

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

# Dean Smith and the Meaning of Being a Coach



As a coach and teacher you are a role model whether you like it or not. Hopefully, most of you do enjoy the challenge and do your best to set a great example every single day. Which brings me to Dean Smith and his passing last month.

One of the most enjoyable days I ever had was during a Golf Magazine Top 100 Teacher Retreat I was running at Pinehurst Resort about a dozen years ago. We did an after-dinner fireside chat that year and I had asked Coach Smith, the University of North Carolina's legendary basketball coach, if he would join us to talk about coaching and tell a few stories. We had packed the dining room at the Pine Crest Inn with about 75 of the Top 100 in attendance.

By the way, Smith's first coaching job was as the baseball and golf coach for the Air Force Academy. Even though he didn't continue to coach golf, he had a lifelong love for the game and played often.

One recollection that stands out from that evening is the fact that Coach Smith drove himself the 70 miles from his home even though I suggested that we send a car for him. As dinner was in full swing I went out to the lobby to see if he had arrived. I was nervous as I had never met him and as luck would have it, he was walking up the steps. I was the only person in the lobby and he walked over, gave me a strong handshake and in an upbeat voice said "Thanks for inviting me, what would you like me to do?" It was one of those moments when I just knew instantly we were going to have a very good night.

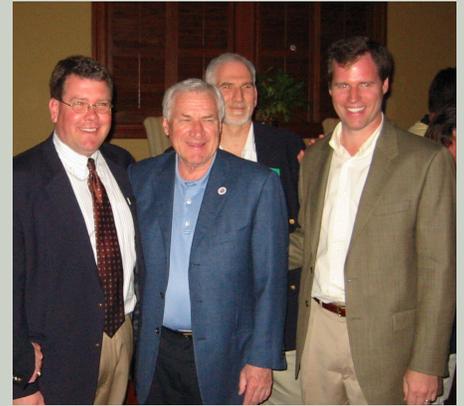
As it turned out it was better than that. Coach Smith turned our planned 45 minute "chat" into about an hour and a half and after that he stayed for another hour signing

autographs and taking pictures with just about every single person in the room. To be honest, I couldn't tell you exactly what he talked about that night when it came to his coaching secrets or his basketball stories, but I remember vividly the way he was revered by everyone in the room and the way he made everyone feel like they were his long lost cousins. Nobody left the room that night without being truly inspired at what one coach with the best intentions could accomplish.

After he spoke that night I was so intrigued by his presence that I did some

research. What I found was a man of uncommon integrity and decency who did whatever he could to elevate those around him. He was deeply involved in the civil rights movement and worked behind the scenes for social justice.

Every day you can have a similar influence on your students, especially your juniors. As a role model, you benefit by associating with a game that thrives on integrity, discipline and focus. With the passing of Coach Smith, I was reminded of the bond people feel for the truly great coaches in their lives. I hope you always embrace this responsibility as it is what separates coaching from just giving golf lessons. I hope you do more than just give lessons.



From Left: Eric Alpenfels, Dean Smith, Jim Frank and Lorin Anderson

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