

SPORTS & LEISURE

Spencer rubs shoulders with pair of LPGA stars

Georgetown South golfer plays with Sorenstam, Gulbis

By **HERB GARBUTT**
Staff Writer

Natalie Gulbis said the best advice she ever got in preparing for her pro career came from a meeting with PGA veteran Peter Jacobsen.

"I was going to Q school and he told me, don't play to qualify, play to win the tournament," said the LPGA star. "That's what I've done ever since."

Samantha Spencer hopes some tips from a pro can help take her game to new levels after the Grade 9 Christ the King student got the opportunity to tee it up with Gulbis and Annika Sorenstam on Tuesday.

Spencer had known for more than a month that she was going to playing at the Scotiabank Women's Charity Challenge at the Magna Golf Club in Aurora. She earned her spot in the event with a top-six finish at the Ontario Summer Games with back-to-back rounds of 77.

Still, as she stood on the 10th tee with the other junior golfers, the player widely regarded as the best woman to ever play the game and an LPGA tour winner, Spencer was having trouble coming to grips with her good fortune.

"It's incredible," she said. "You're still thinking, is this really happening."

Only 14, Spencer was eight when she took up the game. She's come a long way in six years.

Sorenstam said there is no secret for players like Spencer to make the jump to the next level—it all comes down to practising regularly.

"Keep it simple," she said. "The game is hard enough to play. These girls are young. They just have to continue to im-

prove their fundamentals and then get experience. That's how your game matures."

Spencer will be doing just that. In March, she will head to Florida to train at the Core Golf Academy under Sean Foley and his staff.

As if playing with Sorenstam and Gulbis wasn't enough to make the juniors nervous, they were also being followed by TV cameras and a gallery of about 150 people.

"Usually it's just us, parents and siblings (watching at tournaments)," Spencer said.

Each of the six junior players played three holes with the Gulbis and Sorenstam at the event, which raised \$200,000 for women's charities. And though Sorenstam—who shares Spencer's favourite player status with Phil Mickelson—retired two years ago and had played golf just five times this year, she still hit shots during the event that left the gallery in awe. Gulbis also showed incredible skill, dropping her third shot on the par-5 12th hole within a foot of the pin from 130 yards out.

Spencer and the other players took advantage of the opportunity, quizzing their playing partners as they walked down the fairway. Spencer asked Gulbis about how to best prepare for tournaments, got some short-game pointers and got some useful tips on her swing, especially when the pressure is on.

"They told me how to control my speed and my tempo, to not get too hyped up before a shot."

Although the players had heard some of the information they received before, Spencer said it was different hearing it from someone who has played on the LPGA tour. "Hearing it from the pros, it really means a lot."



Not only did Grade 9 Christ the King student Samantha Spencer miss out on a lockdown at her school Tuesday, but as one of Canada's top up-and-coming golfers she was invited to play nine holes with LPGA star Natalie Gulbis (right) and the tour's all-time wins leader, Sweden's Annika Sorenstam, in Aurora.
Photo by Herb Garbutt

Show-stopper

Goalkeeper Julien Pita of Ruffin's Pet Centre Bulldogs dives to make a save in the penalty shootout against BuyWise Windows & Doors during the Georgetown Soccer Club's Closing Day for the under-8 boys' house league division held at the Croatian Centre in Norval. The teams were tied 2-2 after regulation time and it came down to the sixth shooter for each side in penalty kicks, when BuyWise goalie Spyros Kyriakoulis saved a Ruffin's attempt and then teammate Aidan Southon netted the winning goal. Scoring for BuyWise earlier in the contest were Luke Hickling and Ethan Gould, with Daniel Cannon and Brody Spencer replying for Ruffin's.



Photo by Ray Lavender

Albany 2nd at Maple Leaf event

Being one of the youngest in his age group didn't phase Georgetown's Joel Albany as he finished as runner-up in round one of the five-event Maple Leaf Junior Golf Tour Fall Series held at the Guelph Lakes Golf Course.

Fourteen-year-old Albany shot an 80, five strokes behind winner Matt LeMay of Waterloo in the boys' 14-16 division.

Albany also took one of the tournament's closest-to-the-pin awards.



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