

With a drive

Junior follows in her family's footsteps in her passion for golf

NATHAN RUSSELL

Sports editor

For junior Regan Clifford, golf is a family tradition.

"I started playing when I was 10 years old," she said. "I got inspired to play because of my Grandpa."

Clifford, who has been on the Wando golf team since the seventh grade, also followed in the footsteps of her parents, both of whom played the sport. Golf turned into her passion and a path for her through high school and beyond.

"When I started I wasn't even in the top five," Clifford said about her 12-year-old self. "I really had to work my way up."

To do this, Clifford didn't just go to the four-a-week, two-hour long trainings. Instead, she trains extra on the days that are free of team practice.

"I practice every day," Clifford said. "I putt, chip and lift weights so that I can hit the ball further."

Even while she is at the team practices, she is pushing herself.

"She goes out and without anybody saying anything to her, she is already started," varsity golf Coach Jeffrey Emory said. "She is highly motivated to do well."

At the end of the season, this motivation doesn't stop. Clifford continues to play and train for golf.

"After the season is over, she's practicing almost, if not just, as much as we practiced as a team," team member Ella Drew Dodd said.

Of course, Clifford doesn't just stop at practicing. She also competes year round. So playing for Wando is only a small portion of her year -- although she said it is a more preferable portion.

"In tournaments I have a mindset to win even though that's not always possible," Clifford said, "but when I'm on a team we feed off each other's scores and positivity, and do better than before."

Clifford doesn't just feed off of the other players positivity -- she radiates it.

"Regan is the teammate every sports team should have," Dodd said. "She's dedicated, which is great but she is also hilarious."

Senior golf captain **Abby Rankin** swings on her drive at the Dunes West golf course on Oct. 17.

The girls team finished 10th in the state at the state championships. Freshman Ella Drew was the low scorer for the team. *Photo // Nancy Remoll*



Senior **Justin Pelic** runs on the field with the spirit spear at the homecoming game against West Ashley on Oct. 5. He carried the spear in recognition of being the Ultimate Warrior. *Photo // Peyton Raybon*

A star on and off the field

Football linebacker breaks school record for most tackles

TYLER FEDOR

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It's the first quarter of the game against West Ashley Oct. 5. Justin Pelic is playing inside linebacker and is right on top of the school tackle record.

In the first quarter, Justin broke his right hand. But did he sit out the rest of the game?

No. Justin fought through the pain, managing to break the school record for tackles with a broken left radius in a cast and a freshly broken right hand.

Justin's career in football started long before his arrival at Wando, and his resilient character shone from the start.

"I was interested when I was eight years, so in third grade, and tried out at first, in the first year, I was considering quitting, like it was that tough. I didn't think I could do it. But then, I pushed through and then the next year just kind of fell in love," Justin said. "It's gonna be like nine, almost 10 years now."

Justin's passion for football grew from his own participation and some family influences.

"My dad is a huge football fan," Justin said. "He went to Notre Dame... and he hasn't missed a game since 1991. So he definitely wanted me to play, so his love for it kind of rubbed off on me."

Justin began to grow an athletic profile at an early age before arriving at Wando, covering more than just football.

"I had a great group of kids that I played rec with and then a great group of coaches, and then, a love for the sport kind of kept developing after that," Justin said.

Justin's father, Chris Pelic, said Pelic is a gifted athlete in more than just football.

"When he was 12, he actually won the state 100 and 200 in the Hershey track system, and represented the entire South..." Mr. Pelic said. "And went to nationals for the 100-meter dash and they flew him up on their dime to Hershey, Pennsylvania and he came in seventh nationally for the 100-meter at [the age of] 12."

Justin managed to break the school record of tackles in some of the most dire circumstances he could've found himself in -- fighting through the pain of a freshly broken hand to do so.

"I have 284 or five [tackles] right now... The previous record, which I think was around 250 something, and I had known that going in to this year that I had a good bit of tackles so it might be possible to break it," Justin said.

Pelic said his son is a determined and fearless player on the field.

"He wasn't ready to be done playing football for Wando, and he really did feel like he didn't want to let the team down," said Pelic, whose son is still playing with both the broken arm and the broken hand. "Instead of throwing it in and saying I'm going to focus on healing for college, he's all in, and it really defines, in my opinion, the true Warrior."

Justin may be a top tier football player, but off the field his achievements distinguish him as well.

"I bought him a tractor and a blower and said 'it's all you...' He took off with that..." Pelic said. "He's made almost 50k doing that on his own... and he's over the years hired Wando students to help, he'd pay them, so it really has turned into his own business."

Justin has managed to distinguish himself as a successful person, managing to balance his social, academic and football life, and on top of it all, Pelic is just a good person, his father said.

"He is humble, he doesn't brag about himself," Pelic said.

Defensive Coordinator Jamel Smith said Justin is an exceptional person and football player.

"You can't ask for a more malleable, hard working, dedicated football player. I know a lot of coaches say all the time what they wish their football players to be like, but if I was wanting to hold my football players to be like somebody..." Smith said. "Justin is right there with the best of them... The guy is just a phenomenal person."

Justin, however, looks to the future, seeing football as a viable route for himself. As a senior, he's going to have to say goodbye to his football family soon, but he's still as loving as ever towards them.

"I remember being 10 years old writing that as a dream of mine, but now if I can go and play at collegiate level and then do well there, then I think it's definitely a possibility," Justin said. "We've become like a family and I'm excited to see what's in store for the younger kids that are not graduating, and also excited to see how the seniors are going to do after football is over... and see where everybody goes and what they do with their lives."