

MAX LYONS | MARQUETTE GOLF

Uh my name is Max Lyons I played division one golf for Marquette University as a high schooler When preparing to play college golf I think the biggest focus that I knew would be important for me to separate myself from the other players would be mainly ball striking and iron game I think that that's one of the biggest ways to bridge the gap between being a good player and a great player coming to college is really taking time on the range to work through swing thoughts and really just hone in ball striking because if you're able to place the golf ball in very precise spots coming into the green you you have an advantage on the competition and there's a lot of other areas like short game and putting that maybe everyone is mostly similar at at that stage But I think ball striking is something that I really focused on with my coach in high school and really allowed me to elevate my game in that way I think one of the most simple pieces of advice that I've always took to heart is that at the end of the day golf is a sport I play It's not who I am Uh that really frees you up to be able to compete for something bigger than yourself Knowing that whether I shoot 67 or 77 you know I'm still going to be loved and supported by the people around me And uh golf isn't really my identity I think that's something that's allowed me to take my focus off of my performance and allow me to play more re relaxed But also I think one big thing that my dad always uh wanted to emphasize is uh golf tournaments are very long They take a long time sometimes three days sometimes four days And a lot of players maybe struggle when they try to get too greedy or too hasty with their process or trying to make birdies quickly as opposed to knowing that the tournament is very long and all these tournaments we play in some days or 10 hour days where we're playing two rounds in a day And I think the most important thing is staying patient I think that's something that a piece of advice that my mentors my parents and my coaches have emphasized is making sure that I'm trying to be the most patient person on the golf course letting things come to me instead of trying to push the initiative and do something that maybe the situation doesn't call for So I I'd say those two things are probably the biggest pieces of advice and from my mentors as well as coaches So some of the top challenges that I'd say I faced was a little bit less of the physical and more of a timing situation I played uh baseball and hockey up until my freshman year of high school and didn't really start playing competitive golf until my freshman year So there is a huge time gap between a lot of the other players my age and

myself with I only had four years to get myself prepared to play college golf Whereas a lot of these kids grew up with swinging at a golf club when they were super young and had played in different us kids golf tournaments as well as just kind of playing with their friends on the side But golf wasn't really a big part of my life until freshman year So when when that challenge I kind of had to face that head on and I think just outwork everyone was something that wasn't an option I had to do it if I wanted to play at the next level and practicing more than everyone practicing more efficiently than everyone getting more reps in And like I said being more precise with how I'm gonna allocate my practice time I really didn't have time to waste in high school if I wanted to play at the next level So really being specific with how I practiced how I worked with my swing coach what we worked on as well as specifically identifying what tournaments made the most sense for me to best take that jump and and win these tournaments So my name is now on a a larger scale when when it comes to recruiting I think because I was behind the eight ball it required me to really lock in and not just go to the course and hit balls or go to the putting green and smack some putts around But I really need to be extra precise with how I allocate my time because it was either that or I don't play a sport in college because baseball and hockey were out the window at that point So just really I'd say that challenge uh did take a mental toll on me and my family just not really knowing whether I'd be playing division one sports because baseball and hockey were such a big part of my life But I think when I realized what my objective was and what the challenge was just facing it head on and knowing I'm gonna have to say no to certain things in my life if I really wanna play college golf So just you know saying no to certain things and saying yes to practicing as hard as I can and as much as I could That's a great question Um When it comes to recruitment I was kind of towards the latter half of the COVID phase And with recruitment it was it was kind of the worst situation for anyone wanting to start playing a sport and trying to get recruited Because when COVID happened in 2020 that's when I started to play a lot better And my results uh were being recognized by a lot of these coaches kind of towards my junior year of high school when I started to score Well my performance was a little bit better and bam COVID happened and a lot of these schools were not able to host recruits for visits And a lot of coaches were required to strictly meet with me virtually So that was a bit of a challenge not really getting to meet a lot of coaches face to face but instead having to use an online platform to get to know these coaches as best as I could when it comes to golf it's less of a

