

Stacy and Michelle Encourage College

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Stay in school! Like “Just say No” our eyes tend to glaze over when we hear it, but it has a huge bearing when we are talking about golf. So many young players jump on the bandwagon of turning pro far earlier than they should. Completing their degree or even going to college in the first place has so many benefits both professionally and personally. Not only do they grow as people, the relationships and networking that happens at school are highly beneficial as well.

Many players with promising college careers think talent alone will lead to a bountiful pro career and that is really only a small part of it. Talking to a very successful D1 college coach at this year’s Curtis Cup in St. Louis, she made many good points. Her student athletes have trainers, nutritionists and coaches at the ready. Their travel plans are handled and a hotel room is waiting for them when they get there. It’s easier to play well when golf is all you have to think about above your studies. They don’t realize how draining and how much energy it takes to turn pro and all that it entails, not to mention the learning curve of just figuring out places to eat and where to get your clothes washed. We’ve all seen young players excel and win and then flounder when they try to

make a career too early. For whatever reason, parental pressure or dreams of the bright lights, may steer them to try to make it on Tour when they would be better off taking their time.

Comments by Stacy Lewis on Tuesday at Royal Birkdale prior to the Ricoh Women's British Open come from a person who graduated and learned a lot more than just her double major of Accounting and Finance gave her. When asked if going to college gave her an advantage, she answered quite honestly.

"I do. I think I always – honestly, I hate all these girls turning pro so young. I love seeing girls go to college. You know, you learn how to be an individual and you learn how to take care of yourself and take care of your game and not rely on so many people. I think that's the biggest advantage of going to college. You saw that in Michelle (Wie). She's taking ownership of her game. Look at the whole putting stance. Everybody went crazy when she switched to it but she took ownership of it and she said, I'm going to do this and it's going to work and she believed in it. So she's got that belief in herself. That's why I think so many girls coming out, I don't think they have that belief that they can really do it, and college just kind of helps – I think it helps build that confidence."

Young players need to remember that they learn so much in college as they develop into young women that will help them in their careers. Not only will they have a degree to fall back on if the golf route doesn't work, but they learn life skills and confidence. Meg Mallon told me that she tells young players who don't plan on college to at least take some finance or business classes so they can read a contract and protect themselves financially. This is a business and they need to come at it from that perspective.

Michelle Wie responded when asked her opinion on what Stacy said about her being changed after going to college.

"Yeah, I've always felt going to college was an important part of my life. I've said this over and over again; for me personally, it helped me grow up a lot. I think that was actually the one beauty of college. You kind of go there and you don't have your parents telling you what to do. You don't have anyone telling you that you have to do something. It's all a choice and you kind of – especially how busy I was, I really learned how to manage my time and how to balance my life. I definitely had fun but I couldn't have as much fun because I practiced and I went to tournaments and I had to study and everything. I think I just learned to manage my time a lot better. It was difficult getting out of college. The transition period was very tough. But I think I learned a lot over the past four and a half years I was at college, and it was definitely a lot of fond memories, too."

So, to all my college players out there ... if world #1 and world #6 are telling you this ... please keep in mind that they have been here and know what they are talking about. College may not be for everybody but it should be very seriously considered. Grow your

game. Grow your confidence. Grow your minds. Your career will thank you and will be waiting for you on the other side.