

Golf can be a grind sometimes, but not if you play with a smile

■ By Joe Petshow
For Columbia Gorge News

THE EVOLUTION OF 15-year-old Tora Jo Timinsky's young golfing career has progressed from her first clubs — a pink, Barbie set — to a single-digit handicap. And, if indicators are correct, there should be more progression in her future.

That should benefit Dufur High, where Timinsky is a sophomore, and part of the school's first (hopeful) season of girls and boys golf teams. The sport is hardly new for Timinsky, who is a regular on the state junior circuit. She plays year-round, having finished second earlier this year at a tournament in San Antonio, Texas, where her dad, Bill, was her caddie.

That's who introduced Timinsky to the sport. "My dad got into golf a little bit before I was born," she said. "Later, he thought it would be a good sport to get me and my sister into."

"At first, I didn't play that much on the course. Instead, I just rode around in the golf cart and watched movies, while hitting a few shots here and there. But that's what kept it fun; I wasn't forced to practice or play constantly."

At about age 6, Timinsky said she participated in the First Tee of Greater Portland program, which introduces youngsters to the game of golf. Closer to home, she participated in Bob Sproule's junior golf program at The Dalles Country Club — where Amy Wilson also helped mentor Timinsky.

"As I got older, I started to like the game even more, so we started to play in little tournaments here and there," she said. "I would practice more and get lessons, then the rest just kind of played out."

Timinsky travels to Lake Oswego every couple of weeks to receive instruction from Meurig Morgan, who operates Dragon Golf Instruction. She also continues to participate in



Dufur High School sophomore Tora Jo Timinsky takes a swing on the practice range in August 2020. Timinsky, who plays year-round, finished second at tournament in San Antonio, Texas earlier this year. Contributed photo

the First Tee program under the tutelage of Ron Moseley, and more recently plays high school golf under the guidance of Coach Travis Kane.

Timinsky practices five days a week, she said. Those sessions include the use of a simulator in the family's workshop — when winter weather doesn't allow outdoor play.

"Normally I look back and reflect off of my previous tournament to help me decide what I should practice," she said. That ethic has helped lower her United States Golf Association handicap to 9.1. Her best 18-hole competitive score was in the fall of 2020 at the Oregon Golf Association Tournament of Champions at Illahe Hills Country Club in South

Salem. Timinsky shot 79 and won the age 15-18 division.

"My putter was on fire that day and I was just draining all of them," she said.

She attributes her positive attitude and her short game as important factors of her golf success. "My pitching wedge, 9-iron, and 8-iron, I feel good when I need to hit a shot with those clubs, because the swing is just in me by muscle memory," she said. "I've hit so many good shots with those clubs that my mind just goes to full confidence."

"Another thing I'm strong with is staying positive on the course. A lot can go wrong when you start to get down on yourself or start to become negative on the course. So, I just try and

congratulate myself on each good shot, and I make myself believe that I can, and I will, play well."

"My favorite thing about golf is that it's a lifelong enjoyable sport. When you smile on the inside is when you really know you enjoy what you're doing. That is the feeling I get on the course, a strong smile on the inside that also shows outside."

Despite this, Timinsky is not immune to golf's many challenges, physical and mental. The legendary golfer Bobby Jones once said, "Golf is a game that is played on a five-inch course — the distance between your ears." Timinsky said most of her

golfing struggles of late are on the putting green.

"When it comes to golf, just a little weakness can mess with your game because it can get inside your head and doesn't want to come out," she said. "My biggest struggle recently with golfing has been my putting. Inside of about five feet I don't seem to have that strong putting confidence I used to, instead I seem to just push it to the right side of the hole."

"Putting used to be one of my stronger suits ... and now it's on the low side, but I have some good drills and equipment to help me get my confidence and skill back. Even though positivity is one of my strengths, sometimes confidence can be one of my weaknesses. It's really nice knowing I have all of these people that believe in me, but sometimes I can get inside of my head and it messes with my confidence out on the course."

A summer family road trip in 2020 help fuel Timinsky's love of golf and family. "My family and I took our camp trailer and traveled for golf tournaments in Oregon," she said. "(We were) all on the course together, just having a great time. It's also fun when we play in Friday night scrambles at The Dalles Country Club. We take our red, four-seater cart out and play a scramble as a family."

Family, at least some of it, was a big part of her most recent competitive junior golf round in early spring in San Antonio. "I had never been to Texas before and it was an amazing, unforgettable experience," she said. "My dad and I walked on the river walk every afternoon and had our fill of delicious Mexican food." As for the golf, Timinsky finished second to medalist Abra Richmond of Los Angeles in the age 15-18 division at Willow Springs Golf Course, near AT&T Stadium. The tourney

was part of the US Kids Golf Foundation Teen Series.

Away from the course, Timinsky has been on the Dufur High cheer squad and also enjoys dance — jazz, musical theater, and tap. "Sometimes it can give you a good break from reality," she said. "With dance (pre-COVID), I would go to different dance conventions and those were a blast."

Timinsky said one of her goals is to consistently shoot in the 70s for 18 holes, which should get her noticed by college coaches. "Golfing in college is one of my goals for the future," she said. "My hopes are to work hard enough to receive a golf scholarship, and if not, I still would like to play on a college golf team."

A year-round golfing climate would be ideal, she said, of her college location. "Even though I can, and do, play golf year-round here, it can get a little chilly," she said. "So going somewhere where the weather is nice sounds good to me."

Timinsky, a sophomore class representative at Dufur High, continues to ponder her future. "My mind seems to bounce from career to career when I think about what I want to do ... what I should study in college to help get me there," she said. "As of right now I'm thinking about majoring in business, because it's always good to have a solid base ... I've bounced from thinking about being a chiropractor, to a teacher, to being a photographer."

If that career trifecta pans out, it should benefit her golf game. She will be equipped to treat the occasional back injuries which sideline some golfers; she can instruct her way out of slumps; and when she wins, she can snap self-portraits holding the trophies.



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