

FROM THIS SMALL-TOWN COURSE

From the small city of Kimberley in southeastern B.C. (population under 7,000) have risen not one but two junior golfers with big futures ahead of them. Both have developed their game at the Kimberley Golf Club, and are taking their passion to the next level with full NCAA Div 1 scholarships. » *by Kimberly Schoenberger*

For the second time in as many years, a junior golfer from Kimberley, B.C., has been granted a full-ride scholarship to an NCAA Div 1 university.

Signed this year was Julia Dereniwsky, a 2014 graduate of Selkirk Secondary School in Kimberley. This September, she'll be beginning her freshman year of university with the team at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. This follows on the heels of 2013 Selkirk graduate Jared du Toit just completing his first year with the golf team at the University of Idaho.

Tom Vold, director of the Kimberley Golf Club, calls it a historical event.

"I've been around a long time," said Vold, "and they're the only two from this area that I've ever heard of coming out of one golf course. For a small community to have that happen back to back is pretty rare."

This girl grew up with golf

Dereniwsky said much of her inspiration comes from her father, Kevin, who introduced her to the game.

"When I was three, he'd bring me out and we'd hit balls on the range," she said. "And he's helped me pursue it more, taking me to bigger tournaments."

The two have played together at the Kimberley Golf Club for many years; Dereniwsky's father is a member of the club, and she works in the pro shop. She's also a junior member of the club and takes lessons from Vold.

"Right now, when Tom is coaching me, it's just working on swing fundamentals and working on different shots—how to play in the wind, how to play wherever," she said. "I try to get out to the course as much as I can, whether it's going out to the range or going out to play nine or 18 holes."

As a seasoned junior golfer at the Kim-

berley Golf Club, Dereniwsky does what she can to give back and to help other young golfers discover the sport.

"Last summer, I helped Tom with a few junior clinics, teaching kids how to work with longer clubs at the driving range and on chipping and putting," she said. "We have a few holes set up on the driving range; we cleared that all out and set pins up, then let the kids play to the holes."

Getting a grip on the mental game

Luckily, the kids that Dereniwsky helps out with are young enough to not get too stressed when the game doesn't go their way—something that an older player like Dereniwsky can struggle with. She recalled one particular event, the 2013 BC Junior Championship, that she found quite challenging. Dereniwsky didn't walk away with a win, but she did find a way to push through what she says is one of her biggest weaknesses—the mental game.

"I had one of the worst rounds of the year on my first day, and I was a little frustrated after that," she said. "So I just thought, 'Tomorrow's a new day,' and I went out and played better the next day and shot my career low."

Since this past December, Dereniwsky has been working with a mental coach, in an effort to fine-tune this area of the game that has at times caused her some grief.

"We do some training sessions through Skype or phone," she said, "just working on visualizing shots, how I'd make certain moves, and practising keeping emotions level through the round."

Dereniwsky has found that having a coach for the mental side of the game has proven to be very beneficial, and she is looking forward to working with the mental coaches Texas has to offer.

Winning a spot in Texas

So how exactly did a school in the southern U.S. find Dereniwsky, an 18-year-old from small-town British Columbia?

"I went to a college golf combine in »

» **HOW IT'S DONE:** Julia Dereniwsky tees it up at Hole 12 at the Kimberley Golf Club.

» Cover Story

» December in Las Vegas,” Dereniwsky said. “A bunch of coaches came down to watch the skills competition and the nine-hole competition.”

The combine was an opportunity for players who have not yet been seen by recruiters to go out and show what they’ve got. The competition involved skills testing on the front nine followed by a stroke-style play on the back nine; Dereniwsky ended up taking first place in the latter.

“I’d seen a few coaches around, but they’re not allowed to talk to the players—just the parents,” Dereniwsky said. “My dad ended up telling me after the fact that one coach, Carol Blackmar (with Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi), had given him her business card and said, ‘We’d like to talk.’”

Though Blackmar had shown interest at the competition, the regulations of the combine meant that Dereniwsky didn’t actually get to meet her until the official visit later on. But it was that visit combined with the full-ride offer that really solidified Dereniwsky’s decision to play for Texas.

“When we went down, I really fell in love

with the location,” she said. “I’ve never lived by the ocean but I’ve always loved it. And the coaching was great and the academics were really great too.”

