

FEELING SICK?



STUDENT DISCOUNTS

Swine Flu & Flu Shots

480-941-4400

AllCare

News Sports Opinion A & E SPTV SPM



After a long journey, Sweeney finding peace at ASU

By [Nick Kosmider](#) April 19, 2010 at 6:18 pm

As she practices her putting stroke at ASU's Karsten Golf Course, the familiar white buds of an iPod emit soothing sounds into Jaclyn Sweeney's ears.

Like many athletes, the junior on the women's golf team enjoys listening to music while she perfects her craft.

Sweeney's choice of tunes: Classical.

"It helps relax me," she says.

But as Sweeney begins to explain her story, one of a fierce competitor long enamored with the game of golf, a game for which she has sacrificed much, the calming instrumentation of Bach and Beethoven seems to represent more. A sense of peace she has found in herself and in the game she loves.

Sweeney's story starts in her hometown of Andover, Mass., 30 miles north of Boston, where she was inundated into athletic competition by the time she was old enough to hold a bat, racket, golf club or any other piece of equipment the sport at the time required.

"I played all sports except for football and hockey," Sweeney said. "My dad wouldn't let me play hockey."

In addition to golf, which Sweeney said she began playing at the age of 4, Sweeney also excelled at tennis, volleyball and lacrosse. But when it was time to choose a sport that she would devote the bulk of her time to, golf was an easy choice.

Convincing her parents to further her education of the sport in the manner she wanted was, initially, not as easy.

With only a handful of months out of the year available to play golf in New England, Sweeney



FINDING HER WAY: ASU junior Jaclyn Sweeney has found a home at ASU after transferring from Oklahoma State two years ago. (Photo by Nick Kosmider)

Most read stories

- Women's golf set to defend Pac-10 title
- Annual Pat's Run draws record 28,000
- Taking the steps to get rid of cancer, heart disease
- Tennis nabs rivalry win to close out regular season
- Tempe's Relay for Life raises \$115,000 for charity
- Baseball completes sweep of USC with 14-6 victory
- Track produces strong marks at Mt. SAC Relays

WHAT YOU NEED FOR YOUR FUTURE ALL IN ONE PLACE.

MonsterCollege has the tools, jobs and internships to help guide your future.

[Get Started](#)

statepresssport twitter stream

Join the conversation

decided to attend IMG Academies in Florida, a multi-sport education and athletic facility known for nurturing young athletes.

"I kind of had to push my parents into letting me go," Sweeney said.

Her parents relented and Sweeney made the move to Florida, her mother and dog by her side to help her make the transition.

As a result of the instruction she received at IMG, the level of Sweeney's game rose rapidly as she became one of the most highly touted amateurs in the country. She had a very deliberate regiment. Golf and workouts in the morning. School in the afternoon.

But Sweeney's experience at the academy lacked the trappings of a normal high school student's.

"I didn't go to a prom when I was in high school," she said. "I was playing in tournaments over my birthday. It's hard to make that decision to be focused on your golf and your school and have that be about it."

As a result, Sweeney longed for the "college experience," choosing Oklahoma State as the school she felt would provide it. On the golf course, the choice seemed to be the right one. Sweeney's captured numerous accolades during her freshman season in 2008, including being named Big 12 Newcomer of the Year, earning a first team all-conference selection and being tabbed a first team All-American by *Golfweek Magazine*.

Sweeney also became the first freshman to win the Big-12 championship. In terms of golf, things couldn't be going much better.

But something was missing.

"I really wasn't happy as a person," Sweeney said. "I was doing the same thing I was doing down in Florida. I was playing golf and going to school, and I really didn't have much of a social life because of our schedule. I felt like if I was doing that in college, why not turn pro and get paid for it. It just wasn't the best fit for me."

Following her freshman year, Sweeney decided to try her hand at LPGA Q-School, a proving ground for hopeful professionals. Sweeney struggled down the stretch a final qualifying tournament, but she said she realized the direction she wanted to head next.

"I learned so much through [professional qualifying], but I learned what I wanted out of college is what I still wanted," she said. "I was 19 years old, and I wasn't ready to travel full time with my parents. I wasn't ready to take that pressure week in and week out to play for money."

Sweeney realized she still wanted the same things out of college she wanted when she left Florida, opportunities she didn't believe existed at Oklahoma State. So the golfer contacted Georgia and ASU about possible openings on their rosters.

In Tempe, All-American Anna Nordqvist had decided to turn professional following her junior season, leaving a spot on the roster for the upcoming season.

"We won't call it the perfect storm but we'll certainly call it the perfect scenario," said ASU coach Melissa Luellen, who was elated at the prospect of having an All-American replace the one that had just left. "We had a scholarship and we had availability. She was given a release [of her scholarship at OSU] and she was immediately eligible."

For Sweeney, arriving at ASU was like "coming into a family."

"No one really judged me, no one asked me one hundred million questions about [why I transferred]," Sweeney said. "It was just a perfect fit."

The junior admits that the "college experience" she had envisioned is not exactly what she's had at ASU, but she is content with what she has replaced it with. Sweeney has worked hard in the classroom, taking seven courses this semester so she can graduate when her golf eligibility runs out next spring.



