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A Classic love story

Couple met last year at Toshiba tournament and say they felt something special. A year later, he proposed to her.

By Sue Thoensen

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It was the last day of the 2007 Toshiba Classic, and volunteer Ashley Garbutt needed a miracle.

It was close to St. Patrick's Day, and she was in charge of selling hats. Green hats.

Unfortunately, a vendor was handing out hats — of the same color — for free.

Ashley had a lot of hats nobody was buying, she was kind of bored, and there weren't a lot of people hanging around, when out of the blue, she got her Mericle.

Jason Mericle, fellow volunteer. He had a little time on his hands, he said, "she was hot, and I wanted to get to know her" and before too long, he was hanging around her tent making small talk.

Miracle, Mericle, — close enough. This is one of those cute, feel-good stories.

Ashley's dad, Ira Garbutt, was the volunteer chairman last year, and he had always given all three of his daughters the same advice.

"Golf is a great way to meet people," Ira said.

Father definitely knows best.

On Feb. 23, after dating for a year, Jason proposed to Ashley, she said yes, and at this year's classic, the volunteer couple was the talk of the town.

They aren't saying it was love at first sight, but both Ashley and Jason acknowledge they knew there was something special that first night.

"I was just waiting for him to ask for my phone number. He's a gentleman, very well-raised, and I just kind of knew that he had old-fashioned values right from the start," Ashley said.

"I couldn't find a moment alone to ask for her number. I wanted to talk to her more. There was something there," Jason said.

Brian Horn, Jason's business partner, has known Garbutt for the past 25 years. He and Jason have been working together for the past few years, yet Brian said it never occurred to him to see whether Jason and Ashley would be interested in meeting.

"I never put that connection together, but they're meant for each other," Horn said.

Ashley was right about Jason being old-fashioned. Two weeks before he proposed, Jason took Garbutt golfing at Pelican Hill so he could properly ask Dad for his daughter's hand in marriage.

Dad said yes, everyone in both families was sworn to secrecy, and on Feb. 23, Jason arranged for he and Ashley to have massages at Spa Gregories.

His birthday was that week, and all he wanted was a massage, Jason said, so Ashley wasn't suspicious about why they were there.

After their massages, in a private corner of the quiet room, Jason got down on one knee, in his bathrobe, and popped the question. Ashley, in her bathrobe, said yes, they toasted with sparkling cider and were engaged.



Ashley Garbutt, left, and Jason Mericle, right, met at the Toshiba Classic last year and are engaged to married.

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