

Tom Cade: Hello. This is News From Washington Golf, and my name is Tom Cade. I'm a Senior Director of Communications with Washington Golf. Today we have with us Kyle Drugge, the new golf coach of the men's program at Pacific Lutheran University. Kyle, thanks for joining us today.

Kyle Drugge: Thanks for having me on, Tom.

Tom Cade: So this is a brand new development. Yeah?

Kyle Drugge: Mm-hmm (affirmative) Yeah.

Tom Cade: Like just a few days old, yeah?

Kyle Drugge: Yeah. Just came out, I guess a week ago. We announced it through the University and so yeah, it's pretty fresh news. It's exciting.

Tom Cade: Yeah. I'll bet it is. So just to give some background of yourself, Kyle, it looks like you've been around PLU for a little bit. You were there as a player.

Kyle Drugge: Yeah. Yeah. So I played originally at Green River for a couple of years, junior college golf, and then ended up transferring to PLU and played a couple years under Coach Swanson.

When I was done playing, I was fortunate enough to be able to step in as an assistant coach and have done that for the last three years. So I've been around. This is my fifth year at PLU being a part of the team and looking forward to many more.

Tom Cade: When you were a player, PLU had a pretty good program going under Kris. That right?

Kyle Drugge: Yeah. Yeah. He's a phenomenal coach. I joined the team and it was already a strong team and just missed out on winning conference my junior year. Then coming back my senior year, we had a really strong team again. It was a little bit smaller team, maybe more cohesive, but yeah, we had a lot of talented guys like Mitchell Baldrige, who won the PPGA Men's Am-

Tom Cade: He did. That's right. A couple of years ago [inaudible 00:02:24].

Kyle Drugge: Yeah. So we had a pretty good squad and ended up winning conference my senior year, which gave us an opportunity to play at the National Championship in Florida. So that was a really cool experience. Just the whole season in general.

Tom Cade: When your playing days were done, did you know right away, "Gee, I'd like to stay around a little bit longer with this program?"

Kyle Drugge: Yeah. I actually remember riding home from a tournament in the van one day and after a tournament I asked Swanson, I said, "Hey, is there maybe an opportunity for me help out?" I love this atmosphere of college golf, and I've had coaches in my family and teachers in my family so it just came natural to me. I knew it was something that I wanted to get into. Fortunately, the stars just kind of aligned on timing and with everything happening. It was awesome being able to learn from Kris and be mentored by him. That was a really cool opportunity for me.

Tom Cade: It looks like 2018 you guys, you're an assistant coach there, that was a really good year.

Kyle Drugge: Yeah.

Tom Cade: You guys won the Northwest Conference Championship and then went on to the NAAs for DIII, yeah?

Kyle Drugge: Yeah. Yeah. So that was my first year as an assistant coach. We had a really good freshman class come in that year. Mitchell Baldrige was playing some of the best golf he's played. It was just a really fun year with some of the young guns that came in. I think the travel team was made up of four freshmen all year long. It was a cool blend of some senior experience from Mitch and then some of the freshmen that were fearless and just came in ready to play. That was a really fun year for me to start off and get to see some success from those guys. That was a good learning year for me as a coach.

Tom Cade: What's your home course for the team?

Kyle Drugge: We practice most of our time at the home course in Dupont. Every once in a while we bounce around to different courses in the area. For qualifiers, we like to switch it up and play different courses so that we're not playing the same thing every time. We pretty much just local around the Tacoma, even sometimes in the Olympia area.

Tom Cade: So 2020 spring season, you win your first UPS Invitational, and then the season gets shut down because of the virus situation.

Kyle Drugge: Right, yeah.

Tom Cade: That had to be a little disappointing, but understood. So the question is how do you keep the team together? How do you keep them in shape and sharp? How do you keep the game sharp? How do you think about recruiting? Just all those questions. You've suddenly got a big challenge, it looks like, to get the program going.

