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Dana Rader

April 21, 1958 - Aug. 17, 2022

Dana Rader, 64, of Hilton Head Island, SC, passed away Wednesday, August 17, 2022 from a rare degenerative brain disease, Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD).

Dana was a loving daughter, sister, partner, and friend; a world-renowned golf professional; a leader and mentor within the LPGA; a successful entrepreneur; and an active, generous member of her community.

Born in Morganton, North Carolina on April 21, 1958 to the late Laura Jean and Vernon Rader, Dana and her brother, Brian, were encouraged by their parents to try new things. For Dana, that meant taking dance lessons, riding her motorcycle, family road trips to Myrtle Beach, and with the gift of height and athleticism, playing basketball. Dana graduated from Freedom High School and later attended Pfeiffer University seeking her degree in Physical Education.

At the age of 15, Dana's father introduced her to the game of golf and she would perfect her craft under the watchful eye of her pro, Joe Cheves, and golf great, Billy Joe Patton at Mimosa Hills Country Club in Morganton, North Carolina. She excelled in the sport and made the men's golf team at Pfeiffer University, while she had the talent to try and qualify for the LPGA Tour, Dana found her real love for the game was in teaching.

Every great teacher is a good student, and Dana learned from some of the best including: Peggy Kirk Bell an early inspiration and mentor; Ellen Griffin and Shirley Spork, LPGA Founders; Nancy Lopez, her idol and great friend; and Charlotte businessman Smokey Bissell. Dana was a meticulous note taker, a terrific listener,

avid reader, committed to continuous improvement and relentlessly dedicated to her profession.

She began her career in golf in 1980 and spent over 35 years building her business in the Charlotte area. For most of her career, Dana was named one of the top teachers in the United States by Golf Magazine, Golf Digest and Golf for Women magazines. In 1990, she was named LPGA National Teacher of the Year.

She established the Dana Rader Golf School, first at Raintree Country Club in Charlotte, and in 1997, she moved her school to a new facility at the Ballantyne Hotel and Lodge in South Charlotte where her school would consistently be recognized as a Top 25 Golf School in America by Golf Magazine. With the support and mentorship from business leaders in the community, her business grew to one of the country's top golf schools, reaching over 17,000 students a year. She developed an outstanding team of instructors and became a respected leader in the community. Dana had a strong desire to serve her community as well. She served on the board of directors for the United Way of Central Carolinas, the First Tee Charlotte, and Pfeiffer University just to name a few of her civic endeavors. A popular speaker and media personality, she received a number of civic honors, including Charlotte Business Woman of the Year in 2003.

In 2002, she wrote a book, Rock Solid Golf: A Foundation for a Lifetime, published by Walkabout Press, with a forward by Nancy Lopez.

Dana was committed to growing her skills as a teacher and serving her association – the LPGA. She achieved her Class A Teaching status from the LPGA in 1984 and Master Professional status in 2013. From 2010-2015, she served as National President of the LPGA's teaching and club professionals. For her extraordinary leadership and service, Dana was awarded the LPGA's highest honor for teaching professionals, the Ellen Griffin Award in 2015. She was inducted into the Pfeiffer

University Hall of Fame in 1996 and the LPGA Teaching and Club Professionals Hall of Fame 2017 for her dedication and contributions to the world of golf. In 2022, she received the Nancy Lopez Golf Achievement Award, recognizing the teaching professional who best emulates Nancy's qualities of leadership, passion, giving and approachability.

With a special interest in introducing and engaging more women to the game of golf, Dana advised club manufacturers and others in the industry on how to create a more inclusive environment for women. Dana served on the staff of Square Two Golf, Nancy Lopez Golf, and she was the first woman to serve on Nike's Advisory Board.

After selling her golf school, Dana moved to Hilton Head Island, South Carolina in July of 2017 and returned to her love of teaching, first at the Sea Pines Resort and since 2018, as Director of Instruction at Belfair in Bluffton, South Carolina.

Outside of growing the game she loved so dearly, Dana enjoyed spending time at home with her three dogs and two cats, going to the beach with friends, dancing, and watching some of her favorite movies (Tombstone, Jaws, and James Bond).

Community has always been important to Dana, and she's built loyal and long friendships wherever she has lived. As her illness progressed, she was lifted up by the prayers, care and kindness of so many. This brought her much comfort and filled her heart with joy to know that she meant so much to so many.

Dana stood strong in her faith as a Christian and took much comfort that her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, would be there to welcome her into heaven. Special thanks to Pastor Michael Carr, the pastoral care team, and congregants from Central Church on Hilton Head Island, Belfair and LPGA communities, and her countless friends and students.

Dana is survived by Amy Prior, her brother Brian Rader and his wife Glenda, cousin and Sissy Judy "JuJu" Hensley, "Aunt Boot" Virginia Hood Rader, nephew Brian Rader II, nieces Anissa Demiter and Heather Rader, along with several cousins and extended family members.

A celebration of Dana's life will be held at 2 p.m., Sunday, August 21, 2022 at First United Methodist Church (200 N. King Street, Morganton, NC 28655) with Rev. Dana

McKim and Pastor Michael Carr officiating. The service will be available to view life at the facebook page for the funeral home (facebook.com/sossomanfh). There will be an additional celebration of Dana's life on Hilton Head Island in the weeks ahead. Information regarding this ceremony will be shared at a later date.

Contributions in Dana's memory may be made to the Dana Rader Leadership Fund through the LPGA Foundation, the Beaufort Memorial Hospital Foundation, or the CJD Foundation.

None of us knew she would leave us so soon. But like all great teachers, Dana's impact will never really leave us. The family would like to thank everyone for their prayers and well wishes through this difficult time. Your love for her is such a beautiful tribute to the person she was and her impact on others.

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

I knew Dana for many many years. I watched her play basketball at Hawthorne Recreation center in Charlotte where I gave her the nickname of Sampson!! I dropped in from time to time to say hello and I am proud to have an autographed copy of Rock Solid Golf...she signed it Sampson. I am sorry to hear that she has passed, she was a special person.

–Vickie "Runt" Barger

Dana was a special person. I was the golf pro at Corbin Hills in Salisbury in the 1970's. I will never forget the first day Dana walked in the proshop and asked for a bucket of balls for the driving range. In those days it was unusual for a young girl to show up by herself to hit range balls. I had to take a peek down on the range, when I saw that golf swing, I knew she was destined for something good. I went down and started talking to her and found out she was first year at Phiffer. We were the closest range to the school, and she became a regular at Corbin and I got to play a lot of golf with her in those days. We both would grab wedges and try to fly a ball into a 55 gallon drum, to improve our accuracy. Se even took me to the home course in Morganton to meet her dad and play her home course. She had amazing skills. I left the golf business in 1980 and lost contact with her. I am not surprised she ended up being so successful. It saddens my heart that she left this world as such a young age. I so wish I would have taken the effort to say hello once in a while.

–Paul Rendleman