

Chatting with Lauren Mason



Women's Captain, Carmel Smith, recently got the opportunity to have a chat with Lauren Mason.

How old are you? 26

What year did you go to the USA? January 2014

What academic institution did you attend? I attended Texas Tech University which is located in Lubbock, Texas. While at Texas Tech playing on the golf team, I obtained both an undergraduate and graduate degree in Sports Management. Not too often do college athletes graduate with 2 degrees in 5 years but I was driven to get both degrees while playing at the highest level of amateur golf. Attending Texas Tech was an incredible opportunity and one that I am so proud of. If I could go back and do it again, I would do it time and time again. The college program is such a great system for young athletes to utilize. It sets us up for success on and off the course without the financial burden of paying for an education or travelling to tournaments week in and week out. It truly is a great opportunity and that is why I decided to become a college golf coach so I can provide the same student-athlete experience to other generations in years to come.

What level of College Golf were you involved in? Division 1 (the highest level)

How successful was the team? During my time our team was pretty darn successful. We participated in 2 NCAA National Championships in 2015 and 2017. The team hasn't looked back since. We were a top 25 ranked team in the nation each year. Texas Tech still runs a very successful program to this day!

Your personal golfing success? I believe the highlight of my career was being a standout junior golfer within Golf Queensland and Golf Australia where I became a big fish in a little pond. I competed against Su Oh, Minjee Lee and Hannah Green who are all on the LPGA tour and are doing very well. I knew I wasn't ready to turn professional and I knew that Golf Australia would support other Aussies Oh, Green and Lee more favorable so I decided to go the college route and have never looked back. Coming over to the states and getting my bachelors and master degrees is something I am very proud of while playing at the highest level of amateur golf. 2 NCAA Championship appearances are among the highest of my golf achievements as well as going LPGA Qschool where I made it through to the 2nd stage which provided me with Symetra tour status. That's right up there as well.

Your personal academic success...come on I know really but I want you to tell me! When leaving for college I was never labelled as an academically bright individual. When I was in high school didn't care for academics one bit. I was 110% focused on my golf career and that was it. I was fortunate enough to be accepted to Texas Tech on the condition that I was to participate in 8 hours of study hall, tutoring appointments and regularly meet with an academic advisor to help assist me with staying on top of things academically within my first year. I am extremely thankful for the academic support I was given at TTU withing my first year. I was able to establish good study habits and utilize the limitless resources they had for academic success that helped me thrive in an area I wasn't successful in previously. From this I was able to achieve several notable academic accolades throughout my playing career as well as obtain 2 degrees for the price of one.

What turned you towards the coaching pathway? I thoroughly enjoyed my experience at Texas Tech and I wanted to provide the same experience I had and felt to others. I knew that I could be a great mentor and resource to future players and I wanted to share my previous experiences with them in a unique way. I tell players when I am recruiting them; I am young and relatable. I am willing to learn and grow with my players. Where as some coaches who are older don't want to change their ways. I am young and passionate. My job is to make the programs I coach be successful by establishing a winning tradition and foster an inclusive culture for everyone. I want my players to love the game more than when they first arrived on campus.

Can you tell us a brief precis of your coaching career? August 2018—June 2019, Assistant Men's and Women's Coach at Texas A&M University-Commerce (a Division II University). June 2019—July 2021, Promoted to Head Men's and Women's Golf Coach at Texas A&M University-Commerce. July 2021—Current, Head Women's Golf Coach at Southern Methodist University (Division I Institution)

Now Head Coach of SMU, where is that situated? SMU is located right in the heart of Dallas, Texas (I'm a city girl now!). Dallas is the 9th largest city in the US and the third largest in Texas with a population of 1,281,047.

What does that involve? (How many players/teams under your tutelage?) I am the head coach of one program now as opposed to two. I plan everything from practices to preparing a tournament schedule and recruiting players etc. There is a lot more involved being a head golf coach than what people might think.

What are your future ambitions? I want to rebuild the team at SMU just as I did at TAMUC, my previous institution. At my previous school within a 2 year span, I was able to get both teams to the NCAA National Championships and have both programs ranked inside the top 15 nationally. I want to make SMU into a power house institution that sustains such success for a number of years. I expect it will take me about 3-5 years to restructure and build the program at hand. The end game for me would be to coach at my alma mater Texas Tech as the Head Women's Golf Coach. If I ever were to move back to Australia I could also see myself working for Golf Australia and being a coach of their high performance teams.

Is there anything else you would like to add? I want to help spread the word about the college system. I believe it is under rated and not many people pursue the opportunity because it can be seen as too much work. I know that Australian golf is booming right now and we have to get as many Aussies over here as possible, both guys and girls. There are so many different pathways juniors can go depending on their skill levels. There are division I, II and III options within the NCAA that all give scholarships for athletics and academics. Juniors can even look into NAIA schools or junior college if they don't meet the requirements straight up. Next time I am home I would love to do a seminar at the Club to help discuss the college route and the different pathways that can be utilized to help educate coaches, parents and juniors.

Take a look at the link below which also lists some information I may have left out...

<https://smumustangs.com/news/2021/7/16/womens-golf-smu-hires-lauren-mason-as-womens-golf-head-coach.aspx>