

Wes Swope, PGA
The First Tee of Chesterfield, Richmond, Virginia

Wes was born on September 29, 1961 in Roanoke, Virginia to John Henry and Margie Ann Swope. He has three older siblings: Jimmy King and Carolyn Young, both of Roanoke and Sharon Stanley of Ackworth, Georgia. Wes was introduced to golf when he was in junior high school by his father who had grown up with Sam Snead in Hot Springs, Virginia. John and Sam played a lot of golf together and even periodically worked together at the Homestead Resort. John also played golf during WWII when he was in Europe. Wes was almost immediately hooked on the game. While he was in high school, Wes worked for PGA Professional Wayne Holley at Roanoke Country Club where he cleaned carts, picked the range and generally everything else the “outside” staff does. Wes graduated from Cave Spring High School (Roanoke) in 1979. Wes turned professional shortly thereafter when he became an assistant for Wayne for the next three years. In 1983, Wes moved to Tempe, Arizona where he was an assistant to PGA Professional Doug MacDonald at Ahwatukee Golf Club. Then in 1987, Wes moved to the Director of Golf position at Pinetop Lakes Country Club in Northern Arizona. He was elected to membership in The PGA on September 1, 1988.

He moved to Sun City, Arizona where he was the Head PGA Professional at Briarwood Country Club until May of 1990 when he moved back to Virginia. Wes also served as the Head PGA Professional at Stone Manor Country Club in Goodview before moving to Willow Creek Country Club in Rocky Mount, Virginia as their Head PGA Professional in 1993. In early 1997, he became an Assistant PGA Professional at Hanging Rock Golf Club in Salem, Virginia working for Head PGA Professional Billy McBride, Jr. Then in January of 2000, PGA Professional Ronnie Kelley hired Wes to be his PGA Director of Golf over both Prince George Golf Course (Disputanta, Virginia) and Lee Park Golf Course (Petersburg, Virginia). At the end of May, 2001, the perfect fit for Wes came along in the form of The First Tee of Chesterfield facility, where today he is the General Manager and the PGA Director of Golf.

The positive values that Wes has learned from the PGA Professionals for whom he has worked, beginning with Wayne Holley, have helped him throughout his quest of giving back to the game he loves as well as his desire to become a role model and mentor to the thousands of young people with whom he has come in contact in his current position. Wes has attended, as both an instructor and coordinator, three of The First Tee National Life Skills and Golf Academies held in Manhattan, Kansas. The First Tee of Chesterfield hosted the second such academy in June, 2004 when the juniors were housed on the campus of the University of Richmond. Wes, along with his staff, coordinated all of the week’s events. His expertise and experience were key factors in the outstanding success enjoyed by all of the participants at the academy.

During the past four years nearly 5000 young people have participated in Wes’s First Tee programs, with well over 1100 youth becoming certified in The First Tee Life Skills curriculum. Wes has promoted his programs within organizations serving the region’s

youth such as The Boys and Girls Club, the YMCA, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Special Olympics (he also hosts one of their state championships), PAL and many others.

In 2003, Wes resurrected the Richmond Junior Interclub Matches, which had pretty much fallen “off the map” of junior golf competitions between the local clubs. The junior golfers representing The First Tee of Chesterfield have done extremely well in numerous competitions and were so recognized by former President George H.W. Bush at the grand opening of The First Tee of Richmond in May of 2003. Wes’s programs have also produced the 2002 VSGA State Junior Match Play Champion along with the 2002 and 2003 Virginia State High School Champions. In the summer of 2004, two of his First Tee golfers were selected to be among a field of only 20, out of 1500 considered nationwide, to participate in the inaugural Wal-Mart First Tee Open at Pebble Beach Golf Links.

In just the last two years, Wes has orchestrated an annual fundraising event through Kraft/Nabisco at The First Tee of Chesterfield. With the help of Julie Inkster, Michelle McGann, Lori Kane and Jackie Gallagher-Smith, he has raised \$140,000 for his junior programs.

Throughout his career, Wes has made a point of always reaching out to young golfers, pointing out how the game of golf has provided him with so many wonderful friendships, acquaintances and business relationships. He shares not only his positive accomplishments, but also some of the not so positive experiences, taking care to explain how to learn from both types of events. Wes believes that the game of golf provides us all with tremendous values and he strives to teach each junior golfer how this game will benefit them throughout life.

Wes’s involvement with The First Tee has provided him with a different outlook when teaching a junior golfer. He says that the life skills (or core values) that comprise The First Tee Certification program have helped him become a better instructor by recognizing that producing the next Tiger Woods or Michelle Wie would obviously be a feather in his cap, but producing well-rounded individuals is truly his goal. Wes stresses this point in discussing his programs with other PGA Professionals, here in the Middle Atlantic Section as well as from across the country. He enjoys educating other PGA Professionals about The First Tee organization and helping them understand what it is all about. Wes has also acted as a liaison for the The First Tee home office working with potential new First Tee Chapters and their PGA Professional Board members. Wes’s passion for what he does has provided inspiration to his fellow PGA members in Baltimore, Charlottesville, Danville, Harrisonburg, Virginia Beach and Roanoke.

Wes is known as a very likeable person who seems to be able to get along with anyone and everyone. His students say that they always learn so much from him at every lesson.

Wes and The First Tee of Chesterfield have hosted the last three Southern Chapter Pro-Junior tournaments and Wes was the recipient of the Tom Strange Memorial Trophy as

the MVP of the victorious Southern Chapter's 2003 TaylorMade-adidas Golf Chapter Challenge Cup team.

Wes and his wife, Shari, just celebrated their 15th wedding anniversary. They both are extremely proud of their 14-year son, Jonathon Michael Wesley Swope! Michael only picked up the game of golf two years ago, but after receiving more than a few hours of personal golf instruction from his father, Michael has won numerous trophies in various statewide golf competitions.