

**DALE  
FLEMING  
McNAMARA**  
**1936-**



**BUILDING  
COLLEGIATE  
GOLF  
DYNASTY**

A “sports dynasty” evokes images of basketball’s John Wooden and football’s Knute Rockne. An amazing dynasty was created by a woman – Tulsa University’s Dale McNamara. A true pioneer in women’s collegiate golf, she compiled one of the greatest records in the history of the sport.

Dale Fleming was born in 1936 in Tulsa. She became interested in golf at age ten when her parents joined Oaks Country Club and got hooked on the game when she attended the Western Junior Girls tournament in Chicago a few years later. Dominating junior golf, Dale won her first of seven Women’s Oklahoma Golf Association State Amateur Championships in 1956.

Due to no varsity women’s golf programs, Dale represented TU as an individual, competing in the few collegiate tournaments open to women, becoming the first woman to earn an athletic letter. In April 1957, Dale was competing at the North-South Amateur in Pinehurst, NC with plans to join the fledging LPGA Tour. During a rain delay, she met businessman Jim McNamara from Erie, PA, and fell in love. They married in 1959, and lived to Erie for four years before moving to Tulsa.

In 1974, Title IX required universities to spend equal money on men’s and women’s sports. McNamara was hired to run TU’s women’s golf program as a volunteer – no salary. Her office was a converted hallway in the athletic building. She had a meager budge of \$1,500 a year for recruiting, travel, equipment, and five tuition-only scholarships. Williams Companies sent 100 shares of stock to fund the program and local golf courses offered free practice time. Dale found five freshmen on campus to form a team.

After the first year, the team got the “pizzazz” it needed by recruiting Cathy Reynolds, Nancy Aaronson, and the most highly-sought high school golfer Nancy Lopez. Ironically, Lopez had never heard of TU before Cathy mentioned it to her jokingly one summer during a national junior tournament. Cathy told Nancy that she had gotten a scholarship offer from TU, in addition to Arizona State and Florida. Nancy was also considering many offers. Despite the other offers, it wasn’t long before Dale McNamara’s charisma convinced both of them to come to TU.

El Paso’s Nancy Aaronson heard TU was forming a good golf team. The 1975 team won six of nine tournaments, with Lopez taking medalist honors six times. They placed 2<sup>nd</sup> in the AIAW National tournament with Lopez winning the national championship. The TU program soon became the gold standard for college women’s golf. Player-of-the-Year Holly Hartley said she wouldn’t have come to TU without the word-of-mouth about how Tulsa was the place to go play college golf.

In her 26 years, McNamara’s team won four national titles, finished runner-up five times, and finished in the top ten 21 years. They won 79 tournaments and came in second 36 times. In 1982, they won the last AIAW championship and the first NCAA championship. Tulsa had 27 All-Americans and 28 became LPGA Tour stars. In 1985, McNamara was selected as national coach of the year.

McNamara has more national titles than Bud Wilkinson (three), Barry Switzer (three), and Henry Ida (two). She had a simple formula: Atmosphere, Attitude, Ability. Once the coach creates an atmosphere, it gives athletes the best opportunity to succeed. With the right attitude of the coaches and team, the ability will flourish. A dynasty indeed!