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## Outstanding Embry-Riddle golfer has her eyes on Mars

By [Mike Camunas](#), Times Staff Writer  
In print: Wednesday, July 2, 2008

### NEW PORT RICHEY

Tara Allen will spend her summer thinking about Mars. This former Hernando High golf team standout is now excelling at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach. She just picked up her degree in human factors psychology with a year left of eligibility with the Eagles. This summer, Allen is working on her internship at 4 Frontiers, a corporation whose sole purpose is to "focus on the settlement of Mars" and "recognizes the economic potential resulting from the convergence of four current and upcoming space frontiers — Earth orbit, the Moon, Mars, and Asteroids."

That's from the company's Web site. Allen's job, at the moment, is to design and develop the interior living quarters for the Mars settlement: a commons area sufficient for 24 people.

"Most don't believe me when I tell them that's what I'm doing at my internship," Allen said. "I know, it's a bit out there and people might laugh, but I love the work."

Once Allen finishes at 4 Frontiers, she'll head back for her senior season while working on her master's in human factors in systems. That will be on the heels of one of the top finishes at the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics National Championship in May in San Marcos, Calif. Allen finished tied third overall, shooting a four-day score of 314. The 21-year-old led on Days 2 and 3, but really struggled on the last, shooting an 87, which was her worst round all season.

Not too bad for someone with a hectic academic schedule.

#### The team's go-to golfer

"(Being a student) was very challenging also being an athlete," Allen said. "I had to switch my major from civil engineering to human factors, because it was either engineering or golf, and since golf was paying for my private education, the choice wasn't that hard."

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[MIKE CAMUNAS | Times]

Tara Allen, here at Seven Springs golf course, graduated from Hernando High and tied third overall at the 2008 NAIA Women's Golf National Championships.

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Now, Allen will become the go-to golfer on the team, a role she feels she already has grown accustomed to.

"I felt like the leader this past year," Allen said. "I am looking forward to my senior year. My roommate will be a freshman, so she'll probably get taken under my wing and shown the ropes."

Sports News Video



Her college coach for the past three years, Maria Lopez, believes that Allen brings emotional leadership to the team.

"Tara's always been our little spark plug," said Lopez, the only coach in the golf program's history. "She's fired up about competing, about having highest GPA, being the most put together team. She gets pretty fired up about everything. She invests everything in anything that she does."

**She's a short long-hitter**

Her longtime golf instructor, Rick Kelso, feels Allen has always been prepared when it comes to golf, education or even her future.

"She usually doesn't make too many bad decisions," said Kelso, who's the golf pro at Southern Woods Golf Club in Homosassa. "If I had a son that was in the marketing for dating, I would try to hook them up. She's always had her ducks set up in a row and knows where she's going.

"She's a got a plan, even if people think this job is fun."

Kelso calls her "a gritty little player" and that's legit since Allen is only 5 feet 2 and nearly the smallest player on the team.

"She may be one of the smallest, but probably hits (the ball) the farthest and that's not too shabby for being 5 foot 2," Lopez said. "She has a huge heart and wants no one going through a bad patch. When something needs to be done, she just does it. She puts her (psychology) education into play and it works out."

Lopez expects Allen to have her best season to come because "with grad school it'll be more relaxed" and "more flow(ed)". It'll give her the time to put into golf and school what she really wants." Kelso, though, feels golf will probably end for her at Embry-Riddle.

"We've talked about what's her future, and she's very content in getting a job and not worrying about LPGA or getting on tour," Kelso said. "She's accepted the fact that that's not where she wants to be."

Perhaps, Allen said she's now "entertaining the idea" of joining a tour, especially with the Florida Women's State Golf Association as an option.

"I joked after my first day of work in an office (at the internship). I said to my dad, 'Okay, I'm going pro,'" Allen said with a laugh.

But for now, Allen will focus on Mars, a long way away from the courses, but a program that Lopez, who's working on her master's in human factors psychology, thinks "is just perfect for someone like Tara."

Community Sports Editor Mike Camunas can be reached at [mcamunas@sptimes.com](mailto:mcamunas@sptimes.com) or (352) 544-9480 .

**>>Fast facts**

**Meet Tara Allen**

**Age:** 21 • **Year:** Senior

**School:** Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University; 2005 Hernando High grad

**Education:** Bachelor's in human factors psychology; working on master's in human factors in systems.

**Accolades:** Four-time All-Conference, All-District, All-Region and Conference All-Academic selection in high school, Conference Player of the Year 2002-04, team MVP in 2003 and 2004. North Suncoast Junior Golf Association Overall Player of the Year in 2002 and 2005. Allen finished tied third overall (a four-round total of 314) at the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics National Championship in May in San Marcos, Calif.

[Last modified: Jul 01, 2008 07:52 PM]

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Comments on this article  
by Lisa

Jul 1, 2008 7:52 PM

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