

The GOLFCChicago Interview

Porter Moser and his Loyola Ramblers

– and Sister Jean – became the toast of

Chicago in March of 2018, when they made an

improbable march to the NCAA Final Four.

Moser was hardly an overnight success, in

basketball or golf. In this interview, he speaks

about both sports, and more.

GC: Tell us about your golf game.

PM: Well there's not much to say. I wish I was better. I love it. I just don't get a chance to get out as much but I absolutely love it. I played a lot when I was younger and two things happened to my golf game. The biggest one is I had four kids, and once they traveled for basketball, baseball, they were all different. I almost feel guilty carving out six hours on a Saturday.

The only thing that happened at my golf game is when I went to work for Rick Majerus. Coach Majerus, he (was) not a golfer, he's a grinder with no kids so we spend a lot of time talking balls, but I'm going to pick it back up. I'm going to pick it back up eventually but it's just to be outdoors, competitive against the course, I love it, I just wish I was better and spent more time practicing.

Porter Moser Rambling Thoughts on Golf and Basketball

by Dave Lockhart and
Dave Weretka

Photos: Tom Yaam Photography
and Loyola University



GC: When you were a kid were you around the game at all? At what age did you started playing?

PM: You know, we lived right off Cress Creek Country Club in Naperville and so we belonged there. We used to go over and golf with my dad and my high school buddies. I would golf pretty regularly through high school and then when I went to Creighton and played college basketball, I didn't really golf in college and then I picked it up a little bit when I started coaching and then when I started having kids my

game just went away.

GC: We measure ourselves with the golfers by handicap, so once they ask you, what would your handicap be roughly?

PM: Let me just say I shoot for the mid 90s. That's what I'm shooting for. If I shoot for 95 to 100 that's the area I always seem to get 2-3 penalties. That's what gets me; then I always have that one shot that cost me every hole.

GC: Do you have a favorite place you like to play in Chicago or another golf destination?

PM: I do have a great golf story since you bring that up. I was the head coach of Arkansas-Little Rock at age 32, and meet (Augusta National members) Warren Stephens and Joe Ford. Joe Ford was the CEO of Alltel; he's the one that actually put the green jacket on Tiger. Joe Ford called me up. "Do you want to go to Augusta and go golfing for two days?" And I'm like, sure, I really didn't deserve that I guess. Ford says "I'm going to pick you up, meet me in my private plane in the hangar there in Little Rock. We're

going to go with my buddy Pat and his son.” So I get on the plane and I walk into the private plane and it’s Pat Summerall, so we flew with Pat and his son Luke.

We went to Augusta and I stayed in the Butler Cabin, which is nuts. I mean you have the TV, the chimney, the fireplace. If you panned the camera to the right there’s one bedroom. That’s where I stayed for two days. It was the most incredible experience. I love talking about this, but I got up in the morning at like 5 and just walked the grounds and I really felt like I was in heaven. It was probably the closest thing to it. And just by myself, there’s some grounds crew people. That was the Holy Land of golf. It was the first time I ever had a caddie and it was amazing because I’m all over the map and I didn’t lose as many balls cause the caddies are walking around, like “there it is.”

GC: *What else is special about the game that draws you in a little bit? Are there any comparisons at all between basketball and golf?*

PM: Well the one comparison in my mind is putting and free throws. You see a four- or five-foot putt and when there’s a little pressure on it is different because your mind starts playing games and there’s a saying that goes, talk to yourself, don’t listen to yourself. You know that’s the thing you talk to yourself – I’m going to make this, I got this –instead of listen to all the demons. You know, always I relate that to free throw shooting, and get to talk to yourself and stay positive, and stay in the moment. Same thing with these short putts and it’s different.

I always hear, it’s funny when you hear an older person that never played say, “I don’t know how you guys miss free throws.” I could go out there and just say well yeah – in the YMCA. There’s nobody in the gym. Pressure is an extra factor, but just like free throws and putting you’re going to practice. You see guys that are just spending time on the putts but I do kind of relate those short putts with the pressure to free throws. You’re supposed to make them but there’s a little bit other factors involved.

GC: *You had some offers from a couple of big schools and you decided to stay here at Loyola. You want to build the program here. Tell us a little about your decision.*

PM: Well I took this job eight years ago and I

was just so blessed to be in Chicago, the city that I love, where I’m from, and to see where it was and to see where we’re going and I feel along this journey ... I feel like I have had a purpose, whether it was with the people, the alumni, with the kids at my camp, whether it was my players. I just feel like I belonged and that was a factor obviously, getting to the NCAA tournament. Some of these leagues, it’s four or five bids to a league, so it becomes harder for Missouri Valley to get multiple bids. That’s a factor that we’ve got to really address. But as far as Chicago and Loyola – I love it. I love seeing people you know around where we go, whether its Wrigley Field or downtown or anywhere on our campus. I just feel like there’s a lot more things we can do at Loyola and it’s a big factor why I chose to stay.

