

Heading to Augusta.

A few days later and I was ready to start out for my first trip to North America. Although the Augusta event would be first, I was booked to stay over through the Masters before travelling on to Texas and the Chevron. My second major after the Open.

In late March, my Mum and Dad drove me down to Heathrow; to Terminal Four, crowded with holidaymakers and other travellers. I had only flown to Spain on that one holiday. Now I was going long-haul and on my own! My parents had parked and walked with me to the check-in where the queue was long and hardly moving. It seemed everyone had decided to arrive early for my flight, not to Augusta but to Atlanta. I would then need to take a domestic flight on to finish the trip.

After we had stood unmoving for almost half an hour, I made the decision that we should make our farewells there. I still had four hours before my flight and there was no point in Mum standing there tiring by the minute, Dad was almost as tired and he would be driving back.

Having told them to go and completed hugs, I watched them slowly walking away. Come on, Sophie Jordan, you're a big girl now, you can hack this.

As the queue slowly edged forward and I wheeled my golf bag in front of me there were a few quizzical looks and I could imagine the question on those minds. "What on earth is she doing with golf clubs? This isn't a flight to the Algarve."

That brought on a burst of nervousness, I mean it really wasn't a flight to the Algarve. Should I back out now and try and avoid the ignominy of missing both cuts thus proving that I really didn't have the game to play at these levels?

While I had been losing myself in those thoughts, check-in attendants had been working their way down the long lines checking people were in the right place. Eventually they had reached me and there was a gentle nudge. "Excuse me, Miss. Could I check your ticket please?"

I pulled out my mobile and showed my electronic version. "I am in the right place, aren't I? I've never flown from Heathrow."

The attendant smiled broadly. "Well, Miss Jordan, you are in the right place but not the right place, as it were."

I looked at him in horror, could I have got it that wrong?

"This is a queue for your flight but you should be over there." He said pointing to the first-class check-in desk.

"I can't be. I couldn't afford that. I'm in economy."

"Not today, Miss. Word came down from on high. The best amateur golfer in the country does not fly economy. Not with this airline! Now, let me help you with your bags, Miss."

There was something of a buzz in the crowd as I was being escorted across the floor and I overheard one conversation which, despite being somewhat embarrassed by the attention, made me smile to myself.

“Told you, silly girl is in the wrong terminal.”

“You know, Colin, you really need new glasses. She is being taken over to the First-Class desk.”

“All right for some, gets an upgrade by a flash of her eyelids!”

“I give up. When we get back you are going to the optician. That’s Sophie Jordan, that brilliant young golfer!”

“Don’t be ridiculous. She wouldn’t be flying economy. She’d be first class anyway.”

“Maybe not. She’s only an amateur. She isn’t earning the big money. Not yet anyway.”

Completing my check-in was as smooth as it could be. The only delay being the need to provide a dozen autographs to the staff. I still don’t understand why. I mean it wasn’t as if I was Tiger Woods or Georgia Hall for that matter, but they insisted.

I then got an escort to the security check although there was something of a ruckus when the gate lit up like a beacon. The electronics in my leg had triggered every alarm going. In my nervousness I had forgotten to switch them off and, even though I had a letter from the hospital explaining my condition and how to allow for the intricacies, I still had to undergo an additional search before they were satisfied.

The lounge for first class was another eye-opener and I relaxed for the first time that day with a drink.

Shortly after I started my walk to the gate, I realised that I needed a comfort break before I boarded, and headed to the nearest Ladies. To my horror there was an unbelievably long queue. I knew that I could use the disabled section although in practice I tried to avoid doing so. A hop-a-long I might be but I had always felt that there would be someone else left waiting who had a greater need than mine. This time I had no real choice. Wait and maybe miss the flight? I also did not think I would be able to last until I could use the facilities on the aircraft. Maybe that was being too unsure of myself but I wasn’t about to take any risks.

As I went in through the door, I felt the pressure of a few pairs of eyes. Couldn’t they see I was really disabled?

It took me a few minutes before I was done and quickly made my exit, only to find a perfectly fit looking young man waiting to use the same facility. I think I glared at him, how dare he?

Then, as I headed down to the gate, I suddenly felt guilty. He looked familiar but I had no idea why. Anyway, how did I know he wasn’t disabled? I knew that my leg wasn’t real but I had been told that the prosthetic was such a match that you had to know it was there to see it. Sorry, I whispered.

As I reached the gate. I found two aircraft doors and I was guided through a shorter file of waiting passengers to the left entrance. I guessed that this was the route to the first-class section, at the front of the plane and that proved true. I found myself looking around in amazement. That one trip to Spain had been in a smaller aircraft and I don't think there was a first class. This plane was a Dreamliner, and huge. My seat must have been as big as two or three economy seats – wow! Well, it took up as much room. How the other half live, I thought before realising that was me, for this flight anyway.

An attendant came over to me with a glass. Of champagne! “Need any help, Miss Jordan? Just call me.”

I found the baggage locker and, having dumped my bag, settled back into my seat, and relaxed with a few sips of the alcohol. At first the next seat was empty and then a young man came into the area led by another of the flight attendants.

It was the same individual I had crossed at the disabled loos! And, oh that's crazy, how did I not recognise him. He's the guy who won best amateur at the Open. Heck, what's his name? Robert Ward, that's it! He is seriously good. Beat the US Amateur Champion into second.

I decided to take the bull by the horn.

As he sat down, I turned to look at him. “You're Ward, aren't you? Rob Ward? You won the Amateur Championship, didn't you? And the Silver Medal at the Open.”