

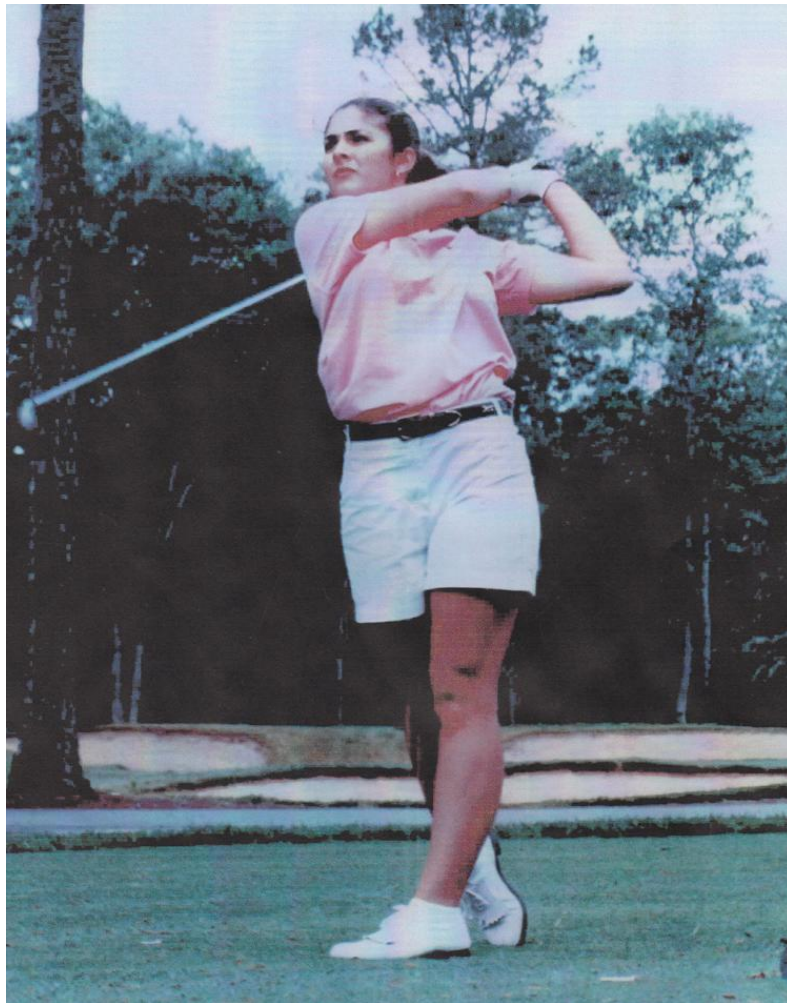
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TOP STORY

Into the Hall: Lauren George

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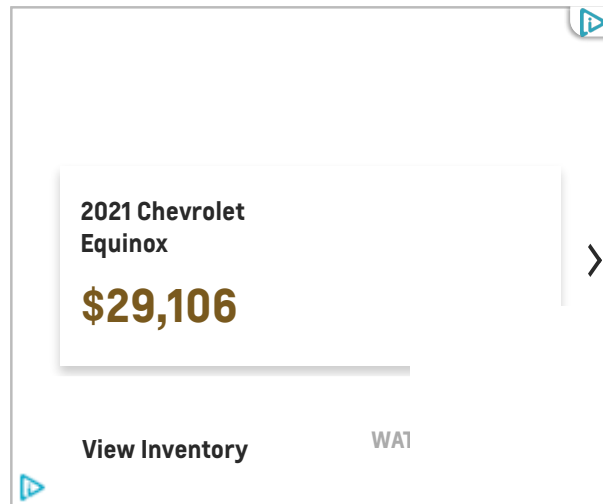
Uniontown graduate Lauren George Clemmer is part of the 2020/2021 class of inductees for the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame.

Submitted Photo

and George Von Benko

Not many people enjoy getting older but there are some perks to aging.

Lauren George Clemmer found that out recently when her cellphone rang and Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame Board Chairman Chris Cluss was on the other end.



“I got a phone call from Mr. Cluss,” George Clemmer said with a chuckle. “He started the phone call with, ‘As we get older we start to get phone calls from the Hall of Fame.’ Even though I don’t want to get older, I was honored and I was very surprised and happy to be selected for this year’s class.”

The 2001 Uniontown graduate and golfing star is part of the 2020/2021 class of inductees for the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame.

George Clemmer and the rest of the inductees and representatives will be recognized at a Hall of Fame Golf outing/Luncheon/Social starting at 9 a.m. on June 25 at Pleasant Valley Golf Club in Connellsville.

George Clemmer had a stellar golf career that included winning the Uniontown Country Club women’s golf championship at a young age, being a four-year starter on Uniontown’s boys golf team (there was no girls team at the time), winning two WPIAL girls golf championships and earning a full scholarship to the University of Kentucky.

Not bad for someone who wasn’t a big fan of golfing when she started out.

“I couldn’t stand it. It was too hot outside,” George Clemmer said while speaking recently about her induction on George Von Benko’s Sports Line Talk Show on WMBS Radio.

“For a little 6-7-year-old kid having to go out there and play, it was hot and I didn’t really like it when I first started. But something clicked and it took and I continued on with it.”

