

A ROOKIE YEAR TO REMEMBER ON THE PGA TOUR

► KEVIN STREELMAN ALUMNI PROFILE

Walking off the 18th green at Torrey Pines on Thursday, June 12, 2008, Kevin Streelman, *Duke '98*, had finally made it. He was whisked into a media tent and was asked questions like “who are you?” and “how does it feel?”, and was *finally* feeling as though things were coming together. He was the clubhouse leader after the first round of one of the PGA Tour’s majors, the U.S. Open, and was ecstatic.

After toiling away for seven years on the miniest of mini tours like the Hooters, Gateway and Dakotas Tours since graduating from Duke, Streelman’s first real notice finally had come – at one of the biggest tournaments of the year. Yes, he had finished in a tie of 14th earlier in the 2008 season at the Shell Houston Open, but that was thrown in the middle of a last place finish and five missed cuts (two prior to it and three following it.)

Although he finished in a tie for 53rd at the Open, that result springboarded him for the remainder of his extremely successful rookie season on the PGA Tour. Following that performance, he only missed one additional cut throughout his remaining 15 tournaments, and had four Top 10 finishes. At the end of the season, he finished 35th on the FedEx Cup list, 78th on the money list earning a cool \$1.35 million, and was ranked #123 in the world.

For Streelman, who barely made it through the first round of PGA Tour Qualifying School (Q School), he was living a dream he had since he was a child.

After first picking up a club at age eight in his hometown of Wheaton, Illinois, Streelman played a number of sports before deciding on golf only midway through his high school career. After a few impressive finishes, he caught the attention of a number of college coaches, including the head coach at Duke, where he played during his four years on campus.

During his collegiate career, Streelman was never the star he has become. In fact, he only won one tournament – The Intercollegiate during the 2000-01 season – with rounds of 69-71-69 for a total score of -7. He is tied for 7th on Duke’s all-time list for rounds in the 60s in a season with 6, which he also got during the 2000-01 season.

In addition to his time in class and on the course, Streelman joined Delta Sig his freshman year, a decision that he said was one of the best he could have made.

“I had a blast, and met to this day still some of my very best friends,” he said.

As he was nearing the end of his collegiate career and deciding what to do for his career after college, he talked to fellow Duke alumnus and PGA Tour regular Joe Ogilvie for some advice. “Joe had nothing but good things to say about my game, and said I had nothing to lose. If I wanted to give it a try, I should. It was my dream growing up, and I decided to give it a shot.”



After graduating from Duke in 2001 with a Sociology degree and a markets and management certificate, Streelman set out on his journey toward the PGA Tour, which as we mentioned earlier took him several years and several mini tours to attain.

“There were extreme ups and downs during those seven years on the mini tours. There’s times you run out of money or are low on gas. You stay at the cheapest hotels and eat the cheapest food. You just try and get by, and keep trying to improve. It made me tougher, built my character, and has made the end result that much more gratifying,” Streelman said.

After those seven years, he made it to the Q School, which he said was “a crazy test.” The fact is that a player can be hitting great shots leading up to it, making a lot of money and winning tournaments on the mini tours, but if they have one bad week, it can cost them a chance at the Tour. “With our sport, you don’t get an eight year contract. You have to prove yourself year in and year out, and those years on the mini tours made me a lot stronger and made me appreciate this time much more as well,” Streelman said.

The times are gone where he is running out of gas and money. His outstanding rookie campaign made sure of that, as his first round lead at the US Open was not his only highlight of the season. He finished third on the PGA Tour with 13 eagles, fourth on Tour with 406 Birdies, 44th on Tour with Four Top 10s, 24th in Scoring Average with a 70.6, and had a low round of 62 in the third round of the Travelers Championship, where he finished in a tie for 10th.

Of the 32 tournaments he played in 2008, Streelman made the cut in 24. He started the season with lackluster results – his best finish a tie for 14th coming at the aforementioned Shell Houston Open – but when the weather began to heat up, so did Streelman.

From May 18 until the end of the year, he was on fire, hitting double digit under par scores five times.

The best finish of those late-season results came at The Barclays, the first of the four PGA Tour Playoff events, where Streelman finished in a tie for fourth at -7. That finish was just one stroke out of a playoff with eventual winner Vijay Singh, Sergio Garcia, and Kevin Sutherland. The week of The Barclays was special for Streelman, as it was held just outside of New York City and many of his chapter brothers came to the event to cheer him on.

“It was awesome to have those guys around at the event,” he said. “They are still some of my best friends, and a lot of them are on Wall Street still in New York and New Jersey. For them to come out and support me was pretty cool.”

Streelman’s beginning to the 2009 season has had some ups and downs. He had some early troubles before finishing in a tie for third at the Mayakoba Golf Classic at Riviera Maya – Cancun the last weekend of February. He finished strongly at that tournament with a 64 in the final round, and is well on his way to one of his goals coming into the season – continual improvement. “Consistent improvement is my major goal, not only in golf but in life. If you’re not getting better, what are you doing?” he said.

After an amazing 2008, a year in which he got married, got a house, and had an amazing rookie season on the PGA Tour, improvement is going to be pretty difficult. But leave it to Kevin Streelman, much like most Delta Sigs, to up the ante in his goals and performances to achieve even greater things in 2009.

Watch for Kevin Streelman coming to a course near you throughout the remainder of 2009, and check in on his progress on his web site at www.kevinstreelmangolf.com or at www.pgatour.com.

Some Interesting Streelman Facts

His caddy, Mike Christiansen, was his best friend and a college teammate at Duke.

A few goals for 2009 include winning a tournament, having six, seven, or eight Top 10s after four in 2008, and finishing Top 30 in the FedEx Cup which would get him into all of the majors the following year.

If feeling good about his game, he doesn’t spend much time on the driving range. If not feeling good, he can spend eight, nine or ten hours a day on the range.

He sticks to timing as to when he eats before a round, when he starts practicing before a round, and when he kisses his wife before a round.

He didn’t have any expectations coming into the 2008 season. He said, “I definitely would have taken 35th in FedEx and 78th on the money list at the beginning of the year.”

Streelman works with two sports psychologists to help with the mental part of his game in an effort to help him be less analytical and mechanical about his swing, and have him play more of a feel game.

When not golfing, Streelman likes spending time with his wife, Courtney, and his dog, Snoop at their Scottsdale, Arizona home.