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## HIGH SCHOOL GOLF

# Ignatius boys, Highland girls look to make up some ground

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COLUMBUS — For the boys from St. Ignatius, let's just say there is a lot of ground to be made up in a short period of time.

The girls from Highland are at least in the same ZIP code as the team they are pursuing.

That's how things stood after the first round of the Division I boys and girls state golf tournaments, played under perfect conditions Friday on the Ohio State courses.

That would be perfect, as in the weather, with sunny skies and unseasonable temperatures in the high 60s after an early-morning frost caused a one-hour delay. The forecast for today's final rounds is even better with a predicted high in the low 70s.

It was a different story with the courses.

The 144 players in the field had something else to say about the courses and their pin placements. They used words such as "tough" and "difficult" and "nasty" and "brutal" and "dirty." They did not go as far as to label them unfair, only because everyone had to deal with them.

"I thought the course favored the high-ball hitters because if you weren't able to kind of drop your shots on the green, it was hard to keep them on the greens because they were so firm," said Highland coach Mary Becker. "I saw a lot of balls skipping off and rolling off."

The respective defending champions didn't seem to have much trouble as the boys from Columbus St. Charles and the girls from Mason posted superb



Koch

16-stroke lead on the Scarlet Course. St. Ignatius is second at 319 and Medina is third at 320.

"There's plenty of golf left, but there's a lot of work to be done," said St. Ignatius coach Terry Hopkins, whose team got a 4-over 75 from junior Beau Titsworth and a 79 from junior Matt Gerard. "You have to tip your hat to St. Charles. Those are great numbers."

Titsworth is in a tie for fourth behind first-round leader Michael Ricaurte (71) of St. Charles.

Medina's Bobby Koch is in third place overall after a 3-over 74, but none of his teammates were able to break 80. Still, coach Jeanne Pritchard was pleased.

"Not bad," she said. "We had some guys struggle, but Bobby shot lights out. We're happy. At least we let them know that a public school is around."

Pritchard, an OSU graduate, was one of the more vocal critics of the setup on the Scarlet Course, citing a combination of hard greens and challenging pin placements.

"The greens are just rock hard," said Pritchard, who has a team in the tournament for the third straight year. "You can't get the ball to spin. I don't care about hard pin placements as long as you can get the ball to

first-round numbers.

St. Charles, seeking a second straight title, had three players shoot in the 70s en route to a team score of 303 and a

spin. When the kids didn't think it would spin, then it would."

Mason's girls, seeking a third state title, were almost as precise with a score of 308 as three players broke 80 on the Gray Course. Highland, hoping to improve on last year's eighth-place finish, shot 319 and is in third place, two strokes behind runner-up Massillon Jackson.

"We're a little disappointed, but 308 is a great score by Mason," said Becker. "We have a lot of ground to make up and I know we can shoot better."

One player who doesn't have a lot of ground to make up is sophomore Jessica Porvasnik, who is tied for the lead with Mason's Emily Wright after shooting par-70.

"It was fun," said Porvasnik, who had three birdies, all on the back nine. "I came back after being 2-over on the front and I played well. I can't wait for tomorrow."

At one point during the round, the Highland camp feared it would trail by a wider margin. But juniors Stephanie Horvath and Lauren McKinzie shot 78 and 83, respectively, to keep the team within striking distance.

Kenston's Nicki Henry, The Plain Dealer's golfer of the year after last year's tie for 10th, is one of three players tied for fourth at 75, and Hudson's Natalie Goodson is seventh after a 76.

Lakota West's Korey Ward, trying to become the first three-time state champion in more than 25 years, is one of three players tied for fourth at 75.

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