Kyle Drugge: Yeah, yeah. It's daunting to think about, but at the same time it's one of those things where it'll be more rewarding on the other side with all the obstacles and

everything. Fortunately the program is in a good place. As far as right now, we're just trying to make sure our guys are in a good place. I really feel for our two seniors, Mitchell Dover and Alex Nelson, not only just having their golf careers cut short, but also the spring semester of their final year at college. So I feel for them.

We've been having a good time. We've been having virtual Zoom meetings every week on Mondays nights. So we have one later tonight. They're all themes. We did Mohawk Monday last week and everybody put their hair style into a Mohawk. We keep it lighthearted. There's a lot of uncertainty going on right now, and we just want to make sure that they're happy and they're healthy and they're still strong in character and all that stuff. Our good thing for us is just to laugh and try to keep things as normal as possible even though there's a lot that's not normal right now.

As far as recruiting, a lot of recruits have asked me if things will change with our student athletes having that extra year of eligibility. At the moment that hasn't changed. None of our student athletes are planning on taking advantage of that. So it's just kind of business as usual for recruiting. We've got a couple kids coming in next year that are real excited to be at PLU and excited to build on what we've done in the past. Then we have a lot of interest in the following class for, I guess it'd be the '21-'22 season. There's already a lot of interest for that.

So, there's still a lot that's up in the air, but things are looking good. As far as keeping their skills sharp and everything, that's a little bit more difficult with courses being shut down. But it's just one of those things where we're trying to, as news comes to us and I'm sure as soon as golf courses are open, our guys are going to take advantage of the nice weather and hopefully play in some summer tournaments with you guys at the PNGA and WSGA. We're just really excited to, I guess, move forward and getting to some more certain times.

Tom Cade: As far as your summer plans, I know it's hard to make plans like that, but you typically, under normal circumstances, you'd probably give your players a mandate to go out and play basically. Play as much as you can.

Kyle Drugge: Yeah. We encourage them every summer. It's just the more you play, the more reps you get, obviously the better it is and the more comfortable you get in competition. So we encourage it.

Some of our players play in the summertime more than others, depending on how much they need to work in the summer, what their schedules are like. But our guys love to compete. They get out there in the local tournaments. Maybe some of the city amateurs, but a lot of them like to play in the bigger tournaments, like the WSGA Men's Am, PNGA Men's Am. They love getting out there and playing, especially when they're championship courses with really good competition. So it's always just been a good transition to go from keeping

their game sharp during the summer, playing against really good players and then coming into the season. They're usually ready to go right away in the fall, in September.

Tom Cade: Good. Well, Kyle, appreciate you taking the time, and you've kind of jumped right into the fire here a little bit with really unusual circumstances. For yourself, just speaking on a personal standpoint, was this like a fine how-do-you-do kind of a thing or when you got this new role were you thinking, "How do I do this? How do I manage this?"

Kyle Drugge: Yeah. There's already a lot of things that I was going to have to learn, and I think I'm just taking it in stride. Everybody's got to deal with this new normal, not just me, and I guess I'm just trying to practice what I preach when I'm coaching to just try to control the controllables. I'm not going to waste energy on what-ifs or why us or any of that stuff. It's just a matter of, "All right, this is what we're dealt with, and we just got to find a way to persevere and get through this."

At the end of the day, we really compete hard and we pride ourselves on our program at PLU, but there is a lot of things that are more important than golf at the end of the day. I think that's the important thing right now is just making sure not only our team, but our community is as healthy and safe as possible. It's difficult, but it is what it is. We're just yet thankful for a lot of things like our health and things like that.

Tom Cade: Good. Good. Kyle, thanks so much again for taking the time, and I hope you guys, the Lutes, can keep the momentum going once the season and once the playing start again, because it looks like you've been on a roll the past few years. For those who want to go check out the men's golf program, go to golutes.com. It's G-O-L-U-T-E-S.com. Again, happy to have Kyle Drugge, the new head coach of the men's golf program at PLU. Kyle, thanks again for coming.

Kyle Drugge: Thanks for having me on Tom. Appreciate it.

Tom Cade: You bet. Talk to you soon.

Kyle Drugge: All right. Take care. Bye.