A few years later at age 13 she turned in an amazing performance as a member of the Uniontown Country Club. She became the youngest player to win the UCC women's club championship, a record that still stands today.

"It was just on a whim," George Clemmer said. "I told my parents I wanted to try, and I ended up winning it.

"That was exciting. That kind of propelled me further into more competitive events around the country and locally. It was an exciting time."

When she hit high school she made Uniontown's boys golf team as a freshman.

"At the time they didn't have a girls golf team," George Clemmer explained. "There really weren't a whole lot of girls at that time that played. So the stipulations were if I wanted to play on the boys team I had to hit from the men's tees.

"It really caused me to have to step up my game to remain competitive because at the time it was highly competitive in our area. It was fun and I learned a lot and I became a better player as a result of it."

Playing from the longer tees actually hindered her when it came to playing in the WPIAL and PIAA girls golf championships, according to George Clemmer.

"It was because when you're playing boys and you're playing from men's tees, the yardages for the course are obviously longer. When you play from the ladies tees, the red tees, it's shorter. When you're so used to hitting it a certain distance and knowing your distance from certain sets of tees, you have to really make a quick adjustment," George Clemmer explained.

"So it was actually more difficult for me to play from the ladies tees because I never did it in those events. It was kind of difficult but you figure it out and make the best of it."

Clemmer George did and went on to be a two-time WPIAL champion, a four-time PIAA qualifier and three-time state medal-winner with one seventh-place showing and a pair of fifth-place finishes.

She gives partial credit for her WPIAL success to Cluss who gave her a club at the time.

“The Callaway Big Bertha Driver,” George Clemmer said with a laugh. “We were playing together and I think he had just purchased it and he gave it to me to try it out to hit and ended up letting me keep it. Both of my WPIAL titles I won with that driver.”

George Clemmer was highly decorated in high school. She was twice named a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Athlete of the Week and earned the Pittsburgh Tribune Review weekly honor once. In 2001 she garnered a Uniontown Area WPIAL Scholar Athlete Award, a YMCA Tribune Review Scholar Athlete Award, a KDKA TV Pittsburgh Extra Effort Award, and a WTAE TV Pittsburgh Student Athlete of the Week honor.

George Clemmer began competing in USGA Girl’s Junior Amateur Championship events while in high school with much success.

“Those were national events,” she said. “You had to go qualify for them, the fields were relatively small, you were playing golf courses where U.S. Opens had been held ... very exciting. You get to meet new people and really have to raise the level of competition with those types of events as well.”

Also while in high school George Clemmer won the 1998 AJGA Sand Barrens championship and was an AJGA Polo Golf All-American in 2001.

“The AJGA would be equivalent to an AAU basketball national-level-type of program so that was definitely an honor that year when I won the All-American status because you’re taking on competitors from across the country and even foreign countries,” George Clemmer said. “To be a part of that was really special.”

When it came time to move onto college, George Clemmer had several major NCAA Division-I offers to consider before accepting a full-scholarship to Kentucky. Ohio State, Auburn and North Carolina State were among other schools in the mix.

“When I thought about it I knew I wanted to play in the SEC,” George Clemmer said. “I wanted to be south because the weather’s better for golf, obviously. I really loved the campus, I loved the school, the coach that recruited me, Bettie Lou Evans, she was wonderful. It just felt like the right fit whenever I was completing all those official visits at the time.”

George Clemmer enjoyed the strong competition she faced in college.

“What made it even better is a lot of the girls from the different universities, we had played together for many years prior on the AJGA and in the USGA events so we kind of knew each other,” George Clemmer said. “It was a really fun time and I have a lot of great memories from it.”

She was a two-year letterman with the Lady Kats with a second-place finish at the UK/Vanderbilt Challenge in 2003 and several top 40 finishes in the SEC championships.

George Clemmer decided to focus on her academics after two years at Kentucky and transferred to Washington & Jefferson where she earned a degree in English. She went on to earn a masters degree at West Virginia.

She eventually moved back into Fayette County, married Albert Gallatin graduate Shawn Clemmer and the two have a 10-year-old daughter, Mallory.

“I’m back at Uniontown and I’m the principal at LaFayette School,” George Clemmer pointed out.

Of course she had to see if her daughter would take to golf at a young age. Instead, Mallory gravitated to a sport her father played in high school, basketball, among the three that she participates in.

“I bought her a set of golf clubs. She didn’t take to it but she does play sports,” George Clemmer said. “She plays basketball, softball and volleyball. Golf is just not one of the things that she’s interested in. But I’ve had a great time watching her compete and grow. It’s been really fun to see her develop as a player.”

George Clemmer admits she still swings the clubs occasionally.

“Every once in awhile somebody will give me a call to play in a scramble,” she said. “Usually every year Uniontown basketball has a golf scramble out at Duck Hollow so I’ll play in that. And I’ll be playing in the Hall of Fame outing.”

As part of Cluss’s scramble team, of course, she admitted with a laugh.

“It’s nice now because when I do get out and play it’s fun, there’s no pressure, I can just enjoy it,” said George Clemmer, who relishes being inducted into the Fayette County Sports Hall of Fame.

“I’m very honored to be a part of it,” she stressed. “It’s very special to represent Uniontown who has had so many great athletes, past and present.”