



SADLOWSKI'S LONG & WINDING ROAD

Big-hitting Canadian Jamie Sadlowki has taken his formative steps in his transformation from long-drive champ to touring pro, and the road thus far has been a tough one.

WORDS PAUL PRENDERGAST PHOTOGRAPHY GETTY IMAGES

Well documented are the 'Four Stages of Competence' in learning any skill in life: from being 'unconsciously' unaware of what's involved, progressing through the various challenges and pitfalls of learning the skill, leading to the hallowed ground of being 'Unconsciously Skilled' – where you don't need to think about what you're doing, so well drilled and practiced have you become.

Think of when you learned to ride a bike. You had no idea how hard it was until you tried, then you became consciously aware of how difficult it was because you kept falling off.

One you've learned to ride however, the skill

has become second nature, you don't even have to think about how to do it.

When two-time World Long Driving phenom Jamie Sadlowski announced to the world just a few months ago that he was retiring from long drive to try his hand at playing professional golf, it was tantamount to an announcement that he was learning to ride a bike all over again.

It's a transition few have attempted, let alone successfully achieved, but a few minutes in the 28-year old Canadian's company leaves you under no illusion as to his determination to confine the novelty of being 'the long drive guy' to the shadows for good.

The odd relatively successful appearance here and there on the Web.com and Canadian ►



Jamie Sadlowksi displays his raw power in destroying a watermelon



Sadlowski blasts a drive during the Indonesian Masters.

Tours instilled some sense of belief that he could do it, although he freely acknowledges that sticking a pencil in your back pocket for a living week after a week is a far different kettle of fish.

In the months since, Sadlowski's notoriety has provided him with opportunities far from his homes in Canada and Scottsdale, Arizona to events in Asia and on the PGA Tour of Australasia through November and into December.

In fact, it was in Australia that Sadlowski had his first opportunity to play four events in as many weeks: at the NSW and Australian Opens in Sydney, followed by the Australian Four-ball Teams Championship in the week opposite the World Cup of Golf, culminating with the Australian PGA Championship, which is co-sanctioned with the European Tour.

His results were mixed at best, eye-opening and the learning opportunity, Sadlowski said on the eve of the Australian PGA, absolutely invaluable.

"I knew it would be a challenge and it would not come easy. I played the NSW Open and other than two really bad holes back-to-back, I played fairly well and had 14 birdies and an eagle in two days," the Canadian said.

“I’VE MISSED THE CUT IN MACAU, MISSED AT NSW, MISSED THE AUSSIE AND THE PGA BUT IT’S A LEARNING CURVE I KNEW WOULD TAKE TIME – JAMIE SADLOWSKI”

"I figured that would be enough to make the cut and then the Aussie Open, just too many mistakes.

"I played some Web.com stuff but you know, it wasn't my livelihood then. I'd show up for

one event and knew I only had that one event. Now, there is a new tournament every week, you're learning new golf courses, different turf conditions.

"I've missed the cut on the Asian Tour in Macau, missed at NSW, missed the Aussie and the PGA but it's a learning curve that I knew would take time."

Sadlowski did perform well in the Australian Four-Ball event at the PGA venue, RACV Royal Pines on the Gold Coast. He finished tied for sixth in a field that included many PGA Tour of Australasian winners and recent PGA Tour players in Rhein Gibson, Bronson La'Cassie and James Nitties.

Sadlowski's experience as a member at the famed Whisper Rock club in Scottsdale ensures he is far from starry eyed in the company of players with a name and reputation.

"When you're talking 30-plus PGA Tour players and you have amateurs winning the club championship every year, it speaks volumes. There are no issues finding good games there," Sadlowski said.

"I've played with Geoff Ogilvy quite a bit, Aaron Baddeley, Kevin Streelman, Chez Reavie, Kevin Chappell, you name it. It's good

to be around them and learn how they play golf as they've been out there a long time.

"I'm not star struck at these events although I might have watched what people like Jordan Spieth did at the Australian Open in preparation before the tournament. More of a 'What did they do? What can I implement into my game plan the day before, the day of the round?'"

"The fields here, obviously the Web.com is no joke, but this is world class. You've got Adam Scott, you've got Leishman here, really strong fields, so it's definitely a lot different.

