

Erik Hott: First Tee – Central Valley Participant Story

Participants like Erik Hott are hard to come by. Not only is he always working on his golf game, but he finds every way to give back to First Tee by coaching and mentoring our younger participants. Erik Hott is 17 years old and has been with First Tee - Central Valley for over 10 years. He plays golf for Ceres High School and looks forward to participating in collegiate golf upon graduation. He is a NorCal Champion and his high school team was undefeated this past school year (10-0). Erik was introduced to golf by his grandpa who later became a First Tee - Central Valley Volunteer. At a young age Erik was adopted by his grandparents who have been such a great support system for him. They have cheered Erik on in all of his doings both academically and on the golf course.

When Erik first started First Tee he also got involved in many other sports including; flag football, baseball, soccer, and basketball. We asked him why he stuck with golf and he said, "Golf is an individual sport and it came the most naturally to me." When Erik was 12 he decided to focus on golf. He knew that he could improve and become a good golfer by focusing on his own game and pushing himself. He learned that he could control the outcome of his personal game and push himself to beat his own scores. This is when Erik's interest in golf took off.

Erik was able to meet several mentors through First Tee - Central Valley that really helped him improve. He worked with Chris Mendes, PGA to change his baseball swing

into a golf swing. Chris also played baseball and had a similar experience trying to break old habits. Erik told us this was when he knew he wanted to stick with golf. He found someone who was willing to work with him, find his strengths, and build off of them. Now Erik loves to help other First Tee participants figure out a swing that works best for them. "It's satisfying when you can help others figure out what they are doing wrong." Erik says.

He loves that First Tee gives him the opportunity to get out on the golf course and to meet new friends. He told us that he met people from his school through First Tee and he has been friends with them ever since. Erik says "I have learned a lot while being in First Tee. I have learned how to meet people correctly and all of the core values. I have also learned little tips and tricks that are helpful to improve my game on the golf course." He also loves the constant competition at First Tee and that there is always someone new in class to become friends with.

This year Erik will be working on the ACE curriculum to eventually get certified and we are so excited for him to complete this huge accomplishment! Erik said, "not many people have been ACE Certified so it would mean a lot to me to be one of the few". He has learned about setting goals, having perseverance, and being responsible for his actions all through First Tee. Erik completing his ACE certification is the perfect example of him applying what he is learning at First Tee to real life.

We asked Erik's grandpa, Jerry, what changes he has seen in Erik since starting First Tee. He said, "Erik has matured and become much more responsible. He cares about school and has improved his grades a lot." Erik found people to look up to at First Tee - Central Valley, and now we can confidently say that many look up to him as well.

Erik has set many goals for himself this past year. He wanted to improve his grades and by setting specific and achievable goals he was able to not only meet them, but surpass them. Erik has also set goals to play golf at a division III college, but has back up plans to help set himself up for success no matter the outcome. It is important to him to attend college and one day work in the golf industry.

We are proud of Erik and all of his hard work. We can't wait to help him continue to accomplish his goals while he is here and we hope to keep him involved after graduation as a First Tee coach and mentor for our other participants who can learn so much from him.