



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gothard to headline Kevin Turner Silver Anniversary golf tournament

PRATTVILLE – Former University of Alabama tight end Preston Gothard will be the guest host for the 25th annual Kevin Turner Golf Tournament on May 9 at the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail at Capitol Hill, Prattville YMCA officials announced.

“Any time you have the opportunity to glorify Kevin’s life or help that cause, you can’t say no to that,” Gothard said. “I didn’t know him that well, but just the fight he had and the perseverance he had and the way he conducted himself when he was so sick was just an inspiration.”

Gothard was the feel-good story of the early 1980s, the guy who walked on at the University of Alabama from Lowndes Academy and played in one varsity game under Paul “Bear” Bryant, then was awarded the final scholarship from Bryant a week before the coach’s death. Gothard went on to earn major playing time and a role as a starter under coach Ray Perkins, catching 24 passes for 294 yards and a touchdown as a junior in 1983 and adding 17 receptions for 200 yards as a senior in 1984. He is best known for the catch he didn’t make, a grab of a Walter Lewis pass in the back of the end zone at Penn State in 1983 for what would have been the game-winning points, but was instead ruled incomplete by the back judge in a 34-28 loss to the Nittany Lions.

“We’re excited to have somebody the stature of Preston as our guest host,” said Prattville YMCA Assistant General Director Keith Cantrell, who initiated the tournament in 1998. “He was a great player at Alabama and went on to spend time in the National Football League. Even though the two of them never played together, it shows that people who knew of Kevin respect him at such a high level, they’re willing to do an event like this.”

Turner, a Prattville native who starred at Alabama and in the NFL for eight years, loaned his name to the tournament after participating in sports at the YMCA in his early years and attended the event before his battle with chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, led to his untimely passing in March, 2016. He made a brief appearance at the 2015 tournament with guest host Gary Hollingsworth, a former Alabama quarterback and teammate of Turner. After Turner’s death, the Turner family was honored as the second guest host.

Since then, the tournament has had former Turner teammates as guest hosts, including Siran Stacy in 2017, Antonio Langham (along with Andrew Zow) in 2018, Sherman Williams in 2019, Martin Houston in 2020 and Roger Shultz in 2021.

Gothard played at Alabama before that group of players, finishing up three years before Turner joined the Crimson Tide, but Turner’s five-year battle with CTE and his fight to beat the disease registered with Gothard, who is quite familiar with the effects of CTE and ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) on former teammates Kerry Goode at Alabama and Mike Webster and Terry Long with the Pittsburgh Steelers.

“When the news came out (on Goode’s diagnosis), I was just devastated,” Gothard said. “One of my best friends at Pittsburgh was Mike Webster and I watched his battle with head trauma and brain injury and what he went through. I played with Terry Long and just watched the movie ‘Concussion’ a couple of nights ago. It’s hard to watch because I know those guys. When you see what this ALS does to them, it’s hard to watch what your buddies go through.”

Proceeds from the tournament help fund the Coach A Child campaign which provides financial aid to make YMCA services available to all persons regardless of their inability to pay. Last year, the Prattville YMCA provided financial aid to more than 2,500 individuals, many of them children, at a cost of more than \$185,000. This year, the goal is to raise \$220,000 through the Coach A Child Fund Campaign.

“Kevin loved the Prattville YMCA and he loved all the things that the Y was able to do,” Cantrell said. “And he wanted to make sure that nobody was turned away due to their inability to pay so we started this tournament to raise money for the YMCA Coach A Child Scholarship Fund. To date, more than \$750,000 has been raised through the work of this tournament.

“The Prattville YMCA was a big part of Kevin’s life. He wanted others to have the same enjoyment he had, growing up and coming to the Y. This tournament is one of the things that makes the YMCA possible for everyone.”

The golf tournament is in its seventh year at RTJ Capitol Hill after spending the first 18 years at the Prattville Country Club. The tournament will feature teams on all three Capitol Hill courses again this year after reaching a record number of individuals (288) and teams (72) in 2021.

Several sponsorship levels remain available. All teams will be provided lunch, beginning at 11 a.m., prior to the 1 p.m. shotgun start and will have the opportunity to have their picture made with Gothard. For more information or to sign up your team to participate in the tournament, contact Cantrell at (334) 358-9622 or e-mail him at kcantrell@prattvilleymca.org



Photos courtesy of the Bryant Museum