Dereniwsky said sharing the news with Vold reassured her that she was making the right decision.

“He was really excited,” she said. “Before I went down for the official visit, I talked to him about Texas and he said, ‘Oh, if I could go there, I would go too,’ and I came back and told him the news and he was just really excited for me.”

Dereniwsky said her golf career has been largely inspired by following sports in the media.

“I always liked watching higher calibre play on TV and watching those bigger tournaments,” said Dereniwsky. “Then I started playing bigger tournaments, and I realized that this was something I could do and I kept doing it.”

Though seeing big-time golfers on the television screen can be a great motivator, nothing quite hits home like playing alongside a local success story.

“Watching Jared du Toit, another player



Kimberly Schoenberger photo

from Kimberley—that also encouraged me,” Dereniwsky said. “I’d grown up with him, and the way he furthered his golf career encouraged me to try to pursue mine.”

Dereniwsky also said that while golf may definitely be an option in the future, she is excited to also be pursuing a biology degree—a degree she intends to use to become a veterinarian. **GW**

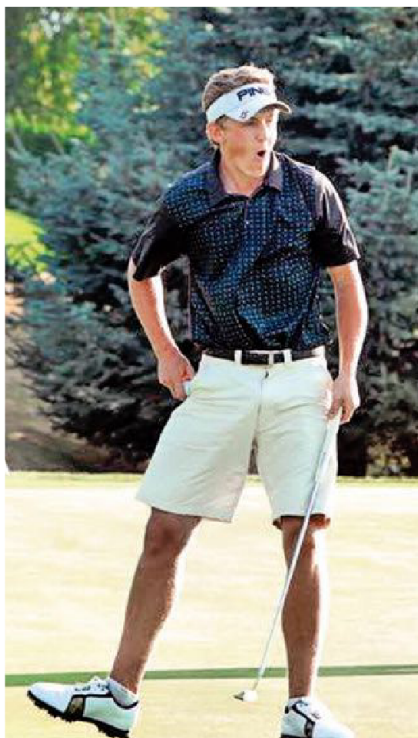


Photo courtesy Jared du Toit

TAKING THE GAME SERIOUSLY: Jared du Toit has spent the past year developing his game as part of the golf team at the University of Idaho. He said it was a busy schedule, with early-morning workouts, classes, practice almost every day, studying and homework—plus all the tournaments.

ONE YEAR IN

Jared du Toit likes where his game is at after his first year of playing NCAA Div 1 golf

by Kimberly Schoenberger » In 2013, Jared du Toit, a junior golfer from Kimberley, B.C., was granted a full scholarship to the University of Idaho, where he has been playing golf for the past year.

Du Toit said Grade 10 was when he began to play more and golf in tournaments in the States, but it was in his Grade 11 year that things started to get more serious and the offers began coming in. And out of all the schools that wanted him, the University of Idaho turned out to be the one du Toit wanted to play for.

“Everything fit pretty well,” he said. “I like the coach (John Means) a lot and I like the guys on the team a lot, and the school is pretty close to home.”

Initially, du Toit was a little skeptical about whether or not he would be able to fit in with the big league that is NCAA Div 1 golf, but he quickly found his place once he started competing.

“Coming out of the gates for my first tournament of the year, I played pretty well—I shot three 69s in a row and finished fifth, and right there was when things start-

ed to feel right,” he said. “Before that, I was kind of unsure about where I’d fit, but coming fifth I realized I could play with everybody there and it motivated me to try and get the ‘W’ and try and compete every week the best that I can.”

Du Toit credits a lot of his success to the support of his family and the tight-knit community at the Kimberley Golf Club.

“At Kimberley, all the members and pros have been very supportive,” he said. “They always wanted to see me do well, and it’s been nice having that support.”

Going into university, du Toit set out with the goal of steadily developing his game to a professional level. While he might not be at that point quite yet, he says the prospect is becoming increasingly possible.

“We compete a lot throughout the tournament against the top golf players in the world,” du Toit said. “I get to see what they’re doing compared to what I’m not, and it turns out that I’m not as far off as I would think. If I just take the time to develop, I’ll be right there with them, and hopefully I can get to that next level.” **GW**