

driving it HOME

Golf eases transition from middle to high school

It's the last putt on the 18th green in the regional match for the Wando High School girl's golf team. **Gaby Martinez**, 9, crouches down to read the green. She lines up her ball and slightly bends her knees. Her eyes focus on the ground and then on the hole in front of her. She brings the putter back and taps the ball forward. The ball sinks into the hole. The girl's golf team moves on to lower state.

"Winning regionals was a great moment for us. We have great players this year and they all tried really hard so it was great to be able to see the rewards and hard work pay off," Martinez said.

Martinez, the team's number two player, has been playing on the team since 7th grade.

"Being on the team since 7th grade allows me to see how far we have improved. It is really cool to see all the players grow and get better. We keep growing every match and now it's cool to see that we have the potential to keep going," Martinez said.

The Wando Athletic Department allows middle schoolers who are zoned for Wando to participate in varsity and junior varsity athletics. Any middle schooler is allowed to play a varsity sport as long as it is a non-contact sport. If the sport is a contact sport then the middle schooler is allowed to try out and play for the junior varsity team, but cannot play for the varsity team.

Many of the players on the girl's golf team are middle schoolers. It gives teammates a chance to get to know each other even if they go to different schools. It can sometimes be difficult and a disadvantage to them. Although it is challenging, the girls make the best of the situation.

"It is definitely more challenging for the middle schoolers. They aren't at the school so communication is hard, but we are able to manage it. The hardest part is that they get matched with juniors and seniors and then there is a maturity difference," **Jason Brisini**, assistant coach of the girl's golf team, said. "We have a little group of middle schoolers and they are all super chatty and close but it's good for them because they can relate to each other better."

Every year the middle schoolers continue to grow and get ready for their transition in to high school.

"Throughout the season the girls have grown tremendously. They have grown a lot maturity-wise but also in golf which is awesome. It is good for them to be around the older players as far as knowing how to act on the golf course and how to be better golfers," Brisini said.

"Being in high school, the teachers understand a lot better. They also respect you more and understand that you are missing class for a legit reason instead of just skipping," Martinez said.

-Lee Buck



Which golf course in Charleston area do you prefer?

GRIP IT AND RIP IT: (left) **Kate Harper**, 12, crushes the ball down the middle of the fairway. "The bus rides to the matches are very interesting. A large part of the team is in middle school so it brings up some unexpected and interesting conversations," Harper said.
DOWN THE PIPE: (opposite) **Gaby Martinez**, 9, slams a line drive down the fairway to take the team to lower state. "The teammates are really encouraging and helpful. They encourage me to stay positive and not get down when I'm having a bad day," Martinez said.



FORE! (above left) **Emma Smith**, 10, chips the ball out of the bunker to land on the green. "In the past, golf hasn't been a very big sport at Wando, so it's fun to see how the team is growing and developing," Smith said.
EYE ON THE PRIZE: (above right) **Lily Joyce**, 9, putts the ball towards the hole at the Dunes West golf course. "Wando gives girls the opportunity to golf; many schools just have boy teams and it lets us show that we can golf," Joyce said.