"I mean, in long drive I had one big event a year that I'd prep for three or four months and I knew I was ready when I showed up. This is every week."

Then he laughed: "There's a lot more thinking in this. It's added a lot more stress to my life."

"When you've got to count them all (shots), it's very different. You can't have any blank moments out there, I've learned that," he said.

"At the NSW Open, standing on the 3rd hole three-under par on the first day in the middle of the fairway, make a double. Next hole, make a nine on a par-4. I played those two holes seven-over and finished three-under for the

tournament and missed the cut by two, that's how fragile it is."

Part and parcel of Sadlowski's early forays into tournament play have been the inevitable parings with local long bombers, which some tournament promoters have understandably seized upon in the marketing of their events.

"I played with Lincoln (Tighe) at NSW, played with Todd (Sinnott) at Royal Sydney and I was hearing some comments that 'Todd hit it 30 by him on this hole' and 'Lincoln hit it 40 by me on that hole.'

"I read those comments and before, it would have bothered me.

"I like my chances in a long drive competition against anyone out here but I'm not here for that. I'm not here to hit it 400 yards but if it was, I have that ability. That's not what I'm here for.

"Length is a great advantage because it's one thing you can't teach. You can't teach a guy to have an elite level of speed. Length can be an advantage but it can also hurt you at the wrong time and really, getting into a wedge competition with some of these guys isn't a great thing to be doing."

Sadlowski also told the story of being paired with some short hitters in the Indonesian

Masters in Jakarta recently, but who were hitting hybrid clubs into 'this far', he explained with arms outstretched.

There's many ways to golf your ball and the past few months have helped not only to identify the shortcomings in his game, but ►

SADLOWSKI'S AMAZING NUMBERS

Longest recorded drive	445 yards (407m)
Longest 3-iron	300 yards (274m)
Longest wedge	180 yards (165m)
Record clubhead speed	148mph (238km)
PGA Tour average clubhead speed	113mph (182km)
Peak ball speed	215mph (346km)
PGA Tour average ball speed	168mph (270km)

“
I’M GOING TO BUST
IT FOR THREE
YEARS AND WHEN
THOSE THREE
YEARS ARE OVER,
IF I’VE GIVEN IT
EVERYTHING
I’VE GOT AND AM
NOT GETTING
ANYWHERE, THEN
I THINK I CAN BE AT
PEACE WITH IT.
”



of the need to establish a relationship with a more permanent coach to take the next steps in his development.

“I’ve worked with Peter Kostis a little bit and Gary McCord has been a watchful eye over the last couple of years but other than that, it’s just been myself,” Sadlowski said.

“I think there’s going to be a time where I need to make a decision on who I’m going to

work with. I’ve only ever played one event at a time then taken six months off before I’d play another event. Now I’ve played a few events, I know what I have to work on.

“If you don’t have a coach, I think you’re behind the times. I didn’t want to jump into it but now I’ve played some events and know what to work on, I think that needs to be discussed in the New Year.”

Seeing a bunch of young kids on the Gold Coast dressed in Rickie Fowler shirts and hats underlined the importance to Sadlowski of creating a brand and broad fan base.

While it’s a little early before the horse to contemplate this at the present time, Sadlowski aspires to walk in the footsteps of someone like Fowler, to have ‘status’ on a Tour and be in a position to ply his trade around the world.

“I’d love to play the PGA Tour, that’s obviously number one, but I’d love to be a global player, no question,” he said.

“I’ve loved coming to Asia, coming to Australia. I think it’s a great opportunity especially to grow a fan base. Look at Rickie’s fan base, it’s not just in America, there were kids here dressed in his stuff. It (playing globally) also makes you a better player.

“My plan is going to be a bit different to some of the others guys who started out. I’m going to bust it for three years and when those three years are over, if I’ve given it everything I’ve got and am not getting anywhere, then I think I can be at peace with it.

“Obviously, I know what I need to work on but I’m not going to be a guy that’s still chasing it at 38-years old. That’s not me, I’m not going to be staying at the Motel 6 eating McDonalds.

“I know there’s something else I can go back to that I’m pretty good at but that’s not in my line of sight or my backup plan right now. It’s a long road but I like the challenge.”



Sadlowski featured on Sunrise with Samantha Armytage during his Australian visit.