at Powell Hall, which was officially opened last autumn, at the end of their trip, the women were full of praise for what Renee has achieved and the significance of her efforts over the years.

Arlinda stated: "I was just out there, lost. Clearview HOPE, it really helped me...I probably wouldn't be alive without Renee. She has given me hope for another day".

Brought together

Barbara remembered the origins of the project. "Renee brought us together. She almost went door to door".

Melinda added: "We've brought our program together through camaraderie, growth and healing. It's such a relief to not think about anything else. I've spent a whole week thinking about golf and not thinking about my house. It takes your whole mind away from everything else we think about too much".

There are a great many woman veterans, up to 15,000 in Ohio alone. This particular group has served throughout the USA and as far afield as South Korea, Iraq and Europe. They've experienced the deserts of the Middle East, been in Asian rice paddies and seen carts drawn by oxen, they cried with joy when the Berlin Wall was torn down. They have been members of the US military from the Vietnam era to today.

"HOPE accepts everyone equally. You've all done your part," said Barbara.

But, Judy said, "Sometimes our service is diminished".

Tiffany agreed: "Men aren't the only ones injured, or who have issues".

Melinda said: "Our whole culture defaults to male. It makes us step back and be quiet. Because of HOPE I'm a lot more open about being a veteran...you carry things that you can't get out".

Pure bliss

Tiffany took a great deal from meeting the Clearview group and interacting with them. "You can be open with a person you don't even know. I'm yearning for it but I don't know where to look for it. It is hard for me to find something. I have severe anxiety but I haven't even taken my medicine. I have been in pure bliss".

Barbara said: "We're blessed but that's only because of Renee. There may be some still alone. St Andrews has been so special to Renee. It's been great to see what she sees, that it is so special".

Bina, the lone navy recruit among the army veterans, who was a jet mechanic, said she hadn't smiled so much in years. "When I get depressed I'll think about Scotland".

Melinda agreed. "We heard all the great things, but it's even grander".

Arlinda treasured the entire environment of St Andrews: "The people are so friendly and the air is so clean, clear and fresh".

For Barbara, there was also the need to set the visit in a bigger context. "I felt some pressure for it to go well and for everybody to have a good time. We are representing every other service woman in the world. There are a lot of women around the world who would enjoy this and really need this".

Arlinda spoke about the game of golf itself and its benefit to veterans. "Golf is more therapeutic than seeing a physician. At Clearview HOPE, silence speaks. We know what they are feeling".

"We have a bond," said Melinda in response.

Fun and joy

Judy continued the theme of how golf helps: "The first time the ball flies through the air, it's empowering, and for some of us it's addictive. It brings fun and joy. It changes people".

Melinda paid a final tribute to the person who had set them on the road to St Andrews:

"The golf, the people, the beautiful views - the whole thing - it's the gift of Renee".



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PURE BLISS

St Andrews Legacy
hosts first group of
women veterans

St Andrews, September 2019

St Andrews Legacy broke new ground this summer when it hosted a group of women veterans, the first time this has been possible.

Barbara Hickman, Hollis Burkes, Arlinda Mitchell, Judy Sallerson, Bina McVehil and Melinda Cooper of Renee Powell's Clearview PGA HOPE (Help Our Patriots Everywhere) project, based in Canton, Ohio, and Tiffany Davis of the Women of Color Golf initiative from Florida spent the week in St Andrews, where they played and practised golf at the Links and the Kittocks Course at Fairmont St Andrews, met the university principal for tea, and were shown around the R&A as honoured guests. They stayed at Powell Hall, a new dorm for postgraduate students at the University of St Andrews, and Renee Powell herself accompanied them for two days. The PGA of America was represented during the week and a CBS film crew recorded scenes from the visit to be broadcast in November. PGA Master Professional David Scott provided top-level coaching to the group.

During a fundraising trip to Del Rio Country Club, Modesto, California, in November 2017 Renee called the HOPE project "by far the most significant and rewarding program I've ever done in my life".



*Row one (L-R):
Tiffany Davis; Bina McVehil;
Arlinda Mitchell.
Row two:
Hollis Burkes; Barbara Hickman;
Melinda Cooper.
Row three:
Judy Sallerson;
St Andrews Legacy participants enjoy
dinner at the St Andrews Golf Club*

The ladies are in no doubt about its significance to them. Arlinda stated: “I was just out there, lost. Clearview HOPE, it really helped me...I probably wouldn’t be alive without Renee. She has given me hope for another day”.

Brought together

Melinda added: “We’ve brought our program together through camaraderie, growth and healing. It’s such a relief to not think about anything else. I’ve spent a whole week thinking about golf and not thinking about my house. It takes your whole mind away from everything else we think about too much”.

The women in this group have served throughout the USA and as far afield as South Korea, Iraq and Europe. They have been members of the US military from the Vietnam era to today.

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