

Spencer to tee it up with world's best

EAMONN MAHER
Staff Writer

Young Georgetown golfer Samantha Spencer received some peculiar advice from her coach as she prepared for this week's U.S. Kids Golf World Championships in North Carolina.

The 11-year-old North Halton Golf & Country Club junior member was selected last month to play for the Canadian Junior Golf Association team that will begin action tomorrow (Thursday) at the famed Pinehurst Resort, which in 2005 played host to one of the four major professional tournaments in men's golf, the U.S. Open.

And with sunny, hot weather in the forecast, the putting greens on the nine-course Pinehurst complex promise to be fast and unforgiving for the 1,100 competitors from around the world who are

entered in one of several different age groupings.

"Sam's coach (the CJGA's Sean Foley) was down there last week to play and he told her, 'Go into your bathtub and practise putting your ball in there,'" said Kevin Spencer, who'll be caddying for his daughter this week.

"He said to try to stop the ball before it hits the drain because that's how fast these greens are. She's going to just work on her putting and chipping in practice because if you want to score well, that's what you have to practise on."

The Grade 6 St. Catherine of Alexandria student will play 54 holes in a division with 74 11-year-old girls and is eager to face her toughest tournament challenge yet since taking up the sport three years ago. Spencer is a multiple-winner on the CJGA Junior Linkster Tour series whose drives average about 175

yards and her best score off the ladies' tees at North Halton is a 93.

"I'm kind of nervous," said Spencer, naming Michelle Wie and Tiger Woods as her favourite golfers. "And I usually don't get nervous when I play because I normally do one-day events, but this is three days and the most I've done is two. I'm just going to try to get used to the greens down there because they're much faster than I'm used to."

A figure skater during the winter months, Spencer also excels on the soccer pitch for Georgetown's under-11 Mustangs and was chosen to play in the Peel-Halton district all-star program this spring. Although a little too young to be considering U.S. college golf scholarships or a pro career, she has been training at the Junior Elite Academy at Glen Abbey in Oakville under the direction of Sean Casey and Connor O'Shea and might have



SAMANTHA SPENCER

to make a decision on her summer sport of choice in a couple of years.

"I just try to get a good round in," she added. "There was a tournament in Acton that I didn't win but I shot a 91 and that's my best round in the CJGA so far. I think I play better when I'm just having fun."

To follow Spencer's progress during this week's event, visit the website www.uskidsgolf.com.

(Eamonn Maher can be reached at emaher@independentfreepress.com)



Samantha Spencer, 11, a junior at North Halton Golf and Country Club, will play for the Canadian Junior Golf Association team that starts action tomorrow (Thursday) at the Pinehurst Resort in North Carolina for the U.S. Kids Golf World Championships.

Submitted photos

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