

A GAME FOR LIFE

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GOLF

Helping To Make Golf A Game For *Everyone*



Tanelle Bolt Demonstrates How She Is Able To Continue Playing Golf, A Game She Grew Up With, Using A 'Para-Golfer' During The Golf & Health Week Adaptive Golf Day At Langara GC

IMAGE COURTESY: BRAD ZIEMER

Golf has always been a big part of **Tanelle Bolt's** life.

Her dad, **Michael**, was the longtime superintendent and assistant superintendent of Lethbridge Country Club, where Tanelle played junior golf and later worked on the grounds crew with her father. She loved the game and 15 years later nothing has changed, although there have been some very significant changes in Bolt's life.

Nearly five years ago -- on Aug. 10, 2014 -- Bolt suffered a life-changing injury after free-jumping off a bridge in Port Renfrew on Vancouver Island. She fractured her T6 vertebrae and was left paralyzed from her chest down.

Bolt, now 32, was determined that her disability would not prevent her from enjoying her life-long love of the outdoors. And that included golf.

She's back on the course, with the help of a 'para golfer' -- a sports wheelchair that allows Bolt to stand and swing her clubs. A game she feared she had lost after her accident is again a part of her life. "This is not a new world for me," Bolt said during a recent round at Langara Golf Course in Vancouver.

"It's an old world that I had lost. Golf gives me the ability to be outside enjoying fresh air with friends and family. It is just such a calming experience to be on a golf course in the middle of the city. There are not a lot of places like this."

Bolt was at Langara as part of the inaugural Golf & Health Week, an annual event supported by golf federations worldwide and designed to publicize the health benefits of golf. The session at Langara, organized by British Columbia Golf Chief Executive Officer **Kris Jonasson**, was focussed on adaptive golf and golfing with disabilities. Bolt is part of an adaptive golf committee formed by Jonasson to advise the association.

The goal is to make courses more open to people with disabilities, who can benefit from time on the course. Bolt's return to the course became possible after she travelled to California and acquired a sports wheelchair that allowed her to

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strap herself in and be raised to a standing position.

Bolt said the time she spends on the golf course greatly benefits her. “Especially for me with paralysis, golf has a lot to do with circulation and bone density and the health of your overall body,” she said. “The human body is not meant to sit in a chair all day, every day. This helps your blood circulation, your skin. We suffer from

shearing (of the skin) and pressure ulcers, so using the para-golfer to be out on the golf course is good for your overall health.

“Golf & Health Week is huge for me to see because my dad was a superintendent, so I grew up on a course that had just started allowing women to golf in the 70s. It is very neat to come back as a disabled golfer and start to see the changes happening in

the game.”

Since her accident, Bolt has become an advocate for disabled outdoors enthusiasts like herself. She started a company, the Rad Recreation Society, that provides an inventory of adapted outdoor recreation

equipment for low-cost rental fees. “I never anticipated getting up in a unit like this,” said Bolt, who now lives in the Invermere area in the east Kootenays. “This para-golfer is such a cool device because it doesn’t just allow me to golf, it allows me to weight train in a vertical position, it



Canadian Amputee Golf Senior National Champion Johannes Grames Sports An Impressive 7-Handicap

allows me to bowl if the bowling alley is accessible or shoot darts.”

It also allows Bolt to look people directly in the eye. “I am able to have an interview or a conversation with people where I am not having to look up at everyone. Sitting at belt-buckle height isn’t always the best thing. After my injury I just sought out anything I possibly could. It was four-and-a-half years ago that I hurt myself, so I didn’t give myself a large opportunity to be disappointed. I was too busy. It was like, ‘if that is not going to happen, I’m moving on to the next one.’ I just try and facilitate as much outdoor recreation with a disability as I can.”

Bolt was joined at Langara by two other members of British Columbia Golf’s adaptive golf committee -- former national wheelchair basketball coach Joe Higgins of Delta and Canadian champion amputee golfer Johannes Grames of Vancouver. They were joined for their round on the course by Dr. Roger

Hawkes, Executive Director of Britain’s Golf & Health Project, which is supported by the World Golf Foundation. It aims to study the many and varied health and well-being benefits of golf.

“I am not the world authority on (disabled golf), but it strikes me that as someone who has enjoyed golf for 20-odd years myself that perhaps we are not quite as inclusive as we should be,” Hawkes said. “I think we have a great opportunity to bring people with disabilities into our sport.”

Hawkes and others strongly believe that a recent decision to award world golf ranking points for elite-level disabled golfers will persuade others to start playing golf. “I think it is a big deal that there are world ranking points now,” Hawkes said.

“Suddenly at the elite end we have an opportunity to show off our best players and that hopefully will inspire the vast majority of non-elite players to come forward.”

Hawkes pointed to the recent Australian Open, where 12

disabled golfers joined the rest of the field at the event. “They were not tagged on at the end (of the draw),” he said. “They were on the same course, using same tees, spread out amongst them, and I am pleased that on the last day the leading player with a disability outscored a number of international PGA European Tour players. How many sports will ever be able to emulate that?”

Higgins said golf courses can benefit by welcoming more disabled golfers to their facilities. “When you look at it from a business perspective I can only tell you I know a lot of disabled golfers,” Higgins said. “But the people I enjoy golfing with the most are my able-bodied friends, my wife, my kids, and that party multiplier is pretty huge.”

Grames, an above-the-knee amputee who carries a seven-handicap, said courses must make disabled golfers feel welcome. “There is an element of fear with disabled golf as well,” Grames said. “I have showed up with shorts on and people fear that I am going to be way too slow or wreck the golf course.”

Jonasson said British Columbia Golf is committed to making golf more accessible for disabled players. “I have been here for 20 years and we had dabbled a little bit with adaptive golf and people with disabilities,” Jonasson said. “We provided some funding to athletes to attend championships and have done some things with blind golf. But we hadn’t really looked at it as a big part of our operation. Now we are.”