

# Fresno State Men's Golf

By Kimberly Horg-Webb



Fresno State's Men's Golf Coach, Mike Watney, was living his dream and playing the PGA Tour in 1978. The golf coach at Fresno State quit in the middle of the year and because Watney was a Fresno State alumnus he was tracked down to interview for the position. "It's interesting how one's life-direction can change," he said. "Coaching never crossed my mind earlier in my career." Watney and his wife Paula were new parents of their first child and even though the couple enjoyed their life on the PGA Tour, children have a way of changing things. When the Fresno State opportunity came, he knew it was an opportunity he couldn't pass up. He was born in Los Angeles but grew up in Fresno so this is his hometown. He says he loves Fresno and quotes Jim Sweeney as saying,

"Bulldog Born, Bulldog Bred, going to be a Bulldog 'til the day I'm dead." He has been the coach for over 30 years now. One day in the future when he retires, his plan is to stay in Fresno and watch even more of all the Bulldog sports teams. "I love being a Bulldog," he said.

There are ten players on the team he coaches. There are many different aspects he enjoys about being their coach including watching the men grow physically, academically, emotionally and spiritually. "It is great to see their growth and maturity in the four or five years that they are here," Watney said. "For me, it is great to watch boys become men. Hopefully, their golf experience helps them graduate from Fresno State with more than just a degree." Watney tries to recruit good golfers who are good students as well as good people. In most cases, the players are already sharp young men who have had good influences from their parents.

This coach has an impressive resume that must have also had an impact on the teams' success. Hosting the NCAA Championship, being on numerous committees and directing the Topy Cup in Japan gave the team national connections that the team might not have had otherwise. Watney was recognized for his achievements when he was inducted into the Golf Coaches Association of America Hall of Fame in 2007. "It was a very pleasant surprise," Watney said. "I don't think anybody coaches with the goal of being inducted into the Hall of Fame. You just do the best you can for your team. I must give thanks for the help that numerous people have given me along the way." Watney always thought that being involved with the other things would eventually help his team. He thinks it has paid off for the team because of the tournament opportunities it has had over the years.

The future goals for the Bulldogs are to win the WAC and qualify for the NCAA Tournament. The coach says it has shown that those goals are definitely within its reach. He says he has a team that could do extremely well in the NCAA tournament. "You never know in golf if you will play well at the right time," he said. "I do know that with Bhavik Patel, Brian Sunker, Bryan Hogan, Michael Gideon, Adam Barkow, Brad Wyatt and Nate Jessup we have guys who have all excelled at a high level against college competition." Watney says all of those players have shot scores in the mid-sixties in tournaments. And can hang with the top ten teams in the country.