GC: *Life basically changed after that Final Four run. Talk about some of the things that are different out there now.*

PM: Without a doubt and it never gets old. Someone came up to me last night and it was like, “I know it’s old,” but they started telling me a story. “I’m from the class of ’84 and we all got together with our friends,” and I guess it never gets old. I get chills talking about it. How we connected the university, connected to the city. When I got the job everyone said, “Porter, you can’t do it at Loyola, it’s a pro town, it’s a pro town and I kept on saying it’s a sports town.” If you’re blue

collar, if you’re tough, if you do it the right way, they’re going to embrace you. Chicago embraced how we did it. We did it with great kids, the No. 1 graduation rate in the country with Harvard. So academically, we’re knocking it out of the park and I think they really related to the toughness of our team, I love that about Chicago, and I want to keep building that.

GC: *You mention that you have four kids. Have they caught the golf bug?*

PM: My youngest have, my older ones they still think they’re going to be – you ask one million 15-year-olds what are you going to do when you grow up and they want to be in the NBA. So he might, but I want to keep encouraging them. I wish they would, but my 12-year-old, Max, he



gets the bug. We’ve golfed a couple of times at Canal Shores. We run over there. He’s getting the bug and he’s going to take some lessons this summer.

GC: *What else about the game draws you in that you really like about it? Do you have any plans to play more golf in the future; any destination travel trips?*

PM: What draws me in? I play an indoor sport and I love the outdoors, so I love that part. I love the camaraderie of it. I love calling some buddies, walking around, driving around, talking, getting away, feeling the breeze and I love the competition of it, for me to try to get better at it. Me and coaching – I know I’ve got to practice but it doesn’t make a difference, I still get mad when I miss a shot. I’m like, I know

better. I got to practice if I expect to get that shot but that draws me in.

GC: *Do you use it as a recruiting tool to maybe play with the kid’s parent or play with the kids and tell them listen, you need to come to Loyola and play basketball for me?*

PM: No, but like (Clayton) Custer and (Ben) Richardson, those guys are like really good some. I’m holding off playing with them, but they played in the Loyola golf outing; they’re going to play again this year. And those guys are really good. Our freshman Paxson Wojcik, he’s a really good golfer. So it’s funny because there’s a handful of our guys play and but I’ve never

used it as a recruiting tool. I think we might not get the kid if they took me golfing.

GC: *What’s the best thing about your game? Is there a strength in your game?*

PM: Well, two, three weeks ago, I had a golf bag that I had Wilson Fat Shafts from twenty-five years ago. At times I’ve hit it far fine. Most times, I just don’t know where it’s going. So I’ve got to start with that, because my short game is definitely not my strength. My putting is not my strength. So if I had a strength every once in a while, I can hit it off the tee box a long way.

GC: *Okay do you have any favorite players or favorite golf stories you can share with us?*

PM: Well, obviously, like everybody, we got caught up in that when Phil and Tiger rivalry at their prime. That was just riveting to see Tiger and how good he was, but I have an unbelievable golf story about pro golf. I grew up in Naperville and a lifelong friend, Phil LaScala who's the head basketball coach at Lake Forest High School. He used to caddy and remember the Western Open? Back then you couldn't bring your own caddies, so they had like a lottery. We were seniors in high school, Phil drew like the fifth pick at the Western Open, and he selected Tom Kite. And so on day four he was in the running and Phil was trying to caddy all summer to earn money to pay for college. And here is Tom Kite in the thing, and we're all at a barbecue at his dad's house. We're watching on CBS. And Tom Kite hits the putt to win the Western Open and the first person he hugs is Phil, his caddie, who's our lifelong friend. Man, Tom Kite gave him everything in his bag, a big check to pay for, basically paid for his first year college and Tom Kite became our favorite golfer at that time because it was so fun to see. You just don't have any more where you have a lottery for caddies. And that was just a great story for a great guy and a great friend with Phil with Tom Kite.

GC: How do you get prepared mentally for big games?

PM: Well, we're talking about like the pressures of being in the NCAA tournament and opposed to a regular season game and the pressures of being in a major and it is so mental. For me in the NCAA tournament, we wanted the guys to enjoy it, embrace it. You know, there was a lot more media. There's a lot more pressure there and you know, and but we embraced it. We said we were going to laser like focus when we were going to prepare film, walk through practice. But I really think we stayed loose and embraced the moment instead of just really playing mental gymnastics on it. Because it is, it's overwhelming sometimes, the tension, the pressure, the amount of eyes that are on you. We went to our shootaround practice at the Final Four in San Antonio. There were 37,000 people at our practice.



Jim Nantz is interviewing me and I'm looking out at 37,000. You've got to embrace it. So I always kind of look at that with these majors, with these guys. Obviously, the majors are the ones you're really going to make your legacy on. Same thing with wins in the NCAA tournament. So you just mentally got to embrace it because like I said, talk to yourself, not listen to yourself, because the pressure becomes overwhelming, and if you don't embrace it and have fun with it and use it as a positive, it can consume you. There is a huge part of the focus. And we talked about that and because there are distractions everywhere and the

mentally tough really kind of have these blinders on when it gets to that.

