

Few would dispute that alcohol consumption or misuse has a negative impact on one's athletic ability; you need not look far to find the science on dehydration, disruption of muscle-building, or impairment on reaction time. People who get well from addiction find meaningful ways to fill their time. You'll find stories ranging from runners in recovery to the Wharf Rats, the sober group who followed the Grateful Dead. Some of the most interesting stories are the ones involving activities we most often associate with drinking alcohol like pool or softball leagues, or in this case, golf.

"I rediscovered golf the minute I quit drinking." – Tom Jansa

Three eighths of the Jansa clan, Steve, Dave, and Tom, sat around the table, visiting and telling stories with the ease only siblings, or friends as close as siblings can have. Steve takes the lead, as the eldest often does, to the point of being the one who got sober first.

It was a family affair, the history of which Steve described as brutal. Most drank and drank to excess. A fourth brother, Mark, attended college in Omaha and part of a trip home was loading his car with as many cases of beer as possible due to lower alcohol costs in Nebraska. The carload of beer was stored in the cool basement coal bin of the family's North End home. It was not surprising to see any of the boys consume a case of beer solo at a family get together. There were a few incidents, but no big fights or drastic personality changes during these times, so it was just part of the family culture for them and not something with which to be overly concerned.

But in the early 1980s, Steve realized he was headed for disaster. His drinking had begun to impact every facet of his life, with his immediate family bearing the brunt of the pain. Steve was a self-described "horrible drunk," who finally managed to stumble into an AA meeting and discovered it was the point at which he needed to change: "I went out in a blaze of rum and Pepsi."

Tom's road to wellness from addiction was perhaps a bit more traditional inasmuch as it involving a stay in a formal, inpatient treatment program. His alcohol and drug use escalated while attending school at USD. Life had imploded for Tom at that point—he was dealing with the death of their father, his mother's struggling mental health, and was seeing himself heading down the same road as his big brother Steve. Their sister, Sue, was attending law school at USD and alerted the family, which led to Steve and Dave "rescuing" Tom from the dorm, belongings packed in pillowcases, and dropping him off at a treatment center.

"I was happy to go," he said. "Mom had started get better, I got worse."

After completing treatment, Tom began working at a golf course and put all his energy and focus into playing and working. He spent some time working at a golf

course in Arizona before moving back to Sioux Falls and beginning his career with Dakota Golf Management.

With Steve and Tom both getting well and in recovery, Dave looked around uncomfortably. It was a moment of ambivalence for him and he was finally pushed to do something after attending an event and calling a childhood friend by the wrong name. At this point, their mom got involved and pointed out Dave's drinking problem to him as well. The morning after the name-forgetting fiasco, their mom was waiting to be transferred from Sioux Valley Hospital to Rochester for open heart surgery. She told him he'd made her promise to tell him if she felt his drinking was a problem. Dave remembered no such promise, but it proved to be the turning point for him to change.

All three maintained a life of wellness from addiction long-term. But for Steve, 21 years of recovery were gone in a glass of wine during a trip to Portugal. Addiction is tricky like that—one can have many years of wellness and for a myriad of whatever reasons may influence a person, the brain thinks it would be a good idea to have a drink. Steve found himself in some familiar patterns with excessive drinking again affecting his life and eventually, the pendulum swung back to recovery.

The catalyst?

A series of heart health scares pushed him to the realization that drinking alcohol and managing his heart health were incompatible. He needed to focus on managing these chronic conditions so he could live a full life. Now Steve prepares to be inducted into two State Halls of Fame, one honoring his high school basketball career, and the other in the South Dakota Golf Association.

The tie that binds

Tom said, "I rediscovered golf the minute I quit drinking. The shared golf/sobriety experience as brothers was an integral part of our recovery."

This included a few golf trips where their counterparts were binge drinking and as a result, playing poorly. On one particular trip they unintentionally helped a friend see that he might want to consider abstaining from alcohol. During the weekend he realized that they were having a really great time, and playing better golf! The experience so changed their friend that his wife called Dave to ask, "What did you do to my husband?"

For Dave, helping others get well from addiction has turned into a full-time passion and a part-time job. Since retiring from a career in sales with Ditch Witch, Dave spent countless hours educating himself on the science of addiction and began volunteering with local organizations dedicated to helping others get well. He was instrumental in bringing the SMART Recovery program to Sioux Falls and has been active with Face It TOGETHER@ Sioux Falls (FITSF) since its inception. He know

works as a Recovery Coach and does community outreach for FITSF, part of which was spearheading the development of "Solving Addiction on the Green," a fundraiser which is now in its third year of play at Kuehn Park, a Dakota Gold Management course, where Tom is president.

Join the Jansas at this year's event, which will be held Monday, June 13. This is not your typical golf fundraiser. It's a nine-hole event played on an executive course offering four different tee times: 7:00 AM, 10:00 AM, 1:00 PM, or 4:00 PM. Flexible start times and the ability to participate in just a few hours make it business and family friendly. Since the event is held in partnership with The First Tee of South Dakota, one of their participants is paired with every team. It's a truly unique and fun event for all ages and skill levels.