

# Athletics: Talking tours, golf and lakes area fun with Sharpe

113 [Jeremy Millsop](#) Today at 2:00 a.m.



Ryan Sharpe gives pointers to Matthew Leary (center) and Mullen Bratney Wednesday, June 19, during Chris Foley Golf School's junior golf program lessons at Cragun's Legacy Courses. Kelly Humphrey / Brainerd Dispatch

The buzz in the lakes area is the hopeful coming of the PGA Tour's developmental tour now known as the Korn Ferry Tour.

One person with a unique perspective of that tour and the lakes area is Ryan Sharpe, a PGA golf instructor at Chris Foley Golf Schools located at Cragun's Legacy Courses.

Sharpe—husband to Alyssa, father to Griffin and son No. 2 coming in July—was a caddie on the tour.

Here are his thoughts about Korn Ferry, the tour and the lakes area.

Q: My first question for you is an obscure one, but what do you know about Korn Ferry?

RS: They are the new sponsor for the developmental tour of the PGA Tour which was previously Web.com. They are a management consulting firm with locations around the world.

Q: Do you know if a tour sponsor like a Web.com or a Korn Ferry has any influence on where tour stops are or where they might go and do, we in the lakes area need to start calling the owner of Korn Ferry?

RS: Ha! I believe the PGA Tour has more to say than the major sponsor, but I will start looking into contacting the CEO of Korn Ferry to get the Brainerd lakes area on their radar.

Q: When the idea, or even just the glimmer of an idea, that the Brainerd lakes area might host a PGA tour event came about, yours was one of the first names to come up. You caddied on the tour for a bit, correct? Describe what the Web.com or now Korn Ferry tour is?

RS: I caddied on the Web.com tour for Clayton Rask for one year. Web.com tour is the development tour for the PGA Tour. There are two ways to get on the Web.com Tour—you can qualify through Q-School or you're a player that has finished ranked 126th or worse on the PGA Tour after the FedEx Cup. The top 25 players for total money from the Web.com Tour automatically qualify for the next season of the PGA Tour. After those top 25 are set, they have a 4-playoff system similar to the FedEx Cup for more qualifying spots. The schedule consists of roughly 25 events.

Q: How do lakes area courses, which are designed to be resort-type courses and not necessarily championship caliber courses like Hazeltine, compare to the tour courses and will they be challenging enough for the tour?

RS: One big difference between PGA and Web.com (taking out the top-10 players in the

world), most of the players are of the same caliber. The courses on the PGA Tour vs. the Web.com are a little more challenging. Our courses in the lakes area would allow the players and the fans to have an exciting event with a lot of birdies and low scores which is great for excitement. There's a big misconception of what the course level of difficulty is for Web.com events, our area courses are more than capable of hosting a Korn Ferry Tour event.

Q: Last year's "The Happening" event at Cragun's Legacy Courses was a big hit. I didn't hear a single complaint from the tour pros or those playing in the event. Knowing what they have planned for this year, in your opinion, how close do you think we are to blowing the socks off the PGA and almost forcing them to bring an event to the lakes area?

RS: I think it'll take a few years and a few successful events to truly get on the radar but getting some of the players here that we are attracting and getting their feedback is definitely helpful. There are a lot of driving factors when the PGA Tour is deciding on a host for an event. Schedule, sponsorship and the area accommodations being on the same page are a few key ones. We are working in the right direction to get noticed. One thing I have noticed this year is there hasn't been any interference with the Canadian Tour or Dakota Tour which should attract some good players, too.

Q: When you were caddying on the tour, who were some of the top players then that we might recognize? Also, how often would a PGA guy drop down, say he was coming off an injury or a major swing change and wanted to test his game before hitting the PGA tour first?

RS: Luke List, Scott Brown, Jason Kokrak, Jonas Blixt, Danny Lee, Eric Compton, Matt Every. As far as tour pros dropping down it was less than one dozen times per year. It's not as common as you would think.

Q: If the lakes area is successful and does land a regular tour event, what can the area and golf fans expect? How big were the crowds? What was the excitement level like in some of these communities that hosted the event?

