

Pinehurst GC Champ Adds Another Entry To Athletic Resume

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By Scott Kindberg, Post-Journal

SALAMANCA - On his way to Elkdale Country Club on Sunday morning, Nolan Swanson drove past his late maternal grandfather's old home in nearby Little Valley.

"It was nice to think about him," he said as he stood on the No. 1 tee box moments after the completion of the Jim Riggs Memorial Champions. "He was really a big baseball guy and he taught me a little bit how to throw a curveball and how to pitch."

John Sharpe would have appreciated his grandson's golf talents, too.



Nolan Swanson

Fueled by a 3-under 32 on the front nine, Swanson, the Pinehurst Golf Club champion and co-owner, got to 5-under after 15 holes before settling for a 2-under 68 and a four-shot victory over Roy Glosser of Moon Brook Country Club.

"I really enjoy playing golf, and I work on it a little bit, but we're working a lot, so I (play) when I can," Swanson said. "I pride myself on being an athlete, maybe before a golfer or before a runner. ... I always have felt like I'm an athlete more than just a one-rout guy."

Growing up in Sherman, Swanson won the 1993 state high school cross country championship, was chosen to the all-state team and was a second-team all-Northeast choice.

On the basketball court, he earned all-state mention and was a McDonald's All-American nominee, and on the baseball diamond, he was a pretty fair pitcher for a school that didn't have a track team.

A walk-on at Wake Forest University, Swanson didn't take long to leave his mark in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. In fact, he won the Atlantic Coast Conference cross country championship as a freshman and went on to have similar success in track and field the remainder of his career, ultimately ending up being inducted into the school's Hall of Fame in 2010, seven years after enshrinement into the Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame.

Having written about most of Swanson's athletic accomplishments for more than two decades, I wasn't surprised that he won The Post-Journal-sponsored event Sunday against a talented field. What would have surprised me was if he wasn't in contention.

Swanson seized control right from the start recording birdies on the par-4 second hole and the par-5 third. By the turn, he was 3-under, one shot in front of Glosser. Birdies on the par-4 10th and the par-5 15th provided Swanson with enough cushion that a double-bogey/bogey finish was of little consequence.

"It's a pleasure to win it," he said.

With the victory, comes a silver bowl and a return invite to the Jim Riggs Memorial Champions in 2017.

"This (bowl) will be on the golf course bar (at Pinehurst GC) for a while," Swanson said with a laugh. "I might drink out of it, I might not."

If nothing else, he owned family bragging rights at least for a day - younger brother, Ryan, the pro at Pinehurst and its co-owner, is playing in a pro-am at Elkdale today - and another opportunity to drive past his grandpa's old homestead in Little Valley on the way out of town.

"(My grandfather) would have just loved this (tournament)," Swanson said. "He probably would have been here today, loving this whole thing."