

Who's Behind Your Success?

Essay by Natalie Gulbis

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Throughout my life, many individuals have contributed to my success as a professional golfer. Without them, I would not be where I am today. The most influential has been my father, John.

One of the qualities I have always admired about my father is his dedication to my dreams. He retired from law enforcement when I was 12 years old and used his retirement income to pay for my travel, entry fees and equipment. We traveled to tournaments by car and train; we camped instead of staying in hotels. I spent many hours reading and studying while we drove and was fortunate to see much of the U.S. We never lost sight of my goals, and achieving those goals has always been much more fulfilling because of what we sacrificed to reach them.

Another important lesson I learned from my father was to keep things in perspective. I recall one memory every time I suffer a setback or encounter a difficult challenge. Many years back, after a poor round on the course, I was driving home with my father, feeling sorry for myself and my poor performance, when we came upon a traffic jam on the highway due to serious car accident. We watched as medical personnel and police carried victims away from the wreckage. The victims' families stood by helplessly, and I could only imagine the grief they must have experienced. I will never forget what my father said to me: "You may have a bad day on the golf course, but remember there is so much more to life. Never forget to put the sport in perspective of what is really important." I will never forget his advice that day. There is so much in life to be thankful for, and I credit my father for reminding me of that.

My father always focused on positive thinking and having fun. Every day, rain or shine, we would practice. If the weather was bad, we'd grab hot chocolate and hit balls at water puddles. We'd go to quiet driving ranges with a mini boombox and hit wedge shots to classic rock. We even had putting contests to determine who would pick the radio station on the next drive or what movie we would see that night. My father not only helped me set goals but also gave me daily incentives and challenges. That helped keep practice and my work fun. Our practice sessions were long and tough, but what we did better than anything was to finish on something POSITIVE. Whether holing a chip, hitting a long tee shot or playing one more hole, we always left the course in a positive frame of mind.

Finally, my father always taught me the importance of surrounding myself with supportive and positive people. I've had many great people behind my success, both personally and

professionally, during my career. These individuals have been there during my struggles and have witnessed me achieve my goals. I truly believe that in order to excel at something, you need to be surrounded by a support system of people who truly care about you and genuinely wish you success in life. My father is one of those people. He has given me invaluable advice and insight over the years and instilled great values. I would not be where I am today without him!