RS: The Web.com tour event in Wichita would be comparable to what the lakes area could expect. It's a middle of the road event in terms of attendance, but the recreational attractions in the area for players and spectators would be second to none. It would be an attraction for golfers and golf fans all over central and northern Minnesota. I would say you could compare a Web.com tour event to what Lakes Jam is for the music festival crowd. We have good momentum after last year's "The Happening" event, it's all about building off that momentum.

Q: You've recently joined forces with Chris Foley Golf Schools to focus on the teaching side of golf. What is it about that aspect of the business that has you stressing that direction?

RS: Since I was a young kid, I always knew I wanted to be a full-time golf teacher.

I've always enjoyed studying and breaking down the golf swing. Helping people improve their game and reach their goals on the golf course is very rewarding for me. The relationships I have built with my students of all ages on and off the teaching tee has been a highlight as well. I feel very fortunate to have been given the opportunity by Chris Foley to further pursue this side of the business.

Q: Is there a particular age group or gender you really enjoy working with?

RS: Truthfully, I don't have a favorite. I've worked with students from age 5 to 70+ and every student is so different than the next which makes each lesson a new challenge than the last.

Q: For those that have never taken a golf lesson, sell my readers on it. Why would it be beneficial for any and every one?

RS: Your readers should stop right now and call Chris Foley Golf Schools to get a lesson scheduled with myself or Chris Foley right away. Lessons are beneficial if the instructor gives you one or two items to focus on, instead of 4-5 and making it too overwhelming.

During a lesson we can focus on something as simple as your grip and stance, or we can work on swing change, depending on where you are at in the game. You are going to see the biggest impact if you commit to practicing and improving and continue to take lessons on a regular basis to progress. That said, a regular basis doesn't have to mean weekly, it could be monthly through our golf season, just to stay on track.

Q: What are a few misconceptions about taking golf lessons and what's the reality?

RS: The biggest misconception is you have to be a good golfer to take a golf lesson. Another is that the golf instructor is going to change my golf swing during the lesson. Typically, I have seen one or two minor adjustments in a player's set up are going to affect the ball flight which is going to make the most noticeable change for a player. I consider myself a ball flight coach more than a swing coach, the ball flight tells me all I need to know about the player.

Q: One of the big things I hear is people don't want someone else looking at their golf swing or they don't have the time to really put the work into it. How would you persuade those people to at least give it a try?

RS: There's a difference between making a swing change and taking lessons. You can take a lesson and make some adjustments in your setup to help your ball flight without

changing anything about your actual swing. If someone is self-conscious about their golf swing, I encourage them to Google "Ho-sung Choi Golf Swing"

Q: What is the best golf tip someone has given you?

RS: While on the golf course, play the game and get the ball in the hole with the least number of strokes. The golf course is meant to be played as a game. While on the range, you practice. Keep the two separate.

Q: You've been in the area for a while, if you were playing in a two-person event, who are you recruiting from the area to be your partner?

RS: That's a tough one. Who are we playing against and what course are we playing at? If it's at Grand View, you can't go wrong with Jack Wawro, Jesse Nelson or Adam Haugen. If the match is at The Legacy, I'll take Tim Johnson and Chris Foley all

day long. If it's at The Classic, I'll take Glenn Hagberg because he knows every inch of that golf course. We are lucky to live in an area with so many course options and a great group of pros to play with and against.

Q: The lakes area had some decent showings in all three classes of the Minnesota State High School League's state tournaments. One of the arguments I've heard in my years here is with all the great golf courses, facilities and opportunities why aren't we even more dominant? What are your thoughts?

RS: This is something that I have thought about a lot and is really interesting to me. I think it comes down to the recreational opportunities in the area like fishing, hunting, lake sports, etc., puts area athletes in a situation where they have to make the decision to practice, or "play." Being out on the Web.com Tour opened my eyes to what elite players go through and the work they put into their game on a daily and weekly basis. We have a lot of talent in our area, these kids are just lucky to live in an area with so many recreation opportunities.