



## **IK Kim makes big impression on The First Tee** **by Holly Danks, Communications director**

When In-Kyung Kim steps up to The First Tee, it's a win already.

A well-liked LPGA veteran at age 28, "IK" is known as much for missing a 1-foot putt on the 72<sup>nd</sup> hole at the Kraft Nabisco to win her first major as for her activities off the course. She handled the former the same way as the latter -- with grace and generosity.

In her 10 years on the LPGA tour, Kim has won more than \$7 million – and regularly donates part of her purses to charity. Currently, she's working to organize The First Tee for disadvantaged youth in her homeland of South Korea.

"I feel it's a duty" to give to charity, Kim told a group of The First Tee/Children's Course supporters at a reception during her recent stop at Columbia Edgewater for the Cambia Portland Classic. Kim finished tied for 13<sup>th</sup> in the Portland tournament at minus 5, and currently is ranked 63<sup>th</sup> in the world. "(You've got to hit straight on this golf course, I'm telling you!")

Kim says she has always held Karrie Webb in high esteem as a role model because of the longtime LPGA player's charity foundation. Kim made headlines in 2010 when she won her third LPGA title and donated her entire \$220,000 earnings to charity. Half went to the Lorena Ochoa Foundation, which funds education for children in Mexico, and half to the U.S. Special Olympics. She subsequently was named a Special Olympics ambassador.

In Korea, Kim notes, all golf courses are private. So while we see what seems to be a tidal wave of Koreans on the LPGA, only the privileged can learn to play. Kim hopes to change that with The First Tee.

The First Tee, with chapters in Portland and across the world, teaches disadvantaged youth golf skills, as well as leadership and life values embodied by the sport: honesty, integrity, sportsmanship, respect, confidence, responsibility, perseverance, courtesy and judgment.

Kim hopes that when The First Tee opens in South Korea in October, "kids will have more of a chance" to learn and play golf and there will be "less pressure."

She admits she only took up golf at age 9 to get out of school. “I was friends with a boy in my class who always skipped Friday and came back on Monday with a trophy. I asked him, ‘What do you do?’ He told me he played golf and I said, ‘Can you take me with you to the golf course?’”

An only child, Kim surprised her parents with her interest in golf. “My parents didn’t think I was into sports” but she begged them to let her try. She said her father didn’t coach her, but teaches others. “Dad stayed as a dad. I always did everything opposite of what he said to do.”

Not much golf was broadcast on Korean TV back then, but Kim did get to see the Masters. “So I said I want to play in the Masters. Dad says, ‘Work. Work.’”

She beat her father and one of her father’s friends (*that was a big deal!*) for the first time at age 11 and started collecting big trophies like her classmate. “I really enjoyed skipping Friday afternoon,” Kim confesses.

The money that Kim doesn’t donate, she puts in the bank. She can’t think of anything she’s splurged on, but has bought a house in the San Diego area. “At first, I needed money to play. I didn’t have a big sponsorship and I had to have money to travel, to eat.”

During her first 10 years on the LPGA tour, Kim didn’t think much about the future. Only now is she thinking about fitness (“In the last year, I made progress in my fitness and feel like I’m getting better.”) and what she will do in another 10 years (why she likes having The First Tee and Special Olympics internships). She likes to travel, write, daydream and play the guitar.

“I can play the guitar for three hours and it really goes fast,” Kim says. But practicing on the driving range? “I can only do it for 30 or 40 minutes and then I need a break.”

Showing a group of spectators at the Columbia Edgewater range, Kim notes that her coach says she is turning her hips too fast. So she works on slowing her swing into three stages. “I do what I have to do, then I go have fun.”

Because of Kim, many others will be having fun, too.

