

GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL GOLF PREVIEW

GIRLS GOLF TEAMS TO WATCH

Copley: Went to state four straight years thanks to Heather and Carly Arison, but will have to rely on senior Molly Leonard and juniors Claire Meneer and Camille Smith to get back to Columbus this time.

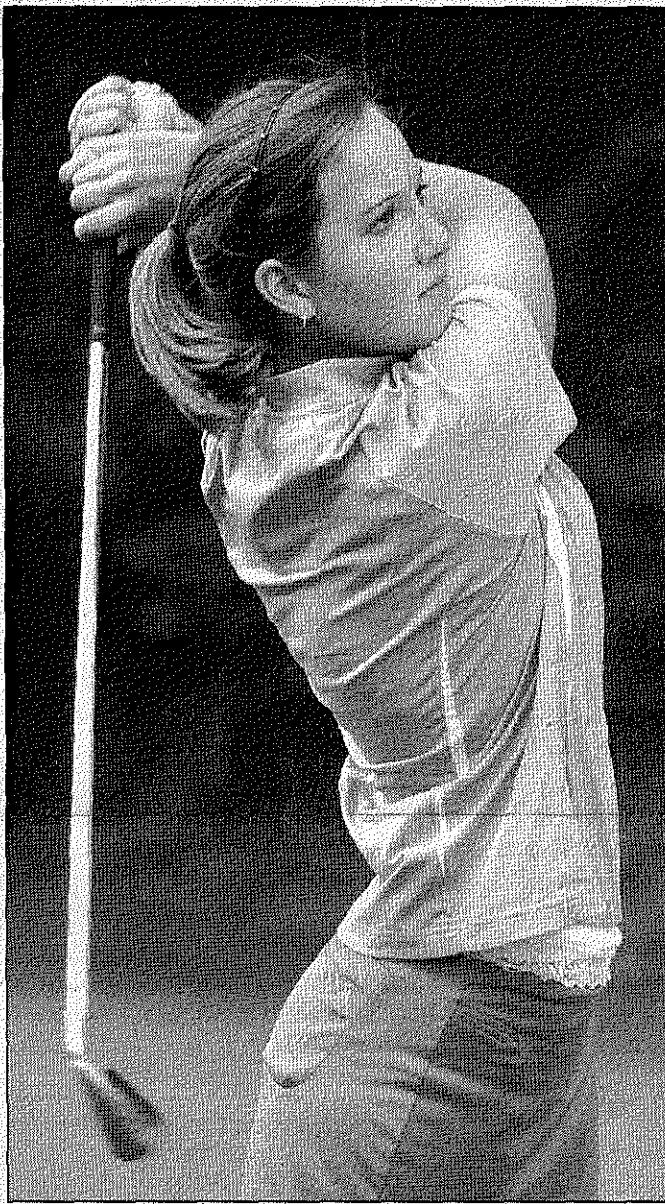
Cuyahoga Falls: Veteran coach Mary Mazingo has no shining stars, but eight returning players including senior Katie Grenfell, sophomore Megan Goubeaux and junior Stephanie Koval, a transfer from Coventry, will make the Tigers competitive.

Hathaway Brown: Easily the best Division II school in Northeast Ohio and is a state title contender in that division. Samantha Stahler, a recent North Coast Junior Tour champ, provides senior leadership while juniors Jess O'Neil and Keely Lavelle shoot 18 holes in the mid-80s. What coach Paul Barlow needs are two more decent 90 shooters to ensure a top-four finish at state.

Hudson: This team could qualify for state in Division I because the Explorers have talented sophomore Natalie Goodson and junior Heidi Britton, a move-in from Indiana, who along with sophomores Sarah Weber and Jessica Taylor and senior Brittany Landon have been averaging between 42-49 at Ellsworth Meadows. Hudson missed going to state as a team last year by one stroke.

Magnificat: The next-best area team behind Walsh Jesuit, the Blue Streaks return senior Laurel Friesen and junior Victoria Bello from their squad which finished fourth at state. Sophomore Lia Labate has shot below 40 in tryouts, while juniors Jane Peterson and Elise Eiden and sophomore Ellen Dreher are averaging in the mid-40s.

St. Joseph Academy: It's one of the few girls teams with depth, and that gives the Jaguars a good chance to get to state as a team. Brooke Hamilton is the top player, and junior Maddie Keefe, a short but straight hitter, averaged 42.3 per nine holes last season. Senior co-captain Abby Millar is solid (45.3), and junior Keyte Tuleta is the most improved player. Coach Doug Foster said he has three freshmen "with nice swings" vying for the fifth spot.



GUS CHAN | THE PLAIN DEALER

Senior Kelly Krusoe hopes to lead a strong Walsh Jesuit team to a second straight state championship.

Strongsville: Two seniors, tough grinder Ariel Sparrow and Mallorie Boron, carry the Mustangs' hopes.

