

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS GOLF PREVIEW



ROADELL HICKMAN | THE PLAIN DEALER

Walsh Jesuit senior Ariel McNair has worked on her putting to give her a chance for state contention.

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Victoria Bello, sr., Magnificat: Inherits the No. 1 position once held by her sister Alex, an All-Ohio golfer now the No. 1 at Vassar. She has played well at state two straight years.

Brynn FitzGerald, soph., Orange: She placed seventh in the state in Division II last season, shooting 80-75—155 and was medalist in the district at Tam O'Shanter. Had a 39.6 average for nine holes and 81.5 for 18 as a freshman.

Tasita Garcia, soph., Cuyahoga Heights: Shot an even-par 36 at Geneva-On-The-Lake in the first week of the season. This returning Division II state qualifier missed All-Ohio honors last season by six strokes (78-84) because of an off round of golf on the second day.

Natalie Goodson, jr., Hudson: Daughter of Lake Forest Country Club pro John Goodson had an outstanding summer of golf and is ready to emerge as an All-Ohio golfer. She was a near-miss All-Ohio last year at state, shooting 82-81—163.

Nicki Henry, jr., Kenston: She missed going to state by one stroke last season. Aligns herself with the Birdies Fore the Cure for ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) and has built a Web site. Also has built herself a good golf game, and this summer was medalist at a North Coast Tour event at Blackbrook in Mentor.

Maddie Keefe, sr., St. Joseph Academy: Looks to improve upon the 84-87—171 she shot at state last season in Division I. Was Jaguars' first state golf qualifier.

Caitlin Kempton, sr., Shaker Heights: Best girls golfer from this school since Frederique Bruell, a

state amateur champ... and at this stage, Kempton is better. She shot her worst rounds of golf at state last season, a 94-91—185, and intends on doing better in October.

Keely Lavelle, sr., Hathaway Brown: Has improved immensely over last season, and it showed recently in the Magnificat Tournament at the Legacy at Sweetbriar, where she shot a 75.

Ariel McNair, sr., Walsh Jesuit: Putting used to be her weakness, but McNair has worked so hard to improve the past 12 months that coach Bill Reilly says she's ready to place among the top five in Division I.

Lizzy Merk, sr., Padua: She's too good not to get to state and be a state medalist contender. Merk shot 68 last year at the Bruin Invitational. This year, she's longer off the tee, hits 50 percent of fairways and 70 percent greens.

Jess O'Neil, sr., Hathaway Brown: Her father Bill is the University School golf coach, and she loves the game as much as he does. Her 88-82—170 total at state last year helped the Blazers finish third as a team.

Nicole Trivisonno, sr., NDCL: Played with injured ribs at state last year and still shot 89-87. Was North Coast Tour player of the year in 2006-07 and 2009, and her instructor is nationally known Jim McLean of Doral in Miami, Fla. Her brother Mike was a state medalist at Gilmour, and father Rick a low handicap player.

— Pat Galbincea

KEY DATES

Sept. 21: Kiley Cup at Canterbury Golf Club.
Oct. 6: Division II district at Tam O'Shanter Golf Club.
Oct. 13: Division I district at Legends of Massillon Golf Course.

Oct. 16-17: Division II state tournament at Ohio State Gray Course.
Oct. 23-24: Division I state tournament at Ohio State Gray Course.

— Pat Galbincea

TEAMS TO WATCH

Cuyahoga Heights: This very small Division II school has two talented sisters in senior Maruja Garcia and sophomore Tasita Garcia, a state qualifier last season. No. 3 golfer Jackie Whitt, a senior, is respectable. Redskins missed state trip by two strokes last season.

Green: Strong team of seniors led by quality players Miranda Rokich and Sarah Allred, plus senior Joanna Hayes and junior Ashlee Schrader.

Hathaway Brown: Best depth veteran coach Paul Barlow has ever had, and the Blazers, third in the state in Division II last year, have two sterling golfers in seniors Kelly Lavelle and Jess O'Neil. Also on the squad is freshman Nia Marshall, whose older sister Shamira was outstanding at Nordonia. Another freshman, Ashley Yarbrough, has played so well that two girls who played at state last season, senior Maddie Bennett and junior Madeline Horner, are fighting for the fifth spot.

Highland: Surprise standout team in Northeast Ohio. Hornets have developed overnight into a power in only their third year of having varsity golf as sophomores Lauren McKinzie and Stephanie Horvath, freshman Jessica Porvasnika and junior Sarah Sniff are talented and dedicated.

Hudson: Coach Lisa Patterson has perhaps the biggest team depth among Northeast Ohio squads as standout junior Natalie Goodson, juniors Sarah Weber and Jessica Taylor, and senior Heidi Britton have played together for three years, and are joined by freshman Shelby Bitter, whom Patterson says has a sweet swing. Explorers were at state last season, should be going again.

Magnificat: Finished third among 20 teams at their tournament, so the Blue Streaks are strong again, led by senior Victoria Bello and Dana Schwartz. Bello has played well at state. Two juniors, Liz Labate and Ellen Dreher, also have state experience, and Labate shot 81 recently at the Legacy at Sweetbriar. One of the few Northeast Ohio teams with good depth.

Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin: This team has the makings of being a real Division II power — it was seventh in the state in Division II last season — now that senior Nicole Trivisonno is injury free. Talia Trovato, a sophomore, and Danielle Misencik, a junior, played well at state. The Lions also add outstanding freshman Emily Jereb.

St. Joseph: Has two good seniors in state qualifier Maddie Keefe and Keyte Tuleta.

Walsh Jesuit: Not the power the Division I state runner-up Warriors have been, but will be a young developing power as state medalist contender Ariel McNair, a senior, will be joined by sophomores McKenzie Bell and Julia Hoffman and freshman Julia Geiger, and the fifth spot goes to juniors Alyssa Gilbert and Maria Bowen. Warriors coach and PGA pro Bill Reilly expects this team to blossom as the season progresses.

— Pat Galbincea

FOUR THINGS I THINK ABOUT THE GIRLS GOLF SEASON...



1. We've gotten kind of spoiled every year in Northeast Ohio with girls golf because we've always had state title-contending teams. That won't be the case this year. In Division II, defending state champ Poland Seminary has four of five starters back. In Division I, defending state champ Mason brings back three strong players, while perennial power Walsh Jesuit graduated six of their top seven golfers. Parity has hit girls high school golf in this part of the state.

2. That doesn't mean girls golf is weak here. Northeast Ohio still has many good individuals such as Brynn FitzGerald of Orange and

Natalie Goodson at Hudson, but like the teams, most are very young.

3. Another reason girls golf will get better yet is that that area pros and top-flight amateurs have taken over positions at high schools. PGA pro David Dinan is the new girls golf coach at Stow, ex-Quail Hollow pro Tony Milam is now at Lake Catholic and stellar

amateur Chris Minear is coaching at St. Vincent-St. Mary.

4. Not to be overlooked is the good work Teen Burke and Avon Oaks pro Judd Stephenson do with the Ohio Girls Golf Foundation, which helps encourage young ladies to play the game. Girls golf has grown greatly in high school circles since the OGGF came into existence.

— Pat Galbincea