

# THE PLAIN DEALER

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2009

## SPORTS

## HIGH SCHOOLS

### District golf

Youth wasn't just served at the girls Division I district golf tournament in Massillon on Tuesday, it dominated. The teams from Highland and Walsh Jesuit — with only one senior between them — and three area players advanced as individuals to next week's state tournament. **Details, D5**

The Plain Dealer | Breaking news: cleveland.com

Sports | D5

### HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT GOLF

# Young Highland, Walsh advance

TIM ROGERS  
*Plain Dealer Reporter*

MASSILLON — Wait 'til next year.

And the year after that, and the year after that and the year after that.

The rallying cry for embattled sports teams also can be used to describe the state of girls high school golf in Northeast Ohio.

Except in a good way.

Young players dominated the girls Division I tournament at the Legends of Massillon on Tuesday, withstanding temperatures in the low 50s and a wind that picked up velocity as the day wore on.

The teams from Highland and Walsh Jesuit, with one senior between them, finished second and third, respectively, sandwiched between two Stark County schools, first-time winner Jackson and fourth-place

finisher Perry. All four will play in the 17th annual Division I state tournament at Ohio State's Gray Course on Oct. 23-24.

The top four teams and the top four individuals not on qualifying teams advanced to state.

Of the 24 players that advanced out of the Legends district, only four were seniors. Nine juniors, seven sophomores and four freshmen will play next week in Columbus, and that speaks volumes for the future of girls golf in this area.

Medalist honors went to Kenston junior Nicki Henry, whose 4-over 76 was one shot better than Highland freshman Jessica Porvasnik and two shots better than Walsh Jesuit senior Ariel McNair. It also brought a sense of redemption for Henry, who missed qualifying for the state tournament by one shot in two previous tries.

"This feels especially good

after missing the last two," said Henry, who rolled in a 40-foot putt for her only birdie on the fourth hole of the East course. "I have worked hard to get to Columbus and I thought I played pretty well today. I putted well."

Henry was joined by Alliance senior Tianna Jones (79), Hudson junior Natalie Goodson (81) and Shaker Heights senior Caitlin Kempton (83) in the individual competition.

Highland's runner-up finish continued a remarkable season for a program that is in its third year of existence. Coach Mary Becker attributed the success to hard work.

"All I can say is that I've been coaching [various] sports for 25-plus years," said Becker, whose team shot 345 to finish seven shots behind Jackson. "I've never had a team that has been as dedicated or worked as hard as this one. Plus, they're a fun group to be around."

Porvasnik, who began playing golf a little more than two years ago, led the Lady Hornets with a 5-over 77. Sophomores Stephanie Horvath (84) and Lauren McKenzie (86) and freshman Jessica McRae (98) rounded out their scoring in the play five, count four format.

Despite losing six of its top seven players to graduation, reigning state runner-up Walsh Jesuit (353) qualified to state for the 10th time, thanks to Xavier-bound McNair, an 88 by freshman Julie Geiger, a 92 by sophomore Julia Hoffman and a 95 by sophomore McKenzie Bell.

Jackson, under veteran coach Teal Harvey, does not have a senior on its roster. The Lady Polar Bears (338) also had five scores of 89 or better, led by junior Amanda Smith's 79.

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter: trogers@plained.com, 216-999-5169