

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS PROFILES

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Stacy Lynn Lewis Iron will

RICH POLIKOFF
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

SELF PORTRAIT

HOBE SOUND, Fla. — Stacy Lewis has stared down some truly frightening putts.

There was the one that clinched the 2007 NCAA individual championship, the only one in the history of the Arkansas women's golf program. There were putts on the back nine to wrap up the 2011 Kraft Nabisco Championship, her first official victory on the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) tour.

Then there were the putts she faced in the summer and fall of last year, when a string of top-10 finishes allowed her to become the first American-born player to win the LPGA's Player of the Year award since Beth Daniel in 1994. Lewis clinched the points-based award with a fourth-place finish at the Lorena Ochoa Invitational, her final LPGA event of 2012.

"That last tournament, she was literally physically ill, she was trying so hard," says Lewis' coach, Joe Hallett of Franklin, Tenn. "As Beth Daniel said at the [LPGA's] awards ceremony, very few people know what it's like to try so hard for something and actually get it."

Yet as terrifying as those putts were for Lewis, they were nothing compared to shopping for clothes as a teenager.

She was diagnosed with scoliosis at age 11, and fitted with the first of her back braces. She was told it would be for just a few years, until she stopped growing, and so she prayed every day that the next set of X-rays of her wrist would show that the growth plates had closed, which would indicate she had reached her full height.

Each X-ray, she was left disappointed. Lewis wound up wearing braces for 6 1/2 years — not 7 1/2 years, as has been frequently reported.

"People always dramatize things," she says with a laugh. "Still, that was a long time to wear it!"

So until she was 18, Lewis wore a series of braces, all of them solid plastic with pads that forcibly attempted to straighten her spine. The braces were like a corset, running from her chest to her hips, and they were as bulky as they were uncomfortable. Lewis slept in these braces, and wore them during

Date and place of birth: Feb. 16, 1985 in Toledo, Ohio
Occupation: professional golfer

Being the middle child is great. My sisters keep me humble. My younger sister doesn't usually know when I'm playing.

My mom is the one who always brings me back to reality. She helps me get better. Even if I win, she [focuses me] on what I can do better, not just on the golf side, but in interviews, the way I handle myself.

My next goal is to get to No. 1 in the world. I want to win more majors.

My favorite win as a Razorback was definitely when I won the national championship.

Other than golf, my favorite sport is college football. I love sports.

People are always asking me, "How are you going to follow up last year?" It's not following up, it's just doing what you're doing, not breaking it up by year.

To keep my back strong, I do a lot of core and leg [exercises]. Not a lot specifically for my back, but for the muscles around it. If I keep them strong, it takes a lot of pressure off my back.

On coming up on the 18th hole with a lead: If you're not nervous, then there's something wrong.

For fun, I like to do anything on the beach, paddleboarding, fishing, anything out on the water, anytime I can put my cell phone away.

Making the Arkansas Sports Hall of Fame: I was pretty shocked to get the call. I feel like I should do more, but it's an honor to be the youngest [inductee].

My favorite win as a pro was in Japan at the end of last year, the Mizuno Classic.

A misconception people have about me is they think I'm miserable on the golf course. I'm very intense. I've tried to play where I'm smiling the whole time and looking all happy, but if I hit a bad shot or make a bogey I'm not going to be happy.

On never seeing a sports psychologist: I've always been tough on myself. Suck it up and get it done. If there was anybody I'd talk to about it, it would be Shauna [Estes-Taylor].

The coolest thing about being a pro golfer is the people you get to influence.

A phrase to sum me up: "determined in everything I do"

all her waking hours, save for sports and showers.

"She never bought clothes like other girls," says her father, Dale Lewis of The Woodlands, Texas. "She didn't buy sleeveless
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Special to the Democrat-Gazette/GRAYSON HOFFMAN

"I appreciate what I get to do every day. I appreciate being able to work out, to putt, to hit balls. Coming back from surgery, a bad shot doesn't seem so bad anymore."

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SPOTLIGHT ROGERS PUBLIC EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Group fills cash gap to aid Rogers pupils

RICH POLIKOFF
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE
ROGERS — When Angie Tucker-Ridley was asked to join the Rogers Public Education Foundation, she accepted with just one caveat.

"I didn't know much about it until I got involved about four years ago," says Tucker-Ridley, the manager of Tucker's Furniture and Appliance. "I said, 'I'll do anything you need but I'm not a good money raiser.' That's actually all we do."

As Tucker-Ridley quickly learned, the purpose of the foundation is to raise money for use by teachers

in the Rogers School District. Last year, it gave away nearly \$30,000 to Rogers teachers, from grades pre-kindergarten through high school. The contribution was used for everything from science projects to puppets, accounting materials to physical fitness equipment, as well as extracurricular programs like Quiz Bowl.

This year, she says, the foundation hopes to provide even more funding, thanks in part to events like the second annual Wall of Distinction banquet. This year's banquet will be at 7 p.m. on March 14 at the John Q. Hammons Conven-

tion Center in Rogers.

Tickets are \$100 for the general public, and \$75 for current and retired teachers of the Rogers School District. (Tucker-Ridley's father, Mike Tucker, will match \$25 for each discounted ticket, so the foundation does not lose any revenue from their sale.)

"A lot of time people think tax dollars go to a lot of extra things, but those are just the very basic necessities," says Tucker-Ridley, the foundation's president. "Our goal is to raise money, through private funding and individuals. Most of the money [raised] See **RIDLEY**, Page 2D



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Angie Tucker-Ridley is president of the Rogers Public Education Foundation. The foundation will hold its second annual Wall of Distinction banquet March 14 at the John Q. Hammons Convention Center in Rogers.

NWA Media/DAVID GOTTSCHALK