



sports



TOP: Krystal Hu during her first season as a redshirt freshman in 2016.

LEFT: Krystal Hu putts at the Perry Park Spring Fling where she took home first place on Mar. 26 for her first collegiate tournament win after shooting a three-round total of 221.

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-Krystal Hu

Going the extra mile

Krystal Hu’s journey from one side of the world to the other

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Yards of freshly green grass lay before her as she grabs her driver out of her purple and yellow AU bag. Firmly pressing her white tee in the ground, she lays a perfect untouched golf ball on it. A deep breath and then a look over her shoulder in the direction of where she is aiming to hit, follows. One quick swing of the club and the ball is sailing through the open air, past the swaying branches of the pine trees. This is a typical day in the life of sophomore Krystal Hu.

Hu has been a member of the AU golf team for a year and ended the 2016-2017 season with an average that was eighth best in the history of the women’s golf program. For Hu, the love of the game started at the age of five.

“I started playing golf when I was about five. My school in China had this class every week and I got interested in the sport. My family and I went to Australia for a year when I was about nine-years-old and we lived on a golf course. I had a lot of free time after school. So my dad always took me to the practice range or play on the course at that time. We then decided to go back to China and I kept getting educated in China. Which it took me a lot of time on studying

every day so I kind of stop playing golf very often. During a summer my parents were thinking to take me back to Australia for a month or two to a golf academic where at the course we used to live. I came back to China and played my first and second golf tournament. I was so interested in this sport again even though I was not that good at it and could only shoot very high numbers at those tournaments.”

After she learned how to play golf well, Hu’s parents had set out for her to have bigger goals and a better experience than what she could get in China. Her parents knew that in order for her to pursue her passion and get a good education, they would have to look elsewhere. Hu’s love of the game only grew stronger, so her family decided to send her to New Zealand at the age of 14, to be coached by the world’s number one female golfer at the time, Lydia Ko.

Hu’s family later joined her in New Zealand where her golf game only got better. During her high school career, she averaged three-over-par with a 1.2 official handicap. In 2015 at the Auckland region intercollegiate stroke-play-championship, Hu placed fourth. With no universities that have golf teams in New Zealand or China, Hu’s parents decided to start looking in America.

“My family always wanted me to play college golf in America, because it has such a great stage for all the sports players. So I started trying to contact some university’s golf coach. I saw on the Division II universities leaderboard that Ashland is at a pretty good ranking spot,” Hu said. “I was very lucky that got in touch with our coach and knew I could start in January. I was pretty happy with everything after I talked with the coach about the team, university and the program, so I decided to come to Ashland University to play golf.”

During her first year at AU, Hu competed as a redshirt freshman averaging 77.57 in 14 rounds in only six tournaments. Her season average was eighth- best in AU women’s golf history and she finished in the top 10 in three of six tournaments.

Team front runner Kaitlin Neumann graduated in May leaving some pretty big shoes to fill after ending her last collegiate season carrying the Eagles to first place at the Eagle Invitational. Neumann also finished in 13th place or better in all 10 events she played in and was third in AU single-season history with an average score of 76.59. Hu said she is more focused on how she can help the team as a whole versus her individual performance.

“I am always doing the best I can do for the team. We have two new freshmen coming and I believe we have a pretty good team this year too. I believe everyone on the team is on the same page as me that we are all gonna practice hard and try to shoot some lower numbers in tournaments.”

With the help of new head coach Andrew Bolinger, Hu and the rest of the team are looking forward to not only helping each other win tournaments but also growing a stronger relationship with each other.

“Being the only Asian on the team that makes trying to fit in with other American girls a little bit harder. I really enjoy spending time with my teammates and I hope we can have more fun time together this year.”

While her teammates are always there to cheer her on, her biggest support comes from her parents, more specifically, her father. After sending her to different places to better her golf game and moving with her, Hu said her family’s support was a big part of why she is where she is today.

“My parents took me to every tournament, fed me well and took good care of me,” Hu said. “My dad follows me to practice every day and caddies for me for every tournament, no matter how bad

THE WEEK AHEAD

Women’s Soccer

Sept. 15 @ Grand Valley State

Men’s Soccer

Sept. 9 vs. Gannon

Sept. 15 @ Davenport

Volleyball

Sept. 8-9 @ Missouri S&T

Sept. 15 @ Grand Valley State

Sept. 16 @ Wayne State

Football

Sept. 9 vs. Ohio

Dominican

Sept. 16 @ Northwood

Cross Country

Sept. 15 @ MSU Spartan

Women’s Golf

Sept. 10-11 @ Fall Classic

Sept. 15-16 @ Bulldog

Fall Preview

Men’s Golf

Sept. 9-10 @ Al Waltrous Inv.

Sept. 16-17 @ GLIAC

North Inv.

Tennis

Sept. 9 vs. Walsh

Sept. 15 vs Michigan Tech

Sept. 16 vs Lake Superior State

the weather was or how much walking we had. He is always there for me. He spent a lot of time with me on the golf course but he is not that kind of parents that are very strict or command. He understands sometimes I don’t want to practice or sometimes I should have a day-off. I could not wish to have a better father than him. Everything he has done for me and every suggestion he gave to me that made me so proud to have him as my father and made me be where I am today. Also, my mum took care of me at any other things besides golf. She is definitely very important to me in my golf career as well,” Hu added.

The AU women’s golf team has a busy schedule ahead of them in the months to come with four tournaments alone in September. Their goal is to do better than they have in previous seasons. Hu said her goal is to take advantage of the limited chances they get this season. “My goal is still trying to win some tournaments. Maybe practice is boring sometimes, but winning tournaments is not boring at all. There are only five tournaments we are playing in this season so there are really limited chances.”

The Eagles will start off the season on Sep.10 in Erie, Pa at the Michael Corbett Fall Classic.