

Northwest women's golf to begin program by hosting tourney

Rick Dunaway, St. Joseph News-Press
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MARYVILLE, Mo. - Budgets, NCAA regulations and recruiting.

spring championship season, concluding with their own Bearcat Classic Invitational on April 24.

The good, the bad and the ugly of starting a varsity program will come to a head this fall when Northwest's first-ever golf season gets under way.

And coach Patrick McLaughlin couldn't be happier that his team is jumping right in, with its own tournament on Sept. 13 at Mozingo Lake Golf Course.

"I wanted to actually do that, because we're setting history here at Northwest, never having had a women's golf program in the history of the university," McLaughlin said.

Although McLaughlin has been involved with women's golf at Northwest for all six years it has been offered as a club sport, he acknowledges this season is marked by a lot of changes, since the Northwest board of regents voted in April of 2006 to make it a varsity sport.

"We're controlled by the NCAA now, where we weren't before," McLaughlin said. "It makes it much different, as far as our preparation. And we have a budget - it was self-funded before - so we can actually go out and recruit."

No longer a strictly volunteer endeavor, McLaughlin was able to hit the recruiting trail, and has nine golfers listed on his preseason roster. Of those, eight players were at the state golf tournament last year, he said.

"The level of our play should be elevated substantially," McLaughlin said.

However, the competition likely won't be that much different. McLaughlin noted that as a club team, Northwest played all varsity teams rather than club teams, with mixed success.

"That taught us a lot about what it's going to take to become a varsity team," McLaughlin said.

McLaughlin got Northwest involved in women's golf in January of 2001 through his daughter, Megan, who played soccer and tennis at Northwest and was a four-year All-State golfer in high school.

"She said that Northwest needed a golf team," McLaughlin related. "I said, 'How do we do that.' She said, 'I don't know, dad, but we're going to find out.'"

The all-freshman roster consists of Sydney Askin and Lauren Atkinson of Park Hill South, Hanna Bowlin of Raytown South, Erin Luchtel of Lee's Summit North, Molly Ramsey of Columbia-Rock Bridge, Adrienne Taylor of Marceline, Sarah Hayes of Maryville, Lindsey Werdehausen of Westran and Jessica Feuerbach of Iowa City (Iowa) Regina High School.

Although the varsity roster currently contains only the nine golfers who signed national letters of intent, a tryout has been scheduled for Wednesday for former club team participants to earn spots on the roster. McLaughlin expects to open the season with 11 or 12 players on the roster.

The fall non-championship season will consist of six tournaments, while the Bearcats will participate in seven tournaments during the

Golf beginning first season

Brett Barger, Northwest Missourian
Sept. 6, 2007

Jessica Feuerbach didn't know if she'd play golf, collegiately. After all, she didn't take golf seriously until her junior year at Class 2A Regina High in Iowa City, Iowa.

"My coach flat out told me that if I wanted to play golf in college, that I was going to have to work at it," Feuerbach said.

After winning a state championship in her senior year, she narrowed her choice to Northwest and Iowa State - two schools she said had the best Horticulture program - she chose Northwest.

Feuerbach is one of nine golfers that comprises the inaugural season of women's golf. Eight of the nine golfers were state qualifiers in high school, while the lone golfer missed qualifying by one stroke.

The history of women's golf from club sport to varsity sport began with first-year coach Pat McLaughlin's daughter, Megan.

"Her sophomore year, she said 'Dad, we need a golf team.' I said 'Well, how do we do that,'" McLaughlin said.

From there, women's golf became a club sport in 2001. In April 2006, the Board of Regents approved a proposal by Northwest athletic director Bob Boerigter to make golf a varsity sport.

McLaughlin said he is enjoying his first year as a college coach. He's even enjoying learning NCAA regulations and the competency tests he had to take before being given the reigns of the program in May 2006.

"It's exciting," McLaughlin said. "When I was the club coach, I could do whatever I want, but now I've had to learn so much more as a college coach and I owe my thanks to Dr. Sue (Reinders, Assistant Athletic Director)."

