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2-29-2016

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# Alumnus Combines GWU Academic, Athletic Experiences to Help Launch Pro Golf Career

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Office of University  
Communications

February 29, 2016

## *Kris Gray ('12) Benefits from Marketing Education in Reaching PGA Europro Tour*

Kris Gray's choice to move from his home in England to the United States to attend Gardner-Webb paid off in the form of an all-conference collegiate golf career and a position as the University's assistant coach. But it has also advanced his dream of playing professional golf by allowing him to combine his athletic skills and academic interests.

Originally uncertain of his intended major, Gray enrolled in a marketing course in his first semester at Gardner-Webb and discovered he enjoyed the subject and the GWU marketing program's faculty. "My professors came to the University with a wealth of real-world knowledge and experience," he explained. "Getting their insights of what works and doesn't work in the business world was a lot more valuable than just learning theories from a textbook."

He credits his education in the GWU Godbold School of Business, in both his undergraduate marketing studies and Master of Business Administration (MBA) graduate work, with providing the necessary skills to prepare for his current career on the Professional Golfers Association of America (PGA) Europro Tour. He earned a spot on the pro circuit through his successful performance in a qualifying tournament in 2015.

"I am certain that the marketing program at Gardner-Webb has helped me massively in getting my golf career off the ground," Gray asserted. "Professional golf is very expensive with entry fees, travel and accommodation all having to be paid for every tournament week I play. I believe my time at GWU has helped me market myself to businesses to get the vital sponsorship needed to fund the start of my career."

In addition to his marketing education, Gray attributes his success to the development of his skills on the golf course and the coaching he received from GWU's Tee Burton. Gray shares that his options for both earning a degree and playing golf for a major university were limited in England. While searching for NCAA Division I opportunities in the United States, Gray connected with Burton, who he says offered mentorship through his experience and success as a coach and golfer himself.

“Playing golf at Gardner-Webb has opened so many doors for me,” he assessed. “(Burton’s) knowledge of the game is second to none. He played an incredibly high level of golf in his days as a pro, so having someone like that in our camp was such an advantage. But I also got to travel around the United States to play some of the best golf courses against some of the best players.”

Gray offers that his teammates, many of whom were also international student-athletes, provided immense support for competition on the golf course and achievement in the classroom. He believes his participation in collegiate team golf, and his two years as GWU assistant coach while earning an MBA, challenged him and sharpened his skills to benefit his individual game and further prepare him for a professional career.

Now that he has reached the Europro Tour, his target is set on successfully advancing to the next level of golf’s European Tour and a long-term career in the professional sport. In addition to his athletic performance, he underscores the importance of marketing savvy and the role it plays in earning sponsorships. He is currently connected with companies such as Bulova watches, engineering firm UCS and Dynamic Indoor Golf.

“Without their support, I may not have had the chance to chase my dream,” he concludes. “And without Gardner-Webb this may not have happened. My education has helped me get this far with my golf, and if I ever moved into something away from golf, I like to think that my marketing degree and MBA are a great backup to have.”

*Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University provides exceptional educational opportunities within a Christian environment, preparing students to think critically, to succeed professionally, and to serve faithfully as members of their local and global communities.*