





Preschool PRODIGY

Littleton's Brayden Bozak is a three-year-old golf sensation

by James Merliatt

His tee shot sailed down the middle of the fairway, making it about halfway to the green and his approach shot landed about 50 feet short of the hole. From there, he two-putted to make four and put a bogey on his scorecard.

On the surface, this doesn't sound all that impressive. In fact, it seems like a fairly pedestrian effort.

That is until the identity of the golfer is revealed. It's Brayden Bozak. And he's three years old.

All of a sudden, putting up a four on the 198-yard 10th hole at Deer Creek Golf Club in Littleton takes a remarkable turn. But this is an everyday occurrence for golf's latest prodigy.

"We try to get out three or four times per week," explained Reid Bozak, Brayden's dad. "We try to play four to five holes, from tee to green."

That's right; in between reading Elmo books and playing with Thomas the Train, this three-year-old kid is on the links, hitting the ball around with his dad after work. And it's been this way for more than a year.

"It started in our yard when he was about one," Reid offered, talking about the natural athletic ability his son inherited from he and his wife, Shelli, who played volleyball at Butler University. "We got him a plastic set of golf clubs, and by the time he was one-and-a-half, he started breaking them. He was pretty big for his size. We realized that we should probably get him some real clubs, so we got him a set of kids' irons, and he's been swinging from there."

Brayden's swing, which is smoother than what you'll see from most weekend hackers around town, is far from the unruly cut at the ball you'd expect from a kid his age. In fact, slow-motion replays show his hands in perfect position when the clubface strikes the ball. This picture-perfect swing is the result of time on the course and at the range, as well as the imitation abilities of a child.

"I'd go out in the yard and hit a few onto the green, so he tried to emulate that," Reid explained about their habit of chipping onto the 12th green from their home on Deer Creek. "And when we'd watch golf of TV, he'd actually emulate the swings."

Now, Brayden's developed into a golfing whiz kid, able to hit the ball up to 100 yards when he really gets a hold of one. Given his ability, he's become a celebrity of sorts. In the past



year, Brayden has appeared on “Good Morning America” and several local newscasts, been written about by Sports Illustrated and other publications, and hit the honorary first drive at several golf tournaments.

As with anyone garnering the attention of the media, this newfound fame doesn’t come without pitfalls, however. It has raised a few eyebrows, as some think the Bozaks are pushing their three-year-old son too hard.

“It’s pretty simple, to be honest: When he stops having fun and doesn’t want to do it anymore, we’ll stop,” Reid said when asked about burning out their golfing prodigy. “In the meantime, we try to balance his life a little bit so he doesn’t spend all of his time playing golf. He loves to read books. He likes social interaction with other kids. Our friends and family know us and know Brayden, so they know our core values are that both of our children grow up to be fun and loving children.”

“HE’S A THREE-YEAR-OLD KID THAT LOVES TO GET OUT AND SWING THE GOLF CLUB.”

Playing a few holes with Brayden, it becomes readily apparent that he’s a well-adjusted kid. In between ripping balls down the middle of the fairway, he’s swinging his club at the bugs circling around his head. Despite his dad’s efforts to keep him focused, he’s more interested in hitting a yellow golf ball lying nearby instead of his own. And as soon as it’s time to move from one shot to the next, he takes off running down toward the green.

The end-of-the-day activities at the Bozak household are not unlike what’s happening in homes across America. It’s a dad spending time with his son, doing something they both enjoy.

“At the end of the day, this is just a fun story,” Reid offered. “He’s a three-year-old kid who loves to get out and swing the golf club.”

As a result, Brayden and his dad will continue hitting the links a few days per week; not because Reid is hoping his child prodigy will develop into the next Tiger Woods, but because he believes it’s his responsibility to open doors for his son.

“As long as his desire to play the game is still there, we’ll put the resources and time toward him becoming whatever he wants to be,” Reid said. “My goals are that he has fun, keeps the game in perspective and has the chance to be the best that he can be. If that’s the case, my wife and I will be happy.”



BEST TOURNAMENT “RINGERS”

Mile High Power Golf: With two of the top 20 long distance drivers in the world on their team, this elite group of pros can kill it off the tee – sometimes approaching 450 yards. They’re great for charity and corporate outings or as a “fourth” in your next scramble.