

# Profile

Danielle Nadon

# Creating Her own Path



by Scott MacLeod

It would not be tough to argue the fact that Danielle Nadon might just be the busiest woman in the entire golf industry. On any day she might be running a golf clinic for a large corporate function, leading a meeting of the staff at her various golf school locations, or simply trying to steal a few minutes to work on her own game. And sometimes – that’s just the first part of her morning! Who knows, later that afternoon she might be whisking off to Europe to lead a group of eager golfers on a journey of a lifetime.

That is just a taste of what Danielle Nadon is all about. She’s a person on the move, making things happen, and loving every minute of it!

You don’t have to make more than a couple phone calls to find someone who has had their golfing life touched by Danielle Nadon. Now the most prominent female golf professional in the National Capital Region, she has an impeccable resume admired by many and best yet, respected for what she has done in just a few decades.

Now forty-five years of age and in her twenty-fifth year as a member of the Canadian Professional Golfers’ Association, Danielle was born in Ottawa and grew up in Rockland, just southeast of the nation’s capital. There she played all sorts of sports – “basketball, baseball, broomball, I was a jock of all trades,” she admits. But not golf. That was left to her dad who was a one-time club champion at the Outaouais Golf Club in Rockland, but had been forced to essentially give up the game by the time Danielle discovered it.

Looking for work at the age of sixteen, Danielle soon found herself working at the golf club where her dad had success on the fairways. She started serving food and cleaning dishes but soon moved into the pro shop where an unexpected moment initiated her golfing career. “I was swinging a golf club in the old pro shop, the one with all the windows,” says Danielle of that significant occurrence. “Ray Haines (one of the only Master Professionals in Canada) saw me and said *let me see*. I said no, I don’t want to do that. Only old fogies and rich people play golf, but I started that year – I was seventeen.”

Golf became her game for the next couple years before she entered the C.P.G.A. Program as an apprentice at the Rivermead Golf Club in Aylmer, Quebec, in her nineteenth year. She earned her C.P.G.A. ‘B’ card and five years later she became an ‘A’ Class Golf Professional while still at Rivermead, the club she would be employed at for eight years. Successive positions as a golf professional found her at the Chaudiere Golf Club in Aylmer, the Board Of Trade Golf Club near Toronto, Loch March Golf Club in Kanata, and back to Chateau Cartier (the former Chaudiere) before founding her own golf school on 1993.

Although Danielle admits to being a people person, she did not start to teach right from the very beginning at Rivermead. “I’m from the old school where you are not supposed to teach until you know how to do it properly,” says the lady that would go on to be a highly decorated teacher. “I only started to teach after two or three years of watching and learning.” Traditional approaches like that, developed from working for very experienced professionals formed a solid foundation for a career says Danielle.

Showing some entrepreneurial spirit, Danielle, along with her husband at the time, started a golf ball imprinting company, the first of its kind in Canada. Realizing that the major corporate market was in Toronto and that it was costing a lot to ship the majority of their order to the provincial capital, they set off to live near there. The business itself was not enough to sustain the couple so Danielle sought out work as a pro, a quest that brought her to the Board of Trade Golf Club for, one of the busiest club’s in the country. On the recommendation of no less than Canadian golf legends Burt Turcotte and George Knudson she got the opportunity for the position at the club and there, in 1984 and ‘85 she worked under legendary professional Murray Tucker who taught her a few more things about the golf business.

It also was also the place where she ended up influencing many people with her teaching ability including a future CPGA Professional, Linda Shephard. Shephard, now the co-owner of the Barcovan Golf Club in Carrying Place, Ontario says Nadon "got her on the road to playing golf competitively." She did this by giving the then seventeen year-old Shephard her first golf lessons. "She is a great person and a great teacher," added Shephard. So much so that soon she was named the CPGA National Teacher of The Year in 1985 and eventually the CPGA Ottawa Zone Teacher of The Year, in 1998, after she returned to Ottawa.

Ever the industrious soul looking for new challenges, Ottawa beckoned with an opening for Danielle who had mentioned to Murray Tucker that she still wanted to become a head professional some day. "At that time I was thinking I didn't want to leave this business without becoming a head pro. To me the big title was very important to me at the time," she adds. Tucker had heard through a friend who was helping build a golf course in Ottawa that they might have an opening for a head professional. Not long after, Danielle had a three-year contract as the head professional of the Loch March Golf and Country Club. "I had a really good relationship with Loch March," recounts Nadon.

