

T E E T I M E



A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON TWIG KIDZ FROM AN EIGHT YEAR MEMBER

By Rhumel Anderson, Karen Robinson, Diana Phillips, Erica Colleton & Renee Allain-Stockton

According to her mom, Rhumel Anderson, Nyilah has shown a love for the game of golf since she was a toddler. When she was little, we bought her a little toy golf club set. She would run around the house hitting the plastic ball yelling "SHOOK!!!" When she was four, we moved to Durham and her love of golf was truly sparked. Within the year, she started taking group lessons. From that point on, her love of golf only grew.

Through the years, Nyilah has had many interests. She took gymnastics, soccer and tennis lessons. She also plays two instruments, trombone and baritone, and played in the marching band. But no matter what the activity, she always came back to her first love, golf.

Nyilah started working with TWIG Kidz in 2009. Since then, TWIG has been a big part of her golf career. TWIG provided many clinics, lessons and access to golf coaches to her. For the past three summers, TWIG has made it possible for Nyilah to attend the UNC golf camp. These camps gave her an intense infusion of golf lessons. These camps ultimately shaved more than TWENTY strokes from her overall golf score!



This year, Nyilah is a senior at C. E. Jordan High school. After three years of competing on the boy's golf team, Jordan started a girl's golf team. Nyilah was the team captain. She went on to compete in the conference finals, the regionals and ultimately compete at the state finals in Pinehurst, NC. The women of TWIG not only supported her through their well wishes, but two members came to Pinehurst to cheer her on.

"We are so thankful for the TWIG organization and women. They are passionate and kind and without them, Nyilah would not have had the tools she needed to accomplish her goals in golf. Currently, Nyilah is applying to colleges where she hopes to continue to play golf" says her mom, Rhumel.

Nyilah qualified to play in the 2016 NCHSAA Women's 4A State Golf Championship hosted at Pinehurst #5 on October 24-25, 2016. She played some really magnificent shots as witnessed on the back nine of day two by her mom, her high school golf coach and TWIG members, Loretta Hicks and Renee Allain-Stockton. On hole #16, a 350 yard, par 4, dog-leg right, Nyilah hit a beautiful drive approximately 190 yards down to the left center of the fairway. She then hit one of her fairway woods or perhaps a hybrid from approximately 160 yards up high in the air to an elevated green and landed on the green in regulation. She patiently waited beside the green while her two playing partners chipped up to the green for their third shots. Nyilah then confidently two putted from approximately 40 feet for her par.



A little more history about the TWIG Kidz program (formerly known as the Youth Program).

Karen Robinson chaired the TWIG Kidz program from 2012-2014. Her role superseded Diana Phillips who served in this role since the inception of the program. At the time Karen volunteered to chair the youth program, her golf playing experience was limited to playing one-time on a golf course for 9 holes. Hence, she was a bit apprehensive at the thought of working with a group of young ladies who had been swinging golf clubs much longer than herself. There were girls who had been in the program since 2004. The entire group of girls were skilled.

Each golf season began in April, with approximately twenty-five girls between the ages of 8-18. Certified golf instructors taught eight weekly group lessons at both golf ranges and courses. Some girls received individual lessons and attended golf camp. Each golf season ended in August with the TWIG Kidz Captains Choice Golf tournament where the girls were able to showcase their skills acquired through lessons as they played together in friendly competition. An Awards Ceremony followed with lunch, trophies, gifts, and fun.

The girls attended the 2014 U.S. Women's Open at the Pinehurst Resort Course No. 2 with TWIG members and parent volunteers in June. Nyilah Anderson participated in the Drive, Chip and Putt Championship qualifying round in Richmond, VA and won first place in the 14-15 year old group. Her high score qualified her to participate in the regional round. Advanced TWIG Kidz members, Nyilah Anderson and Jillian Overman played competitively with TWIG members and participated in both the TWIG Invitational and Member-Member Tournaments in the fall of 2014.

Karen Robinson commented that "the program was a collaborative effort of TWIG members, TWIG Kidz and their parents as volunteers."



Diana Philips chaired the TWIG Kidz program for nine years beginning in 2003 through 2011. She was also one of the speakers at the TWIG Kidz awards ceremony this year. Here are a few excerpts from an article she wrote about TWIG Kidz in our Spring 2011 newsletter.

