

GUEST COLUMN

Mitch Henck: Madison golfer shows heart

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As an 18-year-old senior at Madison La Follette High School, Max Hosking stood in front of a room full of parents, coaches and fellow golfers at the school's 2008 golf banquet. Sporting a tie and sport coat, Max apologized to his team and took full responsibility for not playing in the state championship that year.

Max had been suspended for attending a party months earlier where beer was served. State high school rules didn't allow athletes to stay at a party with beer for more than 10 minutes, even if they didn't consume any alcohol. Someone mailed photos of the party to the principal's office days before the state championship.

It was devastating. But it was not the first time Max faced a personal setback. Four years earlier, Max was stricken with Type I diabetes. He regulates his blood sugar level with an insulin pump attached to his body while he competes. One week after the high school disappointment, Max set the course record at Yahara West with a 64 in the Wisconsin PGA junior competition to win the championship. The course record still stands.

Max also won the Wisconsin State Golf Association 14 and under championship as well the WSGA junior at 17. That year, Max was in the rough on the 18th hole. He grabbed a three iron but, unlike Arnold Palmer who tragically stayed with the three iron to lose the 1966 U.S. Open to Billy Casper, young Max changed his mind. He grabbed a pitching wedge and punched into the fairway before saving a bogey. Max won the tournament in a playoff.

Max Hosking went on to win three Madison city men's titles and a state public links title. Now a professional, Max is pursuing his dream on a much bigger stage. Last month, Max earned conditional status on the Canadian Tour. At one of four qualifying sites outside San Diego, Max shot a closing round 70 to finish 20th out more than 140 qualifiers. He missed the top 16 cut by a single shot but was good enough to win provisional status. That allowed him to tee it up in the first four events. Max is now playing in Victoria, British Columbia.

"He is having the time of his life," said Max's father, Jeff "Hap" Hosking. Dad is an excellent golfer, too. He taught Max and his older brother Andy how to play, helping Andy win a state team championship for La Follette in 2003. Young Max only took lessons from his dad until well into his amateur career. I asked Max on the radio, "How did you get so good?" He said,

“My dad.” Max also inherits plenty of passion from his mother, Debbie. She doesn’t play golf, but her devotion to her boys is second to none.

Max is following his life’s calling on the Canadian Tour just like Edgerton’s Steve Stricker did before he made it to the highest level in the states. Out there by himself, Max has already found a friend in Clayton Rask, a former Minnesota Golden Gopher. Max stayed last week in a time-share condo with Clayton and his wife. Money is tight as Max hopes to make a cut in the first four events to keep his dream alive. Brother Andy set up a Go Fund Me site for Max on Facebook to assist.

As someone who never broke par for 18 holes in my life, I can join my golfing buddies in living vicariously through Max. But in the much bigger game of life and the battle against diabetes, Max has pulled himself up by his heart in the face of adversity more than people three times his age. In the brutally competitive world of professional golf, I’m betting on the young man from Madison’s East Side, where the people are real.

*Mitch is a Madison, Wisconsin based commentator, broadcaster and standup comic.
The Mitch Henck Show is broadcast live 8-11a.m. Monday-Friday at www.mitchhenck.com.
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