Aiming for Birdies and Eagles
NEW COACH SETS GOALS FOR GOLF PROGRAM

BY MICHAEL REARDON

Men’s golf head coach Bill Poutre ’88 remembers what it was like when the University of Hartford dominated as a Division I New England men’s golf powerhouse.

Back then, in the late 1980s to mid-1990s, current PGA tour veterans Jerry Kelly ’88, Tim Petrovic ’89, and Patrick Sheehan ’92 all played on Hartford’s team. In addition to sending the three former Hawks to the PGA Tour, the men’s golf program made 13 NCAA tournament appearances.

Poutre played golf for the Hawks his freshman year and was elected to PGA membership in 1996. He served as the Hawks’ associate head coach for men’s golf for the fall 2004 season and was named head coach in December 2004.

Poutre knows what it takes to win and is determined to restore the glory days of the men’s golfing program. “When I took over the program, I identified three core elements essential to getting us back to the national level,” Poutre says.

The first item on Poutre’s checklist was to ensure that the team practices and plays at a top-flight course. As a result, Hartford signed a long-term agreement with Gillette Ridge Golf Club in Bloomfield, Conn. In October, for the first time since 1987, the school sponsored a regular-season tournament, the Hawks Invitational, at the club.

The second item on Poutre’s list was to play tougher competition. This year, the Hawks played fall tournaments hosted by the University of Nebraska, Rutgers University, Towson University, St. John’s University, Yale University, and the University of Hawaii. “Our goal is to be a national player, not just a New England powerhouse,” Poutre says.

Recruiting is the last piece of the puzzle. “You are not going to get good players unless you have the best facilities and you are playing great competition,” Poutre explains. With those two pieces of the plan in place, Poutre is confident about the third. In fact, he has already brought in some top-ranking high school graduates.

In addition to his head coaching duties, Poutre is an adjunct professor of entrepreneurship at the university’s Barney School of Business and is chairman and owner of Prime Financial, Inc., of Southborough, Mass. He insists that his team excel in the classroom as well as on the golf course. He is proud that the 2005 spring squad had a collective grade point average of 3.24, the highest in the America East Conference.

“Academic performance comes before athletic performance,” Poutre says. “If they don’t get it done in the classroom, they won’t be able to compete. The team understands that the foundation of the program is built on academic success, respect, integrity, and then athletic ability.” Poutre also insists that his players be physically fit, focused, and determined to win, and he will not tolerate players who are less committed to the program than he is. He demonstrated his commitment when he waived his salary as assistant head coach in 2004, choosing instead to donate it to the university’s athletics program.

Poutre sets high standards for himself as well as his team. “If we are not among the top three teams in New England in 2006–07, then I will not have completed my goals,” he says. “I don’t mind setting goals for myself and being held accountable if I don’t get there.”

Playbook for Life

Bill Poutre ’88 loves golf and loves to coach golf, but he’s also very realistic about what it takes to put food on the table and keep a roof over one’s head. That’s why he travels the country advising student-athletes on how to look out for their financial future in his role as a representative for Playbook for Life, a program that was developed by The Hartford Financial Services Group in cooperation with the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). Playbook for Life helps students learn how to handle the financial challenges they’ll face when their collegiate playing days are over.

In addition to his responsibilities as the University of Hartford’s men’s golf coach, adjunct professor at the university’s Barney School of Business, and chairman of Massachusetts-based Prime Financial, Inc., Poutre helps student-athletes understand money-related matters like credit ratings, savings, investments, and insurance. He tells them about some of the financial mistakes he made when he was younger and how those mistakes made him understand the importance of financial planning.

“Most college students want to learn more about managing money,” says Poutre. “It’s in their best interest to be aware of things like compounding and interest rates and credit scores. This basic knowledge will help them understand how their decisions today can affect them five, six years down the road.”
Hartford to Host 2006 America East Women’s Basketball Tournament

The home crowd at the Reich Family Pavilion’s Chase Arena will have one more chance to cheer on the University of Hartford women’s basketball team to a conference title.

For the fifth consecutive year, the university will host the nine-team Friendship Cottage Cheese America East Women’s Basketball Championship, to be held March 9-12.

The America East Championship has utilized a single-site format since 1998. Maine hosted the event the first season, followed by Vermont in 1999, 2000, and 2001. Binghamton University has been awarded the 2007 tournament.

More than 25,000 fans have attended the multi-day competition during its previous four years at the university. The Hawks won the championship in both 2002 and 2005.

For ticket information, call the Hawks’ box office at 860.768.4295.

Buying a Brick for the Home Field Advantage Project

An unusual fundraising campaign gives donors an opportunity to secure a permanent place in the history of University of Hartford athletics.

The Home Field Advantage (HFA) Brick Campaign will help support the HFA project, which includes the renovation of Al-Marzook Field for soccer and lacrosse, and the construction of a baseball field, a new softball field, and a track surrounding an all-purpose field.

Donors can purchase and inscribe bricks, which will be placed at the main entrance and along the intersecting walkways of the new athletics facilities. The cost for an inscribed 4” x 8” brick is $300, and the cost for an 8” x 8” inscribed brick is $500.

The first brick was purchased by alumna Lonnie Roth Brick ’69, M’72 of West Hartford and her husband, Larry. Lonnie Brick, a member of the West Hartford Board of Education for 12 years (including five as its chairperson), is a lifelong educator. She taught science at Bulkeley High School in Hartford for 34 years and is currently a science instructor at Capital Community College. Larry Brick is an attorney. The Bricks have three children.

To order a brick, or for more information, contact Associate Athletics Director Jim Keener at 860.768.5063 or jkeener@hartford.edu, or visit www.hartfordhawks.com.