TWIG Kidz are stepping into the 2011 golf season in full swing. This year, the full swing could potentially go to another level because for the first time, one of our TWIG Kidz is seeking a golf scholarship to pay for her college education.

Mariah Hopkins, a senior at Leesville Road High School, is putting her golf skills to the test by pursuing a golf scholarship.

This is the ninth year of our Youth Program and the eighth year of TWIG Kidz. My, how time flies! TWIG Kidz pony tails and crop pants have matured into high fashion hairstyles, manicured nails and skinny jeans. Likewise, the golf swing has kept pace. It has matured from skulls, shanks and duffs to beautiful golf swings.

Diana closed her article with the following comments “Thanks to the members of TWIG for introducing golf to many young ladies. I’m sure TWIG will be remembered as one of the things that made a difference in their lives.”

One of our TWIG charter members, Erica Colleton, started the Youth Program in 2001, approximately four years after TWIG was founded on August 10, 1997 as Ladies in Golf. Our organization’s name was subsequently changed to Triangle Women in Golf in October 1997. In the Spring of 1998, we began our first golf clinics with sixty-six members participating at the River Ridge Golf Course.

Loretta Hicks, another charter member of TWIG, recalled that since the organization had a significant number of members in the early years, we had excess funds available which the members decided to earmark for introducing girls to the game of golf with the Youth Program. The Youth Program was subsequently renamed to TWIG Kidz with the mission of introducing girls (ages 8-18) to golf with the intention of inspiring them to continue playing the game.

Erica shared that the Youth Program started with young ladies at Garner Road YMCA. We originally targeted “at-risk” youth by providing golf lessons. We also took them to the 2001 US Women’s Open hosted at Pine Needles Golf Club in Southern Pines. We generated a lot of interest, but had a difficult time with parental support for the program. We subsequently opened the program up to a wider group of girls via word of mouth among our members.

Diana assumed responsibility for the Youth Program in 2003 and moved the program to the next level, renaming it TWIG Kidz and expanding the scope and funding strategy with the TWIG invitational Tournament. Nyilah joined TWIG Kidz under Diana’s leadership.

Erica provided these thoughts based on her observation of Nyilah’s golf skills over the years. “I have really enjoyed watching this young lady develop from a beginner to the excellent golfer she is today. I remember pairing her on my team during the Member-Member tournament about four years ago because there was concern from some members that if we allowed the TWIG Kidz to play in the tournament, it would slow the pace of play. I was convinced that she was one of the girls who had the skill level to keep up! Not only did she keep up, but she was driving the ball longer than everyone including me and she had tremendous feel around the green. I jokingly referred to her as the “quiet assassin” on the golf course. She really got my attention because at a young age, she had a keen sense for reading the greens. I knew she would excel in the game.”

Another impressive moment for both Erica and Renee was during our Tuesday league play at Wildwood Green golf course a couple of years ago. Nyilah nearly drove the green on hole #11, a 250 yard, par 4, with a narrow fairway and water running down the left side of the hole. She also performed well in many of the TWIG Kidz Tournaments as well as the TWIG Invitational. In our 2014 TWIG Invitational, Nyilah won the women’s longest drive contest out distancing all the other women playing in the tournament!

Erica also commented that she is excited about the possibilities for Nyilah’s golf future. At one point during a golf round, Nyilah shared with her that she was planning to major in engineering. “I am so impressed with this young lady. She is an academic athlete, with tremendous promise. Let’s keep her encouraged. She does have a passion for the game. It is important to recognize that a golf career can still feel somewhat isolating for African American females. Nyilah is very aware of these challenges, and she remains committed to her goals.”

How appropriate it is for us to close our 2016 golf season by recognizing and thanking all our TWIG members and alumni members who have been involved in introducing girls to the game of golf and helping them to take their games to the next level. Whether by volunteering your time and efforts with the TWIG Kidz program or the TWIG Invitational Tournament, you have helped to make Diana’s prediction come true. TWIG will be remembered as one of the things that made a difference in Nyilah’s life as her mom shared she would not have had the tools she needed to accomplish her goals in golf without our support.