

Castren Discovering Stroke In Final Season

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Golf is like none other.

The many factors that play into the game are what differentiates the sport from the rest.

Although often regarded as one of the more daunting sports, considering its demanding conditions, golf came quite naturally to Florida State senior golfer Matilda Castren.

Born in New York City, the young prodigy first connected with the golf club at the age of four. After having tried several other sports ranging from tennis to horseback riding, the Finland native ultimately committed herself to golf.

"I'm very competitive and I noticed that I was beating other girls at golf so that really pushed me to continue golf," Castren said. "I started loving the game and competing."

Spending a total of four years in the United States — two years in New York and two years in Dallas, Texas — Castren subsequently moved back to Finland. Not necessarily recognized for its golf talent, her home country served as the ideal spot for a youngster like Castren to develop and reap the benefits that golf presented.

At the age of 10, she competed in her first tournament. By 17, she had clinched the No. 1 spot in Finland in the Under 21 age group. Just like that, doors began to open Castren.

In search of progressing her golfing career while pursuing an education, Castren sought out several opportunities to do so.

"My parents told me that if I wanted to continue playing golf, I could go to the U.S and study and play," Castren explained. "I had seen it in movies and thought that it was so cool."

Traveling to Miami and competing in junior events, the emerging golf extraordinaire contested against several other young golfers in front of more than 25 collegiate coaches in hopes of being recruited. Attracting several offers from around the country, Castren selected Florida State over the likes of Oregon, South Carolina and Louisiana State.

"I've always been pretty independent," Castren assessed. "Coming here was a change because I was on my own for a long period of time."

In her first semester as a Seminole, Castren saw much success. As the leading golfer on the team with a 72.56 stroke average, the newly added 'Nole had her presence quite substantially felt, ranking among the top six golfers in the ACC.

During her fall season, she had notched Florida State's two lowest tournament scores in the Lady Paladin invitational and in the Schooner Fall Classic.

It was during the following spring semester that she emerged as the go-to contributor on the women's golf team. Garnering All-American second team honors and All-ACC recognition, Castren tallied nine scores below 69 in ACC play— the most by any other conference player. In 20 rounds and seven tournaments, the then-freshman had corralled a team best 71.50 strokes.

"Our freshman class was very tight. It was just very easy to be around them," Castren expressed. "The seniors and upperclassmen were really supportive and the coaches let me do what I thought was best for me and that really worked."

In the fall of 2014, Castren contributed in three of the Seminoles' four matches. But it wasn't injuries that kept her sidelined, but an opportunity to travel back home to Finland and represent her country in the World Amateur Team Championship.

Carrying her nation to a silver medal, Castren returned to Tallahassee where she picked up right from where she left off.

"Finland golf is very small; everybody knows each other," Castren said. "Even though they were older than me, I still knew them and I was traveling with them a lot."

Throughout her 2015 campaign, the then-junior continued to lead the team with a 71.73 stroke average. Castren notched the top spot in top 10 finishes with three during the Seminoles' fall events.

For just the second time in her young, collegiate career, she earned All-ACC honors the following semester following a stellar year and tying for first place in the NCAA Shoal Creek Regional Championship.

"Her competitive nature is something that makes her stand out," fellow teammate Lydia Gumm discussed. "She hates to lose, and works really hard on her game. That's motivation for all of her teammates."

Prior to delving into her final season at Florida State, Castren competed in the 2016 World Amateur Team Championship where she finished in 65th place in individual standings and lifted Finland to a 32nd-ranked position in the event.

"It's always more pressure to represent your country because it feels like the whole country is putting pressure on you even though it's not like that," Castren explained. "We had a really good team. They were older than me so they are all role models to me."

Currently ranked among the top two teams in the nation, the Florida State women's golf team is experiencing a breakout season. Recently finishing third in the Clover Cup invitational, Castren and her fellow teammates are on the cusp of one of the most successful seasons in recent program history.

"Everybody is just getting their game together," Castren said. "Everybody is getting their own thing done; no one is trying to push us into a certain mold. We just get along really well as a team."

Following her final season in Tallahassee, the standout golfer for Florida State looks to make a run and play professionally after competing in nationals at the end of the season.

"Golf is so difficult, because the moment you think you're really good, you get back on the ground," Castren concluded. "It's so humbling and you can never take things for granted."