there is a qualitative aspect of recruitment where the coach wants to see how we react to certain situations how we are mannerisms on the golf course But when it comes to golf it's more of a quantitative type of recruitment where your scores kind of speak for themselves And thankfully uh over my junior and into senior year I was able to score really well in tournaments and win a handful of tournaments that made it easier for coaches to see me and and become interested in getting to know me and over my recruitment I I did take 1 to 2 visits to universities But like I said most of my stuff was virtually so and then transition to the second part of your question with regards to how important off the golf course or certain type of personalities plays into recruitment I think the biggest thing was when I was meeting with these coaches virtually it was a lot of just getting to know me and what I was passionate about outside the golf They obviously know that if I want to play division one golf I must love golf I must love the grind and practicing But they wanted to get to know me on a personal level And I think that's what stood out to me is a lot of these coaches had to adapt how they recruit And in my experience the biggest part of my recruitment was getting to know these coaches on a personal level through a camera and that was a bit of a challenge but I really liked it And that's kind of how I ended up choosing my school is my coach was very intentional with how we spent our virtual time and he saw my scores and he knew that I was the golfer the golf type he was looking for he just wanted to get to know me on a personal level So that's kind of how my recruitment went Yeah I say the most tangible thing or piece of advice slash strategy that I've kind of gained over my years in college as opposed to junior golf is something called course management And I think you kind of understand what course management means as a junior golfer where to best place the golf ball It's not just about the golf shots you hit it's about where you're hitting where you're aiming what situations and what hazards you're avoiding And I think course management has been the biggest way that I have gained an edge on the competition Everybody in college golf is a really good ball striker really good putter They have incredible short games they hit the ball miles But I think the biggest differentiator that I've uh came to understand is course management A lot of these players especially on these long 36 whole days might like I mentioned earlier get a little bit antsy too aggressive in certain situations which could leave them in horrible spots short sighted with not a lot of green to work with on their approach shots And I've noticed that if I can do my work before a tournament to go through our yardage books and really prepare the best way for me to attack

certain hole locations that's that's already an advantage going into a tournament And that's a confidence booster Knowing that if I've prepared for this golf course better than everyone the way I'm gonna mentally strategize where I'm gonna miss where I'm gonna aim certain shots and in some situations that might mean aiming completely away from a certain pin because there might be a certain horrible situation on the other side of the pin So stuff like that has been ways that I've gained confidence going into tournaments knowing that the preparation I've done gives me an edge and then I'd say another tangible thing is is putting I think all really good college golfers who are winning golf tournaments are mostly great putters Uh it's hard to win a golf tournament if you're not really really dialed in inside 8 ft And I think that's been an area of interest is increasing that uh from 8 ft in percentage because uh statistically the tour average outside of 8 to 10 ft is relatively miniscule There's not much separation between everyone but inside 8 ft if you can really hone in those short putts and make a very high percentage of them that's where you're gonna gain strokes on the field So that's been kind of an area of focus for me is course management and then putting inside 8 ft balancing academics with a very busy uh golf schedule is one of the hardest things I've noticed in in college so far one of my biggest challenges and I think it really takes saying no to a lot of things we're traveling 456 days in a row and getting back to campus and having only 1 to 2 days of class before leaving on another trip So it really requires a lot of time management and speaking with professors ahead of time on what lectures are gonna be missed what content will be missed potentially exams quizzes presentations that need to be structured around our tournament schedules And I think the biggest way that maybe I've faced that challenge is at the beginning of each semester I'm very intentional with professors letting them know my situation but not just letting them know that oh I'm an athlete I would love some special treatment That's not the way to go about it It's instead letting them know that I'm willing to put in extra work because this class is a priority to me as well as golf A lot of professors see athletes take advantage of their situation as an athlete and try to get out of certain things But I find a better way to go about It is to be just super intentional with my professors letting them know my traveling situation but also letting them know that their class is a priority and and I'd love to find ways to get ahead and communicate with them on a weekly basis to let them know that I would love to get ahead on certain material or meet with a tutor about certain material So I've noticed that it's a challenge but I think professors really love

