

He helps kids tee up good lives

As you walk down the fairway of life, smell the roses. You only get to play one round.

— Ben Hogan

Hit it hard. It will land somewhere.

— Mark Calcavecchia



Kingsley Rowe and his group show Mike Strobel how golf helps kids learn the rules of life

THE THIRD hole at Glen Abbey is a monster drive from Jane and Finch.

On Wednesday, pro-am day at the Bell Canadian Open, 15 kids will pair up with players.

Each will caddy and make the first putt on that par-three.

Lincoln Hooper, 18, will be fit to bust. Won't matter who he's with. Mickelson, Vijay, Davis Love, Mike Weir.

Lincoln Hooper may have a quirky, Charles Barkley swing. He may have learning disabilities and other drags.

He may not talk much.

But, man, he putts like silk.

I hope he drains it. I hope the crowd roars. I hope under that white cap he lives his dream.

"He plays for the joy," says his mom, Esmec. "The pure joy of the game."

We are at Ultimate Golf, on Hwy. 50 near Steeles. It is one of those bubbles on the horizon. It also has outdoor ranges, nine holes and a putting green. The National Junior Golf Academy

is practising in the last-week-of-holidays heat.

"National," but just Jane and Finch so far.

An academy of dreams. First, that of Kingsley Rowe.

He is a five-handicapper who made his fortune in tourism and transport and plays at the plushy Board of Trade.

Five years ago he was thinking: Golf, life. Kids, golf. "Decorum, honesty, integrity, respect for yourself and others," Rowe tells me, watching his charges at the range.

"We're trying to give these kids a different outlook through golf, to tell them they can do something with their lives.

"A different outlook than when you're in the Jane-Finch corridor and you see all the crime and you feel trapped.

"We want these kids to have a sense they can walk up to a country club without being intimidated."

So, once a week, all year, Kingsley Rowe and his young golfers gather. Places like Ulti-

mate, which cut them deals. Or even the Board of Trade. Or the Driftwood Community Centre, blasting plastic balls into nets.

Rowe and his volunteers teach. Not just stances and grips. Discipline, respect. Rules. No sport teaches rules like golf.

Tee times? Don't be late for work. Rake traps? Clean up life's messes. Collars only? Look sharp. Quiet, please? Respect others. Eye on the ball? Focus, focus.

Fun deal at Angus Glen

"Golf teaches you to play from inside yourself, more than against other people," says Zachary Miller, all of 13. He strokes a 5-wood 160 yards to just off a target green.

On Sept. 22, Angus Glen Golf Club will host a Nine and Dine for the academy (www.njga.ca). Hundred bucks gets you nine holes, cart, prize bag and dinner. Beat that.

If he can find the cash, Rowe

wants to expand to other troubled neighbourhoods.

Volunteer Ann-Marie Diver: "People say, why teach them golf when they won't be able to afford it anyway?"

"But they're missing the reason we're here. To open doors, break barriers. I mean, look at Dominique."

Oh, yes. Dominique Claxton, 18. An ambassador for the 250 kids who've gone through the academy.

He is as graceful as his swing. He found golf because of Kingsley Rowe and Tiger Woods.

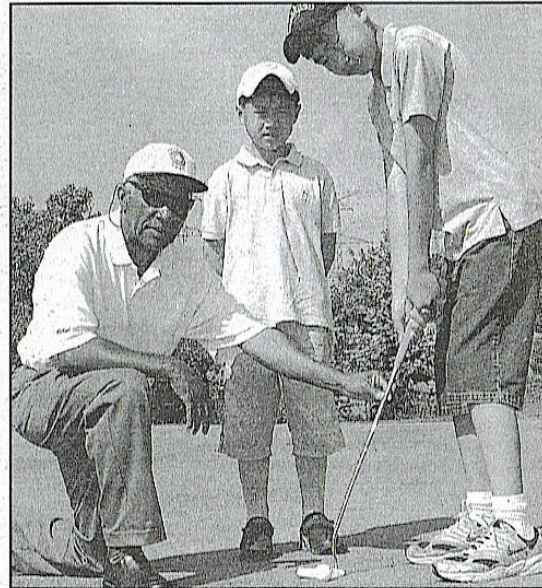
Now the other academy kids look to him. They watch him hit balls, they ask him about problems at school, in life.

His mom works in an auto plant. "I haven't seen my dad in a while," he tells me.

"Golf sets you free for 18 holes. Everything's gone, you concentrate on the game.

"And you can't cheat golf. If you try, it comes back on you. Just like you can't cheat life."

He starts tourism and hotel



— Dave Abel, SUN

■ **KINGSLEY ROWE, left, helps Alex Wang, 12, line up a putt yesterday at the Ultimate Golf Centre while Wang's younger brother, Joseph, 8, looks on.**

management at Seneca this fall, but holds out hopes of pro golf.

I would not bet against him.

School will keep him from joining golf-mates at the Open.

But if you are there for program day and you see another

young man, in a white cap, drain a putt on the third hole, it is, for once, quite all right to scream:

You Da Man!

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