

# sports

## 40-plus years of golf expertise comes to AU ~ Gene Grabiec named head coach of women's golf ~

PAUL MURRAY  
REPORTER

Gene Grabiec sits on the porch at Silver Lake Country Club, untucks his polo and spreads himself out in a chair. He pulls a half smoked cigar out of his bag and lights it up, the first toke is a long one.

It was an extensive day out on the course, from the rampant humidity of the July afternoon to the endless lessons he handed out, he was worked to the bone. Hard work was the norm for Grabiec.

The first time he ever held a golf club was after hours of work. Seven-year-old Grabiec walked over to the neighborhood country club and asked if he could play, only to be pummeled with laughs.

“Young man, if you want to play golf here you better learn how to clean clubs and shine shoes,” the owners said.

Grabiec took this to heart and showed up to work there everyday that summer and stayed after to play golf. Shining shoes and hitting nine irons payed off.

Fast forward 61 years, and Grabiec now possesses a lifetime of golf skill and experience under his belt.

The door opens and a few of Gene’s buddies join him on the porch. They do the same as him, take out a moist cigar and settle into a chair. They all begin crackling jokes and trading stories in between each puff of smoke.

“Aye Gene, what about Ashland?” one of them asks.

“Well, what about it?” Gene said. He didn’t know what they meant by that.

“I heard they got a job opening, maybe give you something better to do other than wipe the floor with us on the course!”

As Grabiec leans back in his chair, letting out a boisterous howl of a laugh, a lightbulb goes off in his head. He had always been competitive. Born and raised that way.

Grabiec’s mother was an Olympic runner and had instilled this in him from a young age. Coaching at Ashland would give him a chance to yet again prove himself, go out there and compete again.

He had not truly competed since he won the Golf and Shoot tournament on ESPN in 2007, but that



Grabiec poses for a picture in front of the recreation center.

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was over a decade ago. This would truly give him an opportunity to partake in one of his favorite hobbies, winning.

Gene flipped and flopped the idea over in his mind like a buttermilk pancake on a hot skillet, carefully making sure he checked all the details and all the edges. And when that thought finally flipped up golden brown, his mind was set. He wanted the job.

On July 8, 2019 Gene reached out to the Ashland University athletic office... it did not take long from there. Two days later

Ashland University officially announced that Grabiec would be taking over as the Head Women’s Golf coach.

The position was previously being filled by Dennis North, who coaches the men’s program but acted as interim head coach for the past year. The quick decision should not come as a surprise, as Grabiec bring with him a ton of passion, commitment, and U-Haul trailer full of experience.

Gene was a PGA member, at one point directing the largest indoor golf school in the country. He

competed in numerous nationally televised golf events while also touring the country giving golf lessons to business professionals.

Grabiec has also been an active recruiter for young golfers trying to receive college scholarships. He has taught the likes of Bob Hope, Bob Evans, Dan Carlisle, and Jackie Presser. All the while Gene was refining his coaching abilities.

“When I first started teaching I was overly technical. Now I do my best to simplify the game. It’s all about set up, balance, and alignment,” Grabiec said. “We tend to

overthink on the course. A lot of people rigamortis themselves out there, that’s what I try to fix. I try to make it easier mentally for the golfer.”

One of Gene’s favorite things is to use other sports as a way to get the golfer out of their own head.

“I try to get to know my players on a personal level, learn what other sports they have played in the past. Learn of the success that they have had in other sports, and tell them to hone in on that feeling. Focus on how it felt. From there we try to recreate that successful attitude” Grabiec said.

When Grabiec was hired, his recruiting instincts immediately kicked back in. He searched for players who he had connected with in the past, hoping that one might find their way to Ashland. Someone with the same mentality and shared the same vision that he had.

He found exactly that in Megan Pollock.

Pollock spent three seasons at Division I Dayton, averaging a score of 86.27. She opted out of her senior season, maintaining one season of eligibility.

Gene quickly jumped on this opportunity and reached out to the Pollock family. After a few discussions, Pollack decided to finish out her eligibility and obtain her masters at Ashland.

“Gene called me and told me what he was looking for in a player, and I could tell he was passionate and had a love for the game. I knew from those first two meetings that he had tremendous experience and he was someone I can trust.” Pollock said.

As the first couple practices have gone underway, Megan and the others are sharpening their skills for the upcoming season; working on their short game, practicing smashing drives and sinking crucial putts.

The girls are locked in and looking to improve on their ninth place finish in the GLIAC last season. They will be working vigorously at the driving range, just like they had in years past, only this year will be slightly different.

Grabiec will be doing everything he can this season to help the women’s team in anyway possible, with his passionate love for the game and a half smoked cigar in his mouth.

## Brenner, Reichelderfer and Shreve to lead Eagles into 2019 season

JOHN MARGIDA  
REPORTER

The Ashland University football team is primed for a great season on the back of leadership from senior middle linebacker Clay Shreve and senior defensive end Tristan Reichelderfer leading the defense.

The defense will be returning seven of 11 starters to what has been a consistently good defense. The Eagles only allowed more than 21 points twice last season and a season-high 28 points to national runner-up Ferris State.

Redshirt sophomore quar-

terback Austin Brenner will begin his first year as a starter despite starting only seven games last year. Brenner is looking to get the offense moving early this season.

With both the defense and the offense returning seven starters the expectations are high for the Eagles this year.

Reichelderfer and Shreve have set the bar pretty high this season for the defense. “Our



ZACH READ

From left: offensive linemen Gavin Posey, Trey Madison, Samson Hairston, Alex Maxim and Ryan Maguire

we’re a better team than that,” Shreve said.

The Eagles have an opportunity to improve this ranking early on, as two of the first three games this season are against top 16 ranked teams.

Reichelderfer, Shreve and Brenner serve as the main leaders of the offense and defense this season.

Reichelderfer believes he isn’t a vocal leader, but rather leads by example and work ethic. He serves as a sort of alternate mentor to the younger guys so that they learn how things should be done and how serious to take it.

Shreve is one of the two defensive captains for this season and believes that his leadership role was earned by gaining the respect of his coaches and teammates over the past three seasons on and off the field.

“My role as a leader on the team is to first and foremost serve the other guys on the team,” Brenner said. “I try to lead in a way that shows the guys I care for them and put them before myself.”

Brenner is adamant that the offense needs to focus on taking care of the ball and holding their own while the defense is doing their job.

According to Reichelderfer, team bonding plays a huge role in how the team will play this year.

“It started this summer with the guys who were voluntarily here working jobs, and then during camp with accountability captains leading talks to get to know everyone,” said Reichelderfer.

Although 14 of 22 starters are returning, new athletes are needed to fill in the gaps.

With so many returning pieces on defense and offense they should

be able to plug a few new starters in. To pick up right where they left off last year.

“The defense is going to be good guys stepping up to replace the starters we lost, and transfers like defensive tackle Ja’Merez Bowen. His nickname is ‘Tank,’ and he is a tank,” Clay said.

Tank will be headlining the new additions to the defense and anchor the defensive line for the eagles this fall.

“We all hang out and everyone enjoys being around each other. The chemistry is really good. We go onto the field as friends and everyone wants to play for each other and work towards the same goal,” Brenner said.

AU football is looking to have a promising 2019 season with these three players leading the attack on the field.

