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In just 5 years, Brisbane teenager Natascha has gone from knowing “absolutely nothing” about golf, to being Australia’s top ranked female golfer with disability.

Holding a club for the first time aged 10, the now 15-year-old and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participant, has secured a list of accomplishments at home and abroad.

Winning the skills competition competing against several other countries at the Macau Golf Masters in 2019, Natascha went on to secure wins at the Queensland Inclusive Championship and the inaugural South Australian Inclusive Championships in 2021.

Natascha also earned a gold medal at the Special Olympics (SO) National Games in Launceston in October last year. The win secured her place in the SO World Games squad that will travel to Berlin to compete in June.

After only picking up the clubs when her parents gave her the option of playing tennis or golf, the teen admits she knew “absolutely nothing” about golf when she chose it.

“I did my first lesson and just fell in love with it, and the rest is pretty much history,” Natascha said.

Now thriving on the global stage with a World Ranking for Golfers with a Disability, things could have been much different for Natascha.

Diagnosed with Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Tourette syndrome, and a genetic heart condition, which affects her ankles and knees, at 8, Natascha’s mother Kathleen said she was concerned about her daughter’s future when she failed to meet walking and talking milestones and became overly anxious in noisy areas.

“She was having a tough time at primary school because she had trouble communicating and was getting bullied terribly,” Kathleen said.

“It was very daunting when Tash got first diagnosed, I was anxious and had no idea what her future would be like.

Kathleen could not work full time because taking Natascha to therapies, psychologists, doctors’ appointments, and paediatricians was a full-time job.

When the NDIS arrived in Queensland in 2018, Natascha’s paediatrician advised Kathleen to apply for it, which she did with help from NDIS partner in the community, Carers Queensland.

The NDIS funds Natascha's psychologist, support workers and occupational therapist (OT). The Scheme also funds physiotherapy to help with her ligamentous laxity, with a focus on strengthening her ankles and her knee joints.

"Before the Scheme came along, I had to give up on speech therapy after a while because it was so expensive. I also had to wean off her OT a little," Kathleen said.

"But now thanks to the NDIS, I'm able to get her all the supports she needs. Natascha's quality of life has improved because of these supports.

Natascha said since receiving NDIS supports, she's also noticed improvements in her strength and energy.

"I would start to lose all my energy and everything. Now I can actually get through and feel as though I could play like at least another three (holes) before I reach the 18th," she said.

After hearing she had been chosen to represent Australia in the SO World Games Berlin, Natascha said she felt ecstatic. At 15, she will also be one of the youngest athletes competing in the games.

"I was so happy at the time and excited. I was literally jumping up and down. I really have been working hard towards it," she said.

Natascha, who is working to raise $9000 to pay for her trip to Berlin, said she would do a "little bit of touristy stuff" while in Europe but ultimately, she is there to win.

With all her success, Natascha hopes to encourage other young women with disabilities to take part in the sport, particularly since golf is still more male dominated.

"My goal is just to take golf as far as I can really and raise as much awareness as I can around all abilities golf. I want to help more women to get into golf in general," she said.

"Having a disability doesn't hold you back, if you try hard enough, it can't hold you back.

"You just have to keep working at it and eventually you'll get there."

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