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## Passion Helps Drive

By Lou Fancher



Elizabeth Schultz Photo provided

A little over one year ago, 14-year old Elizabeth Schultz swung a golf club for the first time. A little over two weeks ago, she shot an eagle on a par 4.

The Acalanes High School freshman is turning heads and holing putts in a stunning second year of golf. Schultz became interested in the sport while attending eighth grade at Stanley Middle School. Playing there in her debut season, her team went on to become the Contra Costa Middle School champions.

"Dan, our family friend, showed me how to play golf," Schultz says, remembering her first experience with a club. "The Masters was on TV and I asked him to show me how to hit a ball. We got some cotton balls and went out in the backyard."

Three hours later, Schultz was still going at it. "I was swinging hard and fast. I was having a good time," she remembers. She even remembers the equipment she was using: a Momentus swing trainer, a driver and a 9-iron. "And we putted right here on the hardwood boards," she adds, pointing at the living room floor in her family's Lafayette home.

Golfing at home merely whet her appetite for the real deal. "Next, I wanted to try hitting an actual golf ball. When I did, even though I wasn't hitting well yet, it was fun to see the ball go somewhere."

Schultz has been able to make the ball go, not just "somewhere," but exactly where she wants it to go. At the Northern California Junior Golf Association's tournament this summer, Schultz played the #1 rated Hannah O'Sullivan. Schultz shot a 79. At another event at Lone Tree Golf Course, she shot an 80, taking first place.

Tim Scott, the Acalanes girls varsity golf coach, said: "I have never met a young lady so into golf. She works at it every day." And he notes her potential: "I know she will become a great golfer. Her greatest strength now is her driving. She hits long and straight. [I] do not know at this stage how big she will make it, but she has more focus than most players her age."

"My driver," she says, when asked what is the strongest part of her game. "I can naturally hit far. I have a strong back and I'm flexible. I create more head speed and I get more shoulder turn." Years of swimming contribute to her forceful swing and add to the upper-body flexibility golf requires.

And the weakest part? "I'm working on my long putts," she says. "My distance control is weak. I tend to leave them short. But 7 footer in-I'm really good at those."

The last comment, delivered without arrogance, is why Schultz, especially at 14, is remarkable. Her focus is intense, but not destructive. She buys all her own clubs, including a cherished \$300 Scotty Cameron putter, saying, "A lot of kids, their parents push them, but I love golf and put my own money into it. It's cool; I have a passion. Unless you have a passion [too], you don't understand it."



Photo provided

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