



BY SARAH CHRISTINE BOLTON

Young Golfer Bria Sanders Has Big Dreams



Bria Sanders practices golf almost every day. She placed in the top five in 21 of 22 golf events in during 2007. She's hung out with Tiger Woods. And the most amazing thing about Bria Sanders? She's eleven years old.

I sat down with Bria and her dad, Mike, at the Ridgeway Country Club on a quiet Sunday afternoon. Bria is talkative and assertive, ordering a slice of apple pie and hot chocolate. She works on the chocolate for most of the interview.

At age three, her dad gave her a set of plastic golf clubs and she hasn't looked back since. As of November 18, she is ranked #1 in the United States Junior Golf Tour.

The Sanders moved from Atlanta to Memphis two years ago and joined Ridgeway where Bria works with Head Golf Pro Sam Cern.

When bad weather keeps Bria off the outdoor course, she heads indoors to Parmasters. They have the only golf simulators in the country, which allows Bria to keep up her game, even if it's raining and cold. She works with Mario Batonga at Parmasters.

Foundation National Junior Golf Team.

As part of her requirements for being accepted into the Tiger Woods team, Bria is required to perform a certain number of community service hours. "We think it's very important for her to learn about giving back to the community," Mike says. "We don't know how far golf will take her, and we want her to have the right attitude in place regardless. It's good for her to realize that there are a lot of less fortunate people out there." Bria's charity of choice is Micah's Children Foundation, an organization that assists parents by providing burial funds for the death of children.

Even though her record speaks of an accomplished golfer, Bria is still definitely an eleven-year-old. She tells a story about herself and her sister, ten-year-old Kaya. "We have these gymnastic mats and we set them up against the wall and hit our golf balls into the mats," she says, alternating with sips of hot chocolate. "So, we can use those mats for two things: for practicing gymnastics and for practicing golf." Mike Sanders backs up Bria's story when he says he re-

Bria Sanders is one of the area's top young golfers.



Bria's Bio

Her Hero: Nancy Lopez, because she was the first minority female to play in the PGA tour and win.

Her New Year's Resolutions: Get straight A's and get a new sketchbook.

Her Current Handicap: 12.6

Her Big Picture Golf Goals: Become a Ladies Professional Golf Association pro, win a major, and play at the Atlanta National Golf Club in Georgia.

Bria gets straight A's at Cordova Middle School, where she says her favorite subject is probably theater arts. "Whenever I'm bored in class, I design dresses," she says. "One time, I accidentally cut my mom's tablecloth. She said I could just use it to make a dress."

The Mindset of a Champion

Before she plays, Bria has a few preparations that get her ready to compete. "I do some stretches," she says. "I try to get there early and practice on the course." She looks slyly over at her dad. "And then, dad gives me a lecture." He laughs.

Apparently, her methods of preparation are working in her favor. She won the Memphis Junior Masters Championship 2007, qualified for several other large junior championships, and was asked to become a member of the Tiger Woods

ally wants his children to have a childhood. "We have to constantly find that balance, between putting in the hours necessary to maintain her game and letting her just be a kid," he says. Even so, Bria already has a college in mind-- University of Georgia at Athens -- and talks about becoming a pro someday.

For now, though, Bria Sanders is quite content being one of the best junior golfers and working on her dress design sketches. Who knows? Maybe someday she'll put out her own golf fashion line.

For more information on Bria Sanders, check out her website at www.briasanders.org. For additional information on Micah's Children Foundation, go to www.micahschildren.org.

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