



Golfweek



Transgender golfer shares her dream of competing in World Long Drive events

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Jamie O'Neill played golf for the first time in six years as part of a team-building exercise with her new employer, an engineering firm.

Her first tee shot went straight down the fairway for 280 yards. "With that one shot I was hooked on playing golf again," **O'Neill wrote in a story for [Outsports.com](#).**

O'Neill, who is a 43-year-old transgender woman, shared her story of chasing her dream to compete in World Long Drive Association events.

She began her transition from male to female at age 34 in 2010. Deciding to transition was not easy, O'Neill writes. "I was prepared to lose my family, my friends, my career, but what I knew was I was not going to lose my life."

O'Neill underwent facial feminization surgery and then spent hundreds of hours on electrolysis for hair removal, voice therapy and breast augmentation before having sexual reassignment surgery.

After recovering from her surgeries, O'Neill began playing softball to connect with the LGBTQ community. While she found support and encouragement from her softball teammates and competitors, it is golf that has provided a new passion.

The World Long Drive Association and Golf Channel have a policy in place for transgender athletes and O'Neill has met the conditions of the rules. "A competitor who has had gender reassignment must have had a gonadectomy no less than two years prior to the registration deadline for the specific WLDA event."

O'Neill has received approval to compete in 2020, a Golf Channel spokesman confirmed.

O'Neill says she has been welcomed by many fellow competitors in World Long Drive, and she aspires to be a role model for other transgender athletes who compete at a professional level.

If she makes it through qualifying at a tour event, O'Neill will be well on her way to inspiring others – not only those within the LGBTQ community – who have followed her journey.

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