Other stories from the Sports desk

- [ASU duo wins sand volleyball title](#)
- [Sweeney finding peace at ASU](#)
- [Devil Dish: April 20](#)
- [Two men's golfers picked for Palmer Cup](#)
- [ASU to face rivals in nonconference contest](#)
- [Pat's Run 2010](#)
- [Former ASU All-American Danny White talks to SPTV](#)
- [Kurt Warner talks life post-football](#)
- [Physical play, mistakes highlight scrimmage](#)
- [Baseball completes USC sweep](#)



The State Press Job Board



Job Keyword Search: Go

[Associate II, Warehouse Operatio...](#)
Tolleson, AZ

[CHILD CARE/ EARLY EDUCATION INFA...](#)
Scottsdale, AZ

[Methods Planner II](#)
Tempe, AZ

[>> View more Jobs](#)

“It’s very hard to believe I’ll be walking next spring when a lot of people didn’t think I was going to make it four years through school,” said Sweeney, revealing that schoolwork requires effort, “because I’m not naturally bright. So I have to re-read and study and work my butt off.”

She has continued to transfer that work ethic to the golf course as well, though it hasn’t always been in terms of her backswing or putting stroke.

Sweeney is a player defined by her passion for competition, often seen yelling at a ball she has hit, willing it to go in the direction she wants. But sometimes the zest has gotten the best of her, like in the 2008 NCAA Championships when she was with OSU.

After hitting a shot not to her liking, a frustrated Sweeney forcefully shoved a club back into her bag and in the process broke her left index finger, leaving her unable to finish the tournament.

Luellen and assistant coach Missy Farr-Kaye have worked with the golfer to help channel her competitive energy into a positive.

“We’re trying to get her to understand and evaluate that the emotions can help you, but then they can hurt you,” Luellen said. “When trying to help her identify that point of when it helps you versus when it hurts you.”

But it’s not just the coaches who are teaching and inspiring. Sweeney said she hopes to achieve her dream of becoming a professional athlete due in large part to the ability it would give her to form charities and contribute to the less fortunate.

“She pushes me a little bit as far as community service efforts with the team,” Luellen said. “She’s always been very involved in charity work.”

Sweeney knows golf can be an outlet for to help others, but it also has been a safety net, a game she has relied upon in difficult times.

In 2006, as she was driving to a morning practice, a woman ran a red light and collided with the SUV Sweeney was driving, flipping the vehicle over.

The then-17-year-old’s life was saved because she was wearing her seat belt and she sustained just a few bruises and a concussion. The accident, though, opened Sweeney’s eyes.

“Whenever I get mad at myself for little things in school, you just realize you’re just lucky to be alive,” she said. “It just makes you feel fortunate to have everything you have in your life, so little things start not to matter.”

Sweeney returned to the golf course the next day, realizing then what she knows now, that the fairway greens provide a comforting barrier.

“The golf course has always been my heaven,” she said. “The getaway from everything in my life.”

Reach the reporter at nkosmide@asu.edu

Categories: [Featured](#) [Golf](#) [Sports](#)

Tags: [Golf](#) [Jaclyn Sweeney](#) [women's golf](#)

Related Posts:

- [Golf teams seeking redemption in weekend tournaments](#)
- [Late collapse costs women's golf tournament title](#)
- [Women's golf set to defend Pac-10 title](#)
- [Strong comeback nets second-place finish for women golfers](#)
- [Golf teams have much to prove in California tourneys](#)
- [Powered by Contextual Related Posts](#)

Add New Comment

Required: Please login below to comment.





☐ Subscribe to all comments by email

[You must be logged in to post a comment.](#)

Showing 0 comments

Sort by

blog comments powered by **DISQUS**

Sections & Categories

Follow us



[ADVERTISING](#) | [TEXTBOOK](#) |
[ABOUT](#) | [CONTACT](#) | [JOBS](#) |
[PRIVACY POLICY](#) | [TRAVEL](#) |
[CLASSIFIEDS](#)

Sponsored links

Sun Devil fans enjoy racing [RC CARS](#) and other remote control toys during their free time in Tempe.

Arizona State University students carry [CUSTOM MUGS](#) all-around Tempe to haul their coffee.

Readers of the State Press can find [ENGRAVED GIFTS](#) for Arizona State graduation gifts by searching on the Web.

Arizona State University students may want to consider [DEBT CONSOLIDATION](#) to consolidate all of their student loans and miscellaneous ASU student expenses into one monthly payment.

ASU students can go online to find their free [CREDIT SCORE](#) when applying for student loans or home mortgages.

Arizona State students hoping to practice law may want to talk to a [PHOENIX CRIMINAL DEFENSE ATTORNEY](#) about the rigors of being a lawyer post ASU graduation.

Partners

[ASU.edu](#)
[cronkite.asu.edu](#)
[asucreative.com](#)
[asuadvertising.com](#)

Student Media © 2001-2010

[Statepress.com](#) powered
 by [WordPress ver. 2.9.2](#)