



Curtis draws spotlight to men's golf program

By Al Weston, '00

British Open champion Ben Curtis attended Kent State and played golf under coach Herb Page.

Photograph by Jeff Glidden, '87

The Kent State University men's golf program has a storied history of success. In his 25 years with the Golden Flashes, director of golf and men's team head coach **Herb Page** has built a dominant program that has produced 11 Mid-American Conference (MAC) titles, 17 trips to NCAA competition, 10 All-Americans and eight MAC championships.

With all of the accolades men's golf has received, no story holds a bigger international impact than PGA Tour rookie *Ben Curtis* winning the British Open Championship on July 20 at Royal St. George's in Sandwich, England.

In an event that ABC Sports commentator Mike Tirico called "one of the most amazing stories in the history of the Open Championship" and "the all-time Cinderella story," Curtis claimed the Claret Jug as the 132nd British Open champion in just his 16th tour start. He may be the first player since Francis Ouimet at the 1913 U.S. Open to win in the first major championship he has played.

The Kent State community is proud of its adopted son. Throughout the months following his big win, local

businesses throughout Kent and nearby Stow, Ohio, cheered on Curtis' achievement. Windows and marquees of every business from meat market to flower shop proudly displayed signs saying, "Way to Go, Ben, We Love You" and "Congratulations, Ben Curtis, 2003 British Open Champion."

"It's ironic going from being a complete unknown to everyone wanting to know you," Curtis says. "Sometimes it gets hectic, but I'm trying to enjoy it and have fun with it."

The win is sure to open doors for the Ostrander, Ohio, native in terms of endorsement and promotional opportunities. But the largest door it will open is the opportunity to play in the PGA Tour on a weekly basis.

"Before this win, people would ask, 'Why aren't you playing this weekend?' and I'd say 'Because I can't,' " he says. "But now when people ask, I can tell them it's because I don't feel like playing."

Coach Page is excited about Curtis' opportunities as well.

"I'm obviously very proud of him, not only as his ex-coach but as a friend," Page says. "It couldn't have

Kriener Captures Gold and Record at Pan Am Games

Former Kent State University track and field standout *Kim Kriener* set an American record in the javelin and brought home a gold medal from the Pan American Games in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, in August.

A two-time All-American in the javelin for the Golden Flashes, she added the medal to a list of accolades including the 2001 U.S. Championship and runner-up honors at the 2000 USA Olympic Trials and the 2002 USA Outdoor Championships.



Photograph by Jeff Glidden, '87

happened to a nicer person. He truly worked hard to prepare himself for success during his time as a student-athlete.

"I feel that young men come here to be champions. We set high goals and have high standards."

Curtis says he took full advantage of his time at Kent State.

"My time at Kent State helped prepare me for life," he explains. "My major [sport and recreation management] helped me understand how the business world works, and how to have respect for others."

"As members of the golf team, we played a long and difficult schedule that helped me get ready for the rigors of the PGA Tour. It definitely helped me realize that I can't have an off week if I hope to succeed."

Curtis' successes at Kent State have proved to be a sign of things to come. In his time with the Flashes from 1996-2000, the team won four MAC championships and finished ninth in the nation in 1999-2000. He also was a two-time second-team All-American, the MAC Player of the Year and the MAC Sportsman of the Year, and he holds the school record with a 72.23 career stroke average.

Since Curtis' college days, the relationship between Curtis and Page has evolved from player-coach to friendship.

"Herb was supportive throughout my time at Kent State," Curtis says. "Now I can call him up, and we can talk about golf, but more importantly, we can talk about life and family. I feel lucky to have that relationship."

Page says he feels just as blessed. "My biggest thrill

comes when he stops by to talk about the tour," he says. "It's special to see him continue on with so much success. It's rewarding as a coach and exciting as a friend."

Never far from his Kent State roots, Curtis' teammate on the 1998-99 and

1999-2000 MAC championship teams and good friend *Danny Sabl*, '01, is his regular tour caddy.

Curtis has helped open the door for other current and former Kent State golfers to make their marks.

"*Jon Mills* has already won on the Canadian tour,"

Page says. "*Bryan DeCorso*, '95, *David Morland*, '91, and the current Flashes [*Peter Laws* and *Joe Hurtuk* qualify for the U.S. Amateur] will all have a chance as well. Seeing Ben achieving his goals gives them the confidence to believe that they can do it, too."

This has been a summer for goal achievement for Curtis. Along with bringing home the Claret Jug, he married longtime girlfriend and former Kent State golfer *Candace Beatty*, '02, in August. Additionally, he completed the final requirements to earn his degree from Kent State.

"It is an important goal for me, and I'm looking forward to receiving my degree," he says. "It will allow me the opportunity to do something after golf, but I'm hopeful I won't have to worry about that for the next 30 years or so." 🌟



Photograph by Gail Moseley

Kent State golf coach Herb Page celebrates with his former student and British Open champion Ben Curtis during his return after winning the prestigious tournament.

2003-04 Basketball Season Promises Excitement

Kent State's second-year men's basketball coach **Jim Christian** returns three starters and eight letter-winners to the roster as the Golden Flashes open the 2003-04 season in search of their sixth-straight 20-win season and national postseason berth. A sixth-consecutive 20-win year would establish a Mid-American Conference (MAC) record, while Kent State also looks to extend its own MAC record with a fourth consecutive MAC East Division championship.

Returning starters are All-MAC senior guard *Eric Haut*, one of the top three-point shooting threats in the nation; junior center *Nate Gerwig*, who set the university's single-season field goal percentage record last season; and sophomore point guard *DeAndre Haynes*, who was named to the 2002-03 All-MAC Freshman Team. Also back are a quartet of seniors: guards *Matt Jakeway* and

Brian Howard, forward *Bryan Bedford* and center *John Edwards*.

Women's basketball fans will see plenty of new faces on the court this season, but there's one face they're hoping to see more often. Kent State was without the services of All-America candidate *Andrea Csaszar* last season due to a torn anterior cruciate ligament. The 6-foot-6 center returns for her third season on the court and should be a catalyst for a young and exciting squad.

Joining Csaszar in the frontcourt are Kent State's lone senior, *Christi Shibata*, and sophomore *Lindsay Shearer*, who is the Golden Flashes' top returning scorer and rebounder.

Transfer student *Malika Willoughby* is the favorite to start at point guard this year. Sophomores *Kacie Vavrek* and *Tiffany Kelly* also return to the backcourt.