Northwest opens the non-championship season Sept. 13 when they host the Bearcat Invitational at Mozingo Lake Golf Course. Monday and Tuesday, the team will play two rounds of golf to determine the top-five golfers. Before each tournament, they'll play two rounds to set up the top-five golfers.

Feuerbach enjoys the competition.

"It's not often that you compete against your own teammates, but it'll be fun," Feuerbach said.

Tee time is now for Bearcat golf team

Rick Dunaway, St. Joseph News-Press
Sept. 13, 2007

MARYVILLE, Mo. - Jessica Feuerbach admits she's just a bit nervous.

Feuerbach, a freshman from Iowa City, Iowa, and the rest of her Northwest Missouri State women's golf team will make history this morning when they tee up at Mozingo Golf Course for the Bearcat Invitational, the first varsity golf match in school history.

Northwest's Board of Regents last year approved the addition of women's golf as a varsity sport after six years of competition on the club level.

Coach Pat McLaughlin, who coached the team each of those six years, immediately went to work recruiting a group of freshmen to bring the sport into true NCAA status.

"Honestly, I'm a little nervous," Feuerbach said. "In most other varsity programs, where you come in as a true freshman, you would expect to work hard for a year or two and then get that varsity spot when you're a little bit older. But for to come in all as freshmen, I think it'll be interesting."

Festivities begin at 9 a.m., according to McLaughlin, with the hitting of ceremonial golf balls and the return of some alumni.

Then, the Bearcats square off against Avila, Graceland, William Jewell, Park and Missouri Western.

McLaughlin said the season-opening tournament is a "thank you" of sorts to those schools.

"We sent out personal invitations for our very first tournament to teams that had allowed us to play in their tournaments over the past six years," McLaughlin said. "It was by invitation only, if you will, to reward some of those other teams that have been so good to us in getting us to this level."

Feuerbach said she's happy with the way the team is coming together.

"I think we all have a lot of growing to do as athletes, but I've learned we're all very competitive, and that will drive us all," Feuerbach said.

McLaughlin - the coach - expressed optimism his young team can win the tournament. But McLaughlin - the pragmatist - has other goals.

"Realistically, with all of these girls playing for the first time, it will really give them a sense of where they are individually and where we are as a team against other schools in the region," McLaughlin said.

Women's golf takes second in inaugural meet

Brett Barger, Northwest Missourian
Sept. 13, 2007

Northwest women's golf coach Pat McLaughlin got quite a surprise when he and his team kicked off the inaugural season Thursday at the Bearcat Invitational.

In the weeks leading up to the event at Mozingo Lake Golf Course, it was McLaughlin's hope that his daughter, Megan, who he says was instrumental in starting a club sport at Northwest in 2001, would be able to attend the event.

"This was her dream," McLaughlin said.

Five years later, the Board of Regents made women's golf a varsity sport and Megan was able to make the plane trip from South Carolina to Missouri to see her Dad and the team make history.

"What a great surprise," McLaughlin said. "She had indicated that because of other commitments, she wouldn't be able to come back and surprised me by coming back. That really made the day special."

The historical day began with a few words from McLaughlin and ceremonial tee shots from McLaughlin, Assistant Athletic Director Sue Reinders. Board of Regents member Bill Loch and club pro Rick Schultz. Schultz is also the team's swing instructor.

The biggest pressure of the day came from Jessica Feuerbach, who hit the first official shot. The tee shot split the fairway, much to her relief.

"I was absolutely shaking. I was so nervous," Feuerbach said, who is a freshman from Iowa City, Iowa. "Although, my mentality going into it was if I don't watch anybody else's tee shots and if I just go out there first and do it first, then I'll be fine, but I'm glad I did. "

The team finished second behind Park University, who won the event with a team score of 352. They were led by Ashley Nicks' 80. Feuerbach led Northwest with an 88, followed by Hanna Bowlin's 90. Maryville native Sarah Hayes finished with a 95.