Danielle moved on from Loch March in 1989 to be part of some major changes at her old club, Chaudiere, which was being transformed into something much grander than the venerable course that she had left behind just a few years earlier. At the newly named Chateau Cartier, Danielle got to share in the development of the property, including the beautiful hotel/resort that it is today. "That was a real challenge," she says referring to the plans to make Chateau Cartier, "like the Banff Resort, but in downtown Ottawa." Most people would find themselves averting such formidable tasks but Danielle says all the new tasks she faced were "news things that I liked" and eagerly looked at them as valuable experiences to add to her life. Soon she was General Manager at the resort and golf course and as she puts it, "got the hotel moving, got it going" including a variety of duties ranging from golf lessons at the course, to membership sales, to tasks of every type and description.

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Looking to scale things back for a while after a heavy work schedule for four years, several people nudged her towards teaching and she decided to take a sabbatical to do just that. A call from the owners of a new range in Orleans (Mere Bleu), gave her a place to practice her skills and re-develop her teaching interest. Danielle Nadon Golf School Incorporated emerged in 1993, sweeping her into the business that today she has grown into one of the most successful in the region. She has three locations with her headquarters now at the Orleans Golf Academy and two school sites in Gatineau. One of them is the Touraine Golf Club where she also has the role as head golf professional and an excellent teaching facility that includes three practice holes.

With eight staff keeping busy and providing up to three hundred lessons a week, Danielle says she has "slowed down to fifty to fifty-two a week," but still stresses the basics of teaching that she had from the beginning whether it is a private or group lessons. "The number one thing is that it is a game of fun. People put a lot of money into clubs and technology but they have to have a simple, confident swing to get anything out of them. My number one thing with people is to get the ball airborne. I want it to be simple for them but I will explain the details to help them understand."

Relationships with many people has also been important to Nadon throughout her career, a span of time where she says she has been privileged to meet many friends and acquaintances. One of them, Jocelyne Bourassa, now the commissioner of the Canadian Women's Tour and a Canadian pioneer on the LPGA Tour, even kept

Danielle teaching at a time when she considered leaving the industry. With some emotion she explains how she wanted to quit the profession in 1986 after she became frustrated with a situation at a tournament in 1986 and Jocelyne convinced her that she should just keep at it. A remarkable list of other people that she has crossed paths with over the years reads like a who's who list including musicians, authors, politicians and professional athletes, all people Danielle can recount interesting stories about. Ken Dryden, Peter Gzowski, Tom Cochrane, Frank McKenna – Dogsleds for golf carts and sun kissed fairways of Bermuda. You get the picture – more material than this profile can hold.

Today, within her business activities Danielle takes a progressive role in getting involved with many groups and charity events, part of her way of giving back to the community that has supported her over the years. "I enjoy it; what you put back you get back," she relates of the many clinics and seminars that pack her summer schedule.

Her lead role as a golf professional as also extended to work within the CPGA Ottawa Zone where Danielle served on the Board of Directors for twelve years and was the President in 1985 and 1986. Described as a "strong character" by fellow CPGA Professional Roseline Menard, Danielle has always been known for having an opinion and a willingness to share it. These characteristics have earned her a great respect from many people who have had business dealings and relationships with her like Wendy Brown, co-owner of the Missing Links Golf Shop, and Norma Burlington, head of a large ladies league known as the Canadian Women's Golfers' Incorporated. In separate interviews both women describe Danielle as being "real and genuine" and a person who has been instrumental in the success of their businesses.

Trying to keep a balance in life, Danielle says she likes to spend time with her family, including her new grandson, and makes gardening her hobby away from the sport. Her golf game is still strong although she admits to not playing as much as she wants. Winter trips with golf students abroad provide the opportunity for many of her golf games. If she wasn't a golfer she said being a sailor would be definitely on her priority list.

With a past so rich in experiences you might wonder what is next for Danielle Nadon. She jokes "retirement" but with a dynamic ability like hers you can expect that won't be happening anytime soon. As she admits, "If I not busy I am not a happy person."