I'll never forget doing the national anthem at the Final Four is really, when it hit me. Now there's 77,000 you just kind of got a breath, you're looking around, and you're seeing like celebrities right on the courtside and you're sitting there and then you've got to really turn it off. You've just got to. What's your task at hand? I think golf's got to be like that. I look at these guys with so many crowds behind them and with those shots and it's just it's a whole level of pressure golf that with whatever all those eyes on you.

GC: We've got a basketball season coming up here in

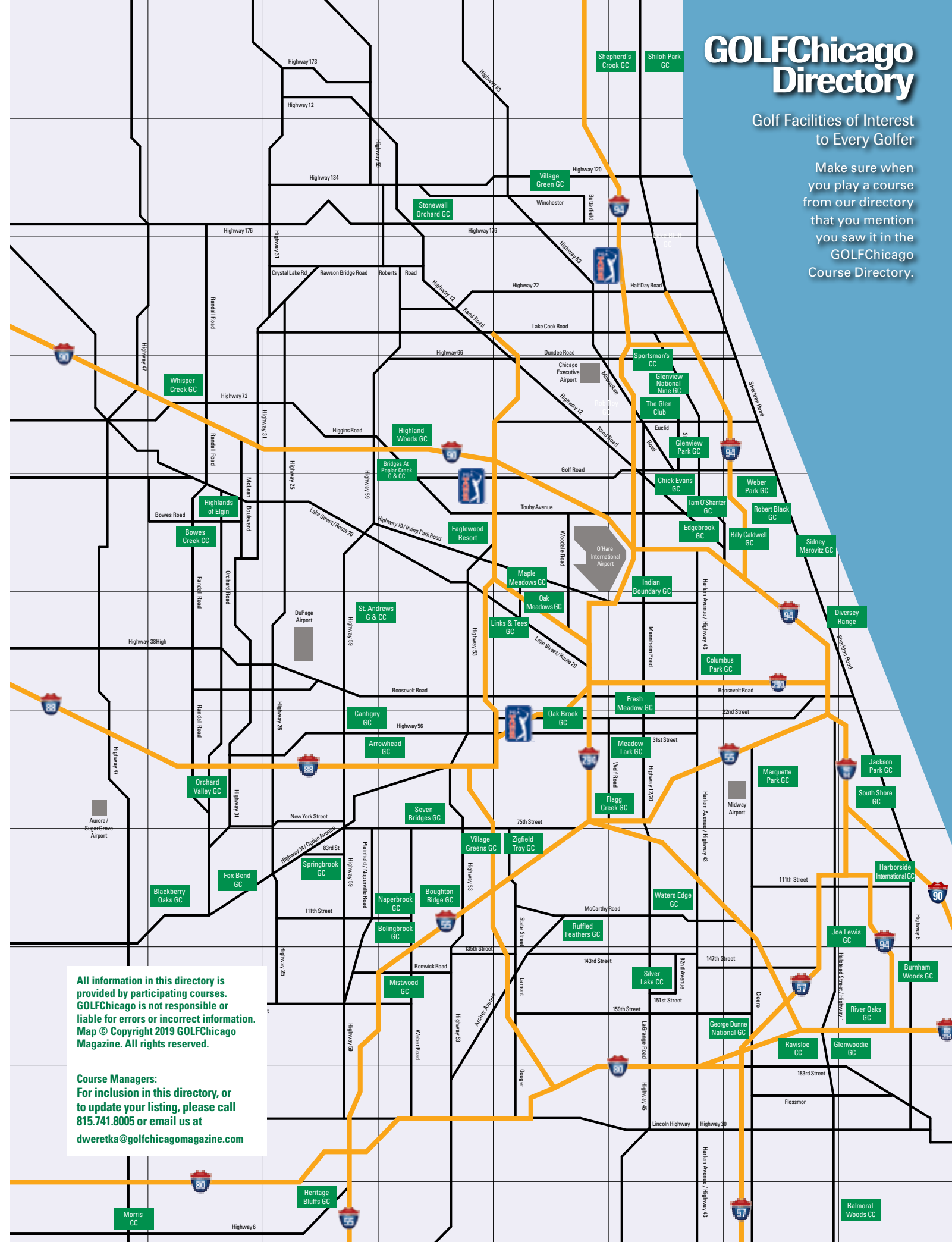
a couple of months. What are your thoughts for Loyola Ramblers this season?

PM: You just couldn't resist, could you? Well, you're going to expect the team that's going to play together, play hard, play fast. We're faster than we've ever been. We've got some new recruits that are extremely fast. We've been old at the guard spot with (Clayton) Custer and (Marques) Townes. We're going to be young at the guard spot. Cam Krutwig in the middle is back. But we only have one senior. I love the culture of the guys. I love going to practice. The one thing I can't guarantee you, I'm not going to put a number of wins on there, but I can guarantee you. We've been selling out that arena, we play our tails off, and it'll be fun to watch. I hope they continue to fill the arena for us.

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