

Wallace drives home first collegiate win after car crash

Langley native shakes off horrific accident the night before to win University of Colorado tournament by one stroke

BY BRAD ZIEMER, VANCOUVER SUN OCTOBER 14, 2010

Jessica Wallace will never forget her first collegiate win this past weekend, not so much for the golf she played but for what happened the night before to the two-time B.C. Junior girls champion and some of her University of Colorado teammates.

Friday night, after completing the first two rounds of the University of Colorado's Heather Farr Memorial Invitational, the Langley native and four of her teammates were involved in a multi-car accident.

Wallace was alone in her car and four of her teammates were in another vehicle when they crashed with a third vehicle.

"Because it was our home tournament we were able to drive ourselves to the golf course," Wallace said over the phone Wednesday. "Just on the way back from the course after our first two rounds that night, that's when it happened. We just had a three-car kind of crunch-up on the highway right by the golf course."

"It wasn't a little fender-bender," added Brent Franklin, the former Vancouver resident and Canadian Golf Hall of Fame member who is an assistant coach with the Buffaloes. "There was significant damage to the cars. But everybody walked away."

They walked away but many of the young women, including Wallace, were sore and badly shaken up by the accident. They were told by school officials to forget about playing in Saturday's final round.

"We told them it's just golf, it's not that important," Franklin said.

Three of the women did withdraw, but Wallace and teammate Emily Talley decided at the very last moment early Saturday morning to play on.

"I went to bed that night not knowing if I was going to play," said Wallace, whose neck was stiff after the accident. "I didn't even set the alarm, I didn't try to wake up to get there. But I woke up maybe 45 minutes before my 8:30 tee time.

"My coach managed to get me and Emily out to the golf course with 15 minutes or less to spare. We just hit a couple of balls, went out and played."

And played remarkably well, given the circumstances.

Wallace, who began that final round tied for eighth place, shot an even-par 72 in extremely windy conditions to win by a shot.

"I wasn't really thinking about the title at all, really," she said. "I just called my coach to ask if I could go play because I didn't want to sit around doing nothing that day. Golf takes my mind off things and I just really wanted to go out and hit some golf balls. I didn't really care what I shot that day. It wasn't about the golf.

"It was definitely a surprise to win. I missed a four-foot putt for par on my last hole. I didn't think it was for the win or that I was even close to the title. My assistant coach [Franklin] told me after I finished that it looks like you might win this one. I had no idea throughout the whole round, really."

The Buffaloes also won the team title, which Wallace said meant far more to her.

"The team win feels a hundred million times better than the individual win," said Wallace, a junior who transferred to Colorado from Pepperdine this past summer and has now registered three straight top-five finishes.

Franklin called the performances by Wallace and the rest of the team inspirational.

"I don't even know the words to describe it," he said. "What they went through and just the fact that they even played the last round when they were told we didn't want them to play, it just shows what kind of heart the players had."

A few days after the accident, Wallace is beginning to feel like her old self. Same thing can't be said for her car.

"It had to be towed and I don't know yet if it's salvageable," she said. "I'll just be carpooling with my teammates for the next while."

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