

# Ellie Spieth is the MVP of the 21 Year old Masters Champ

No Ellie, no Green Jacket for brother Jordan until 2025

April 2015 by Brian Giboney

Listening to the newly crowned Masters Champion speak is an odd occurrence. If you close your eyes and just listen to Jordan Spieth talk you will think he is a well seasoned 31 year old professional rather than the mere 21 years he has lived. He is wise on and off the golf course well beyond his years. Good genetics? Perhaps, but the more likely reason is the real world lessons Jordan learned at a young age by having such a special sister in Ellie. Some of these worldly lessons can be rather harsh too.

Having grown up with a younger special needs sister, I can attest to receiving “the look” while out in public. My sister Jenny was born with Spina Bifida six years after me. She was born paralyzed from the waist down and confined to a life in a wheel chair around the house and leg braces with crutches while in public. Around the time I was 9 or 10 years of age it became apparent people were not comfortable with my sister. While Jenny was perfectly normal in our eyes, she wasn’t normal in their eyes. The looks and stares often felt like people wondered what planet my sister came from. Then there were the actual questions we had to answer: “*What is wrong with her?*” “*What does she have?*” One man who lived down the street in our Seattle area neighborhood had the audacity to ask: “*When is she going to get better?*” to which we had to disclose the answer “*never.*” Much like the Spieth’s, our hope was people like this particular neighbor would just love Jenny unconditionally as we did. Don’t stare - just say hello like you would to any other person.



Special needs & yet still happy - Jenny Giboney at age 3

A correlation can also be drawn to another 21 year old Masters winner in Tiger Woods and his late father Earl. “The look” Tiger and Earl received at Country Clubs in the late 70’s, throughout the 80’s, and even into the 90’s before Tiger’s historic 1997 Masters win, were looks of “*you make me uncomfortable by being here.*” Tiger and his father Earl walking into a country club pro shop in 1979 generated looks not far off from the Spieth family going out to dinner. While growing up it is tough for kids (and parents) to understand as they simply want to enjoy the activity they are doing together.

All of this adds up to kids learning much faster how the world works as to a perceived normal. They learn how the world is indeed a competitive place with a large variety of variables and in order to be “special” a person must be willing to accept many looks from a multitude of people. Jordan learned all this at a young age by simply walking into a shopping mall with his younger sister. It prepared him to be on the 16<sup>th</sup> hole of the final round of the Masters and facing that important 12 foot par putt with the world watching him. Without his experiences through his sister Ellie, one could say Jordan would not have been ready to make that putt and wear the green jacket an hour later.

While the Spieth’s are the ultimate-close-knit-positive-thinking-family with no reason to discuss the realities they faced in public early on - and perhaps still do on occasion – they don’t have too as many of us already appreciate them for being strong people of character and their MVP in Ellie.



(Jordan with his sister Ellie, his brother Steven, father Shawn, and mother Chris. Photo: JordanSpiethGolf.com)

About the Author: Brian Giboney has been a freelance contributor to Parachutist magazine since 1999 and is now doing freelance for Inside Golf Newspaper, and other golf publications. Brian has played more than 250 golf courses in the State of Washington, carries a low single digit handicap in modern play, has broke 80 several times in hickory golf play, and has made over 1,000 skydives as well.