



Scott Ohlson finds Graeme McDowell's lost mother on Hilton Head Island beach

By Russ Pankonin

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When Imperial native Scott Ohlson found a lost woman on a Hilton Head Island, S.C., beach last week, he never expected it to lead to the golf story of a lifetime.

Turns out the woman he found just happened to be the mother of professional golfer Graeme McDowell. He was in Hilton Head to play in last week's RBC Heritage Classic—a tourney he eventually won in a playoff.

Ohlson, who spent his college summers as a lifeguard on the beaches of Hilton Head Island, now serves as one of five full-time beach patrol supervisors on the island.

Making morning rounds

On Sunday, April 14, Ohlson was making his morning rounds on the beach when he drove up on a lady who appeared to be lost.

The woman said she had gone for an early morning walk on the beach and was going to meet up with her son's fiancée, who had gone for a run.

But they never crossed paths and she had no orientation as to where she was.

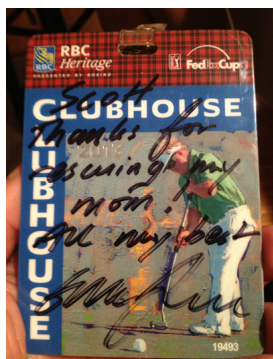
Ohlson said that's not unusual on the beaches at Hilton Head. There's lots of trees and vegetation and the beach front homes can all look the same.

The woman told Ohlson they'd come in late Saturday night. The only thing she knew about their address was that it had the number 38 in it.

Coming in late Saturday night probably led to some of the confusion, Ohlson added. At 10 p.m., all the lights on Hilton Head Island are turned off during the turtle nesting season.

Ohlson said he had a map of the beach-front homes so they drove along the beach, trying to find the right house with a 38 in the address.

Along the way, he got a call on the radio about a woman who'd been missing for about three hours. Ohlson indicated he had her and was able to return her home.



Woman McDowell's mother

After dropping the woman off, he got a call from his office manager, noting the woman was Graeme McDowell's mother.

His supervisor asked Ohlson to go back to make sure the family had been reunited because their call-back number wasn't working. He was greeted by the fiancée, who was joined by McDowell.

"It took me a second to realize who McDowell was," Ohlson said.

McDowell expressed his sincere thanks for finding his mother after a stressful period of not knowing where she was. She ultimately ended up about three miles from the house.

Ohlson told him he was in charge of the beach area around their rental home, so if there was anything they needed, he'd be around.

McDowell said he was playing in the tournament and wondered if Ohlson wanted tickets.

Ohlson had already convinced his dad, Doug, and his wife Keri to come to Hilton Head for the tournament. However, he hadn't scored any tickets yet.

McDowell asked if four passes for the week would do. He even offered more if Ohlson needed them. Four was good enough, Ohlson said.

As promised, the clubhouse pass tickets were awaiting Ohlson at the will call window.

He and his parents attended the tournament on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. He said he followed McDowell most of the day on Friday and Saturday.

He picked him up again on the 12th hole Sunday when he realized McDowell had played himself back into tournament.

In quest of a picture

McDowell held a one-stroke lead after the 17th so Ohlson said he went behind the stands on 18, hoping to get a picture with McDowell after he won. Instead, McDowell bogeyed the last hole, forcing a playoff with Web Simpson.

Ohlson said he went to a VIP area behind the stands, thinking that's where he might go after the tournament.

"I heard the crowds roar but I didn't even know who had won at the time," Ohlson said.

When McDowell emerged after the trophy ceremony, he signed a few autographs before being whisked away to the press conference.

With bad weather approaching, Doug and Keri wanted to get back to the car. However Scott said he had a good feeling about it and wasn't about to give up hope of getting a picture. He told them to grab a cab home instead because he was staying.

Ohlson saw a woman on a golf cart who he had seen following McDowell during the tournament. He stopped her and asked if she was with McDowell, which she indicated she was.

He said he was the lifeguard who had found his mother earlier in the week and was wondering about getting a picture with McDowell.

She said he'd love that, so she took Ohlson into the media tent for McDowell's press conference, where he sat beside McDowell's fiancée.

Afterwards, McDowell came over to them and Ohlson got his picture. McDowell also signed his pass, "Thanks for rescuing my mom. All my best. Graeme McDowell."

McDowell said he wished he'd have seen Ohlson during the press conference because it would have been a good story for the press.

Ohlson said he was pretty pumped up after it all and said it will be an experience he will never forget.

McDowell told Ohlson he'd be back next year so Ohlson gave him his card and told them he'd take care of them when they arrive next year. Perhaps another week of passes could be in the offing?

A golfer, too

Ohlson was a standout runner at Chase County High and Doane College. He still runs some but focuses more on overall fitness, he said.

And yes, he does golf, having lived on the island for the past two years. "How can you live here and not golf," he said, adding the island has 36 "amazing" golf courses.

Ohlson's dad, Doug, said it was a great experience. He said they had never been to a PGA event before.

"It was pretty amazing. Very fun. I'd go again."

They followed a number of golfers and got to see the entire course during the three days they attended the tournament. "Scott's been asking us to come out. It just worked out."