

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS STATE GOLF

Young Medina Highland 8th; All-Ohio for Kenston's Henry

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COLUMBUS — Amid the golden yellow, amber red and burnt orange leaves which graced the Ohio State University Gray Course, one thing was obvious while perusing team and individual results at the Division I girls state golf championships.

That is, Saturday was a lousy day to play golf — particularly if you were from Northeast Ohio.

There were some bright spots other than the dazzling trees which were dulled by a gray and overcast sky. A youthful Medina Highland squad, with no seniors and a program only 3 years old, placed eighth in the 12-team field (350 stroke total), which was led by repeat champion Cincinnati Mason (315).

Kenston junior Nicki Henry shot a 78 to earn All-Ohio honors. The medalist was Alliance senior Tiana Jones with a 73.

It was a disappointing tournament for Walsh Jesuit in that the Warriors finished last in the field of 12 at 364, and senior Ariel McNair shot 81 to miss All-Ohio honors by a mere two strokes.

Among other area individuals, Hudson junior Natalie Goodson had an 82, Shaker Heights senior Caitlin Kempton an 85 and Magnificat senior Victoria Bello an 87.

Henry, considered one of Northeast Ohio's best golfers, made her initial visit to the state tournament a profitable one despite failing to post a birdie. She is involved in Birdies Fore ALS, a program which helps people like her grandmother, who has Lou Gehrig's disease. Her 55 birdies this season have raised \$7,000 for the program.

"I scrambled well today," said Henry, who tied for 10th place. "My driving, chipping and putting saved me. My goal today was



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Walsh Jesuit's Ariel McNair, blasting out of a sand trap, shot 81 to miss All-Ohio honors by two strokes.

to shoot a respectable score. Next year, I want to do better. Win state? I'd love to win it. . . . Wouldn't anyone?

"But I was more nervous trying to qualify for state than I was playing here. I was proud of that 76 at district [where she was medalist] because the weather was even worse than it was here."

McNair, hoping to win state, said her putter failed her.

"It's so weird . . . my putting was clicking all year, yet today it was totally dead," McNair said. "I had five three-putt greens. It's sad. . . . My last time playing high school golf and not [being] able to make a putt. I did give it my best."

A higher finish at state is something the Hornets at Highland are pointing for next season. Jessica Porvasnik, a freshman, shot a team-low 81, while sophomore Stephanie Horvath had an 86, sophomore Lauren McKinzie 91, freshman Jessica McRae 92 and junior Sarah Sniff 100.

"None of us played our best golf," Horvath said. "We all know we can play a lot better.."

Porvasnik played her final seven holes in 1 under. She nearly holed out a 7-iron on the par-4 seventh hole, and tapped in a 1-foot putt.

"Playing at state has encouraged me to play more tournament golf," she said. "I'll start doing that next weekend in Cincinnati and two weeks from now in Kentucky. I want to do better next year, and so do my teammates."

As for last place Walsh Jesuit — a place the three-time state champs are unaccustomed to?

"It's tremendous we got here with a team so young," Warriors coach Bill Reilly said. "I saw good things like [sophomore] McKenzie Bell shooting a 50 on her front nine, then hanging in there with a 41 on the back nine."

"But were we satisfied with what we did today in general? No, not at all. But time is on our side. . . . We'll improve."

