



Tania

TARE

“The Trick Shot Girl”

By Monica Malpass, Contributing Writer



The Trick Shot girl. A Kiwi with a twist. Call her what you want, but this New Zealander is flipping and bouncing her way through the golf world.

32-year-old phenom Tania Tare has multi-year contracts with Adidas, PING, Mercedes, OnCore, 2nd Swing, TROON and Audemars Piguet.

ESPN & SportsCenter post her trickshot videos. She's been on Tosh.0, the James Corden Show, and Mario Lopez. She's done a commercial for Honda. Sounds too good to be true.

But it wouldn't have happened if not for a freak accident that left her arm dangling by a tendon.

SHATTERED GLASS, SHATTERED DREAMS

She was just 11. Tennis, not golf, was her first game.

“I first picked up a tennis racket when I was 1 1/2 years old. My whole family played tennis,” Tare explains.

She had natural talent and determination. By 10 years old she had won several club championships and a national title in New Zealand. She dreamed of going pro. But fate intervened.

Tare and her brother were horseplaying at home when she fell against a closed window, shattering it and severely slicing her left arm. Surgeons at Children's Hospital of Auckland said her arm needed amputating.

“I went under thinking I'd wake up with one arm. It was the first time I ever saw my mom cry,” Tare says.

She woke up post-surgery in a haze and instinctively reached over to feel her amputated nub.

“I couldn't believe it! I still had a left arm. My mom had pleaded with the doctor and somehow they had saved it!” Tare says.

But her left hand was frozen open like a claw. Still she didn't give up on tennis. As a right-handed player, her swing remained strong. She did two years of therapy to rebuild her left hand. It was better, but not perfect. The determined 13-year-old signed up for a tennis tournament. But it took seven tosses per serve to get the ball up. She laid down her racket. It was over.

Tare was crushed. She stepped away from sports for a full year.

“My mom told me not to dwell on the past but to ‘Enjoy the Now. You'll figure out a new life,’” Tania recalls.



HOW ABOUT GOLF?

Then one day, her half-siblings' dad talked her into hitting golf balls. He had bought her clubs years before but she thought it was a sport for older men. The only thing that had piqued her interest was Tiger Woods' Nike ad doing a trick shot.

"It was the first time I looked at golf and said, 'well that's cool.'"

The 14-year-old had a natural swing. A coach in the next bay saw her potential and offered to teach her twice a week for free. She signed up.

"I became obsessed! Four months later I played my first round of golf and shot 106. Then I'd set other goals. I'd break 90, 85, 80. I got down to a single handicap in 6 months," Tare says.

By age 15 she was a scratch golfer. At 16 she won her first amateur tournament.

"I didn't realize how fast that was," she says. "I guess I didn't get into bad habits, and I had strong muscles."

Her high school didn't have a golf team, so Tare played on her own. By age 19, she was given an exemption and invited to play in the New Zealand Women's Open. It's her favorite golf memory.

"My first tee shot at the New Zealand LPGA event... that was really exciting for me! I missed the cut but that was still a big one!" Tare says.

She's also competed twice against Lydia Ko, 12 years old at the time, in the New Zealand Amateur and the North Harbour Amateur. Tare won one, Ko won one.

She was named The 2008 Auckland Golfer of the Year and ranked the second-best women's golfer in New Zealand. Those accolades led to scholarship offers to play college golf. Tare ultimately chose Florida International University, a Division I school in Miami.

GOING TO AMERICA

Although Tare was ranked #1 on the FIU golf team thanks to routinely practicing 40 hours a week, she had mixed results. The pressure took a toll on her body and mind.

"I need a relaxed mindset, I need to have fun," Tare says, looking back, "Now I know your golf swing doesn't have to look a certain way... as long as you [are able to] put a score in."

Then she broke her wrist from overusage during a tournament as a sophomore.

After graduation, Tare played several tournaments in 2017 and 2018, winning on the Cactus Tour in Arizona. She had several other top-4 and top-5 finishes. But she was dogged by more injuries, requiring a second and third wrist surgery.



JOKING AROUND

Before her third surgery, Tare started joking around by doing golf tricks on video to send to her family in New Zealand.

"They always thought golf was so lame," Tare says. "But they liked watching my tricks."

A friend posted one. Then Tare set up her first social media page. Her videos went viral.

Overnight she got inundated by golf sites, TV shows and interviews asking for more.

She was dubbed "The Trick Shot Girl."

"I couldn't believe it! OK, I guess I'm her," Tare admits.

Traditionally, trick shots had been dominated by guys, but Tare was breaking that mold.

She started inventing new tricks, often putting in 20 hours in order to perfect a trick. Golf became fun again.



TRICKS AND DREAMS

Today, Tare lives in the U.S. and has a repertoire of tricks.

There's the Club Flip (her favorite), the Flip Cup 2.0 and 3.0, the Bounce & Hit Mid-air. And don't forget the impressive Neck Stall, just to name a few.

Now Taria does up to 15 paid events per month, both nationally and internationally.

She had to hire an agent just to keep up. She has taped trick shots at Times Square and Niagara Falls. She has traveled to Switzerland and Japan. She's done a snowboarding trick shot with her friend Possum Torr.

Tare's social media following is 315,000 and counting. She's had 20 million views on Facebook.

Alex Rodriguez and Shark Tank's Mark Cuban complimented her. The respect is mutual. "They're high on my list," she says.

Tare is still a scratch golfer who dreams of reaching the LPGA Tour.

"Ideally, I'd like to be a professional golfer who does trick shots, rather than the other way around."

But she's also realistic.

"I think with eight years of dealing with my wrist problems, the dream is harder. I'd need to heal my wrists to make it on the tour," she says.

She actually needs a fourth wrist surgery now, but so far has resisted.

STAYING POSITIVE AND GRATEFUL

Amazingly, she's not bitter.

"There's always, like a slight silver lining in a lot of bad stuff. I probably would credit a lot of my success to having been injured," Tare says.

So despite it all, what has golf meant to her? Everything.

"Basically every opportunity I've had, every job, every reason for why I've been able to do a lot of the great things, is somehow connected to someone I met playing golf."

And she's thrilled to think people are taking up the sport because of her trick shots.

"It's exciting for me that someone can watch my videos and get inspired!" GRD