"My round could've improved quite a bit," Feuerbach said. "I got into a little bit of trouble early. That was a little frustrating. But I think my back nine was a little more solid."

McLaughlin said his team performed well, once it was time to tee off.

"The girls were quite nervous, prior to teeing off for the first time in their college career and for the most part, I think they handled it very well," McLaughlin said. "We talked about the emotions before we got started and to try to block out as much as you can, the ceremonies and the hoop-la and to just get out there and compete. At the same time, it was nice to see their enthusiasm for playing college golf for the first time."

Northwest makes its first road trip of the season as they travel Monday to the Graceland Invitational.

Northwest golf completes journey to varsity status

Rick Dunaway, St. Joseph News-Press
Sept. 14, 2007

MARYVILLE, Mo. - That Northwest Missouri State did not run away with its first varsity women's golf tournament Thursday did not surprise coach Patrick McLaughlin.

His surprise - a pleasant one - came the night before.

"We shocked him," said Megan McLaughlin, the coach's daughter, who surprised her father by flying home from South Carolina just for the history-making event. "He was in tears."

It was a surprise she had worked out with her mother. "I said, 'Mom, I've found a ticket for (\$150). I'm coming.'"

Truth be told, Megan McLaughlin was desperate to make it to Maryville. Now an assistant golf professional at the Fazio Course at Palmetto Dunes in Hilton Head, S.C., she was instrumental in the start of women's golf at Northwest.

Megan McLaughlin, a soccer and tennis player at Northwest after four years as a state golf tournament qualifier at Maryville High School, went to her father in the fall of 2000 with the dream of starting a golf team. By January of 2001, a fledgling club team developed its first schedule, starting with a match against William Jewell College.

"She's the reason why we are here today, actually," Patrick McLaughlin told the group that gathered Thursday morning at Mazingo Lake Golf Course for opening ceremonies. "She's the founder of this whole thing. If it wasn't for her, we wouldn't be doing this."

Megan remembers cleaning tables at local fast food restaurants and various other raffles and fund-raisers, as the club team struggled to fund itself for the first of six seasons until the Northwest Board of Regents voted last school year to sponsor women's golf as a varsity sport.

"We had a great group of girls that were really excited to start history at Northwest," Megan McLaughlin recalled. "Everybody chipped in."

Even finding a place to practice was difficult at first. The coach said his early teams hit golf balls into a net in the basement of a dormitory, then caught a short break when John Yates, owner of a local bar, offered to let them set up a net in the back room and use his establishment for two hours in the afternoon until he opened.

"That worked out well until one of the girls really ripped one left, it came off the wall, bounced over the bar and he said, 'Coach, maybe we'd better find another place to practice.'"

They did, and six years later, the Bearcats jumped into the varsity realm with their own tournament.

Ashley Hicks of Park University took medallist honors Thursday with an 80, edging Graceland's Natalia Renjifo by three strokes. Northwest's top golfer, Jessica Feuerbach, finished in a fifth-place trio at 88, but lost the trophy on a scorecard playoff to Jordan Miller of Avila.

The first tee was completely nerve-wracking," Feuerbach said. "After that, the feeling of playing competitive golf kind of came back."

Park won the tournament with a team total of 352. Northwest was second at 373, Avila third at 386, Graceland fourth at 404 and Missouri Western fifth at 425.

"Some of our girls were surprised their their successes, and some with their failures," McLaughlin said. "But we had some girls put up some good scores, and I think we're going to be competitive in our region, for sure."

William Jewell also competed, but fielded only three golfers and could not figure in the team scoring.

But Cardinals coach Larry Maiorano scored big with the Northwest golf team in the weeks leading up to the season. Maiorano, a former Bearcat men's golfer and 1969 graduate, along with his wife provided the Northwest team its golf shirts for the first season. Maiorano has been a regular supporter of Northwest athletics.

Then, just 3 1/2 weeks ago, Maiorano was named the William Jewell women's golf coach.

"He, of course, didn't know at the time that he would be supporting the competition," McLaughlin said.