



Submitted Photo

The four golfers and coach Matt Cross stand where the driving range was years ago. Pictured from left, Willie Brown, Eric Davis, Cross, Jameel Martin and Rodriquez Lowery.

AN EXCLUSIVE CLUB

Foursome signs to start golf program at TC

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Home sports writer

TALLADEGA—Talladega College's golf program has a rich history.

Despite not having a team for the past several years, the success of the program in the late '90s as well as the possibility of a return to greatness helped to attract several young golfers to the school. On Thursday, a group of four from Atlanta signed scholarships to play for the Tornados.

Jameel Martin, Rodriquez Lowery, Eric Davis and Willie Brown heard about the program starting again and decided

to make the move from Atlanta to Talladega for the chance to further their education and play golf as well.

All four have been playing golf since they were children and are excited about the opportunity to possibly bring another championship to Talladega College. Martin, a graduate of Cedar Grove High, began playing the sport when he was 6 years old.

"My father, he brought me and my brother and my cousin out to the

golf course and ever since then I got attracted to it," he said.

Lowery, Davis and Brown all started in golf after a program was established in their neighborhood in 1995. The East Lake Foundation was created to provide new opportunities for families who live in the East Lake community in Atlanta. Part of their effort to improve the neighborhood included after-school programs, one of which taught the sport of golf.

"Some people came and invested some money into the neighborhood to start a golf program," Brown said. "They supported us in school, with trips, with clothing, supplies that we needed for the golf. We just stuck with it and kept improving. The more we improved the more they supported us."

The golf program was originally known as the East Lake Junior Golf Academy and is now called The First Tee of East Lake. The program provided the group with opportunities to play many courses, meet professionals and attend PGA tournaments. The athletes have met some of the best in the business, including Tiger Woods.

The foursome will bring their knowledge of the game and competitiveness to Talladega this year.

"I heard that (Talladega College) was the champion in '97, so I want

to bring that back to the university," Lowery said Thursday.

While golf is an individual sport, knowing your teammates well can only help in the long run, according to Davis.

"We're all a family," he said. "We all grew up playing together. If you're having a bad day we can help. If we came into a new team we'd probably stay to ourselves."

When planning to bring athletics back to Talladega College, athletic director Matt Cross said golf was an easy choice as one of the first sports to reinstitute.

"Most of the people that I come in contact with, in talking about TC's return to college sports the one thing they usually tell me is how dominant the golf program was in the '90s," Cross said. "The National Minority Golf Championship that the TC golf team won in 1997 is really what TC athletics is known for."

Cross, who will coach the golf team in its first year, said the goal is to add another championship to the school's list of accomplishments.

"Our goal is to build the golf program back to its once dominate state and bring another National Golf Championship to Talladega



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College,"he said.

Plans are already in place to restore the driving range at the college, something Cross said would be an asset to the team.

"We will restore the golf practice range on our campus and over time plan on making it the best golf practice facility in the city of Talladega," Cross said. "Not many institutions have the luxury of having their own golfing practice facility on campus, so it is something we will once again take advantage of."

When Tony Dozier, a board member for The First Tee at East Lake and CEO of TDC Systems Integration, heard about Talladega

College bringing back its golf program, he told Cross about the golfers who had been through the program in Atlanta. And he told the golfers about TC.

"This group of golfers from Atlanta have a tremendous story to tell," Cross said. "I was introduced to their story by Tony Dozier, who is on the board at the First Tee Golf Foundation at Eastlake Country Club in Atlanta.

"They have been through a heck of whole lot in their life to get to where they are now and I am just thankful that their next great story will be told from Talladega College. Each of these players are extremely talented in golf and they will be instrumental in restoring the winning golf tradition at TC."