Walsh Jesuit: The defending state champs have everyone back but All-Ohioan Erin Misheff. Senior Katie Kohut, a starter as a sophomore, is there to fill the gap. With talented seniors such as Kelly Krusoe, Amanda Costanzo and Alexis Omilion, and junior Ariel McNair, nobody in Ohio except Mason has the talent to beat these girls. Portage Country Club member McKenzie Bell, a freshman, is waiting in the wings.

Westlake: Demons will win their share of matches with decent depth provided by senior Amy Polgar and sophomores Kayla Waitrovich and Olivia Serrat.

— Pat Galbincea

GOLFERS TO WATCH

Brynn Fitzgerald, Fr., Orange: Was the North Coast Junior Tour champion at the age 12-15 level.

Laurel Friesen, Sr., Magnificat: One of the few high schoolers playing in the Women's State Amateur at Elyria Country Club, she played well against talented collegians and veteran amateurs.

Natalie Goodson, Soph., Hudson: She barely missed qualifying for state as an individual, but the daughter of Lake Forest pro John Goodson is clearly one of the best players in the state.

Brooke Hamilton, Sr., St. Joseph: Her scores get lower and lower each year. She averaged 41.2 strokes per nine holes last season and is coming off a good summer of Southwest Junior Tour competition. She drives the ball well.

Nicki Henry, Soph., Kenston: Like Goodson, she was a highly regarded freshman who didn't get to state, but Northeast Ohio was loaded with outstanding seniors last year. Henry will likely go to state as an individual this year.

Kelly Krusoe, Sr., Walsh Jesuit: Her father, Dale, is an outstanding low handicapper and her two brothers, Brian and Kevin, were stellar at Walsh Jesuit. Missed All-Ohio honors by a mere stroke (80-81). She works hard at the range, so it's no wonder she keeps getting better.

Ariel McNair, Jr., Walsh Jesuit: A good all-around athlete who excels in basketball, but Aurora Country Club pro and Walsh coach Bill Reilly says her future in golf is bright. She shot 80-85 at state. This summer, McNair qualified for the Optimist Tournament in West Palm Beach, Fla.

Lizzy Merk, Jr., Padua: Noted for her desire to succeed, and she plays in tournaments like the Greater Cleveland Amateur with that goal in mind — to succeed at the state level.

Ariel Sparrow, Sr., Strongsville: Has improved immensely with summer play, and Southwest Junior Tour co-director David Moskal calls her a "Grade A" player.

Samantha Stahler, Sr., Hathaway Brown: She's had a career like Christina Thomas of Rocky River and Hillary Wilson of Hudson — good player who can't seem to get to state. Thomas and Wilson made it as seniors, and Stahler should now that the Blazers are in Division II.

Nicole Trivisonno, Jr., Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin: Her older brother, Mike, was a state medalist at Gilmour Academy, and anyone who has watched her play can see she also has a ton of talent. Like Goodson and Henry, she was a victim of a brutal district at the Legends of Massillon loaded with senior talent, a problem rectified with graduations.

Kayla Waitrovich, Soph., Westlake: With a teaching pro like her dad, Tom, at Lakewood Country Club, she will likely become a strong player by her senior year.

— Pat Galbincea

Girls golf key dates

- Monday:** Season begins.
- Aug. 19:** Padua Lady Bruin Invitational at Medina Country Club.
- Aug. 21:** Walsh Jesuit Invitational at Aurora Country Club.
- Sept. 8:** Kiely Cup at Canterbury Golf Club.
- Sept. 29:** Division II district at Tam O'Shanter Golf Course, Hills Course.
- Oct. 7:** Division I district at Legends of Massillon.
- Oct. 10-11:** Division II state championship at Ohio State University, Gray Course.
- Oct. 17-18:** Division I state championship at OSU, Gray Course.

FOUR THINGS I THINK ABOUT THE GIRLS GOLF SEASON



Pat Galbincea

1. It will be tough for any girl in Division I around the Plain Dealer seven-county coverage area to win state because there are no returning All-Ohioans. This will likely be the weakest year for girls golf individually in Northeast Ohio state history. However, there are good young talents like Natalie Goodson, Nicki Henry, Ariel McNair and Nicole Trivisonno looming.

2. For the first time in state history, girls golf has grown enough that teams have been split into two divisions. Division I will still play its district at the Legends of Massillon, but Division II will play at Tam O'Shanter's Hills Course in Canton. Hathaway Brown coach Paul Barlow has to be elated. Last year the Blazers were one

of five Division II schools in the 20-team, Division I district in Massillon, and they placed higher than any other Division II school in the tournament but didn't get a sniff at going to state. This time, with sterling Samantha Stahler leading the way, the Blazers will be a Division II state title contender.

3. There aren't many powerful teams this fall, but Walsh Jesuit is the exception. The defending Division I state champs are so loaded, coach Bill Reilly is trying to figure how to get standout freshman McKenzie Bell and senior Holly James, the Warriors' No. 6 golfer last season and a mid-80s shooter, in the lineup.

4. It will be interesting to see how well junior Victoria Bello does at Magnificat. Older sister Alex was one of the best players in the state last season, finishing eighth overall. Victoria was unsteady at state, shooting 93-80. Bello has the ability to play as well as her older sister.