it when we're able to kind of take an initiative and letting them know that uh we want to be proactive in that process But then again a lot of our a lot of my teammates are business majors as well with a couple of them being financed similar to myself So we're able to help each other out on the road with certain material And then our athletic academic advisors are awesome about if you need to schedule a tutor schedule time to look over class schedules they're always available and it's been a very easy process in that regard Some maybe final words of advice for high schoolers maybe going through a similar process to what I went through I I'd go two routes with this The first one being kind of what I said at the beginning golf isn't everything And if you are finding your identity in a sport you're always gonna be uh left a little bit empty because because no matter what you do you're always gonna fail at some point Even the number one players in the world eventually fail or fail to win a golf tournament So the first thing I'd say is never find your identity in your sport because it will always leave you wanting more and chasing more And I think that's a little bit reassuring is like we're not on this earth to play a sport Um and that's so far from our purpose here So that's a comforting thing for high schoolers wanting to play at the next level is if you do that's awesome But if you don't that there's nothing there's nothing against that There's nothing uh it's all about just the journey of loving to practice loving the grind and the other avenue I'd say for a more tangible way to encourage or um give some advice to high schoolers or junior golfers is it's gonna take a lot more work than everyone else And if you're willing to just kind of do the bare minimum when it comes to practice or your habits or your daily routines you're probably gonna get an average result If you're willing to put in average you're probably gonna get out average So I think and a piece of advice would be it's not guaranteed that if you practice more you're going to play better But but the only way to guarantee that you're giving yourself the best opportunity is to put in much more time than everybody else you gotta be intentional with how you how you're waking up your AM routine your PM routine how you're scheduling your day to be most efficient at practice It might be it might seem a little excessive to some younger people But that's another piece of advice in college I've understood is taking time every night to plan my next day today and plan exactly how I'm going to allocate every hour of my day so that I can prepare better than everybody else in the country Because in junior golf there's a lot of high school golfers or other players that maybe aren't being as meticulous with their schedule And I think a way you can gain an edge in a

way you can prepare better than them is to just be that much more efficient and precise with how you're practicing Um and you really have to want it You know if you don't if it's kind of just something that is a fun part of your life If you don't truly want to play at the next level there's a good chance you might not So being being uncomfortable with how much you how much you want it if it's comfortable you're never gonna get anything out of it So putting in long hours uh really getting on that putting green and working on those short putts like I said uh I'd say those are the biggest things that I could have used to encourage a junior golfer high school golfer work with a handful of awesome nil brands and partners uh related to golf and also completely unrelated to golf And I think when it comes to the nil space because we're so busy with what we do it's important to make sure that you're not just doing things that that don't make sense for the heck of it You gotta make sure that if you're gonna allocate your time to a specific campaign or specific company you're making sure that it aligns with what you believe in what you're passionate about I've been fortunate enough to work with some golf apparel brands who have been awesome partnerships to promote There's also a a Phoenix based company that produce golf clothing that um really hit home to me being someone from Phoenix and that was an awesome partnership because they understood uh where I came from I understood kind of their start up and that was an awesome experience But then there's been some unique type of food or supplement brands that I've been fortunate enough to work with and promote through social media that has been awesome as a college athlete There are plenty of supplement type things that help with my performance and have really aligned with my lifestyle in that regard So that nil space has been awesome and I think it's just managing it There's a lot of really good platforms out there that allow student athletes to find nil deals or search up and match with companies that best fit their interests So I would just say keep your options open and and just make sure you're never saying yes to too many things and you're really being intentional with what what brands or companies you partner with So Marquette our golf team is officially sponsored by Nike which is our clothing brand And then tailor made is our uh team sponsorship which is our golf club manufacturer But players are also allowed to use other clubs of different companies as a junior golfer I was fortunate enough to be individually sponsored by tailor made So the the train transition to Marquette and tailor made was easy for me But there are some other players on my team that were using different clubs back in junior golf But then made the switch to Taylor made because it's a little bit

easier for us to get tailor made clubs So but everybody has their own preference But yeah tailor makes what um a handful of colleges use as well as Yeah here at Marquette