

Towns County Sports

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Patton, Lady Indians go down swinging; just miss State title

By Joe Collins
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Royston - There were seven teams in the State Class A Public Girls Golf Championship and Stephanie Patton and the Towns Lady Indians were one of the favorites.

The girls played hard and came close to victory but the huge greens of Highland Walk at Victoria Bryant State Park and the climbing temperature took their toll. The Lady Indians finished the tournament in a tie for third with a total score of 204, just three shots shy of first place (Schley County and a shot back of second place Trion. However, Towns finished 38 shots ahead of fifth place Wilcox County.

Patton, just a sophomore, was low medalist for the team with a 97 and won State runner-up individually in a four-hole playoff over Ashley McDonald of Gordon Lee.

Patton was first off during the cool morning hours for the Lady Indians on the front nine followed by sophomores Danielle Diehl and Mia Manto. Junior Amber Williams began her round on the back nine.

It is not uncommon in an event of this repute for the team to start split on the two nines.

Head Coach Brett Keller was back and forth between the front and back nines to urge his girls on.

"We knew going in that the course would play tough because of the hills but it was the greens that got us. They are really big, and with the course playing at about 5700 yards, that left us with a lot of long putts and we didn't putt well. We just had to many three and four putts to win a championship of this caliber," said Keller. "We would have won this thing if we had putt like we usually do. I am



still very proud of the girls and the effort was there it just didn't work out for us today."

Indeed it was a tough day on the greens with the girls averaging over forty putts per round and that is too high an average for scoring well at the level of play state championships require. The girls needed to average approximately thirty-five putts per round and that would have easily won the championship for TCHS.

It was the proverbial nail in the coffin at the end of the day.

Putting is extremely important in competitive golf and can be the determining factor for many championships. It is one of the most important elements to control for victory and the girls succumb to the putting woes many golfers fall victim too in competition.

Another big issue for the girls was the heat. The temperature climbed into the mid nineties as the day went on and the course became like a sauna because it was wet from all the recent rains.

Heat exhaustion became a factor as the day progressed and some of the girls were forced to withdraw because of cramps and nausea. It was a tough day on a course many felt was an inap-



TCHS golf photos by Joe Collins

appropriate venue for the girl's championship.

Point University Head Women's golf coach Steve Patton, father of Stephanie Patton, who was simply a spectator for the day declared, "This is a tough venue for this level of girl's play. The hills and the temperature make this very difficult for these young ladies." Many of the parents and spectators were also displeased with the Georgia High School Association's choice of Highland Walk as the venue for the championship.

Despite all the tough conditions, Patton played fairly well. She shot an overall 97, which was good enough to leave her in a tie for second in the individual bracket with McDonald - Gordon Lee's number one player. They duelled it out



over four holes of sudden death, during the hottest part of the day, and in the end, a solid two putt par from Patton on the fourth hole of the playoff clinched second individually for the rising TCHS star. She actually had a chance to win on the first hole of sudden death but the putting woes continued and a three-putt bogey left her still in a tie with McDonald.

The girls played a respectful tournament despite the putting troubles they encountered. Williams finished in second for TCHS and tied for ninth in the State with a 107. Diehl came in third for the team, and 11th in State with a 108, and Manto followed with a 109 for a 12th place State finish. One amazing fact for the girls is if the format



called for four scores total instead of two, then TCHS would have won the championship. This shows the depth the team has and with all the girls returning in 2014, things might end up favoring the Lady Indians in next year's championship.

Rounding out the field were sixth place Echols County at 247 and Charlton County



at 268. Individual scores were State Champion Jordan Booker of Schley County with a 91, Patton and McDonald - second and third, respectively. Trion had a pair in fourth and fifth place with Reagan Middleton at 100 and Murphy Browning at 103.

Congratulations Lady Indians for winning Area and on a very successful season. TCHS and the community are proud of your efforts.

Moss holds first Junior Tennis Clinic at TCHS

By Joe Collins
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Towns County High School Head Tennis Coach Heather Moss held her first junior tennis clinic recently at the tennis complex located on the grounds of Towns County High School.

She had 14 young tennis players attending the three-day clinic, which included all the basics for playing tennis and keeping score. It was a very successful event as the weather held and the high school tennis stars turned out to mentor the up-and-coming athletes.

It is a known fact among high school coaches that to have a successful athletic program; it must have a training program in the younger grades like elementary and middle school. Professional baseball teams have farm leagues and it is a joke among college football athletes that the Southeastern Conference (SEC) has become the farm league for professional football. Whatever the source, athletes need training.

Moss recognized this need in her tennis program and initiated the junior clinic for the young tennis players in Towns County.

"We need to promote tennis in our school to get more individuals involved and this clinic is just what we need at



Participants in Coach Heather Moss' first ever Junior Tennis Clinic at Towns County High School.



Eryn Cochran instructs Towns' future stars at the Junior Tennis Clinic TCHS. We have several young stars on the horizon and they need to be taught the basics so they can improve and eventually become respectful players for TCHS," declared Moss. "I

love tennis and my mom got me started at a young age so I know it takes a lot of work to become a solid player. The younger we can work with these athletes the easier it will be for them to make

the transition to high school competition. It's a win, win for everyone."

Day One of the clinic worked on the basic ground strokes such as the forehand and the backhand. Day Two involved learning how to serve and to control the ever-important volley, which a player uses to set up and score points. Day Three covered how to play overall and keep score correctly. These basics will be involved in the development of a player's future ability.

Several of the girls high school team members were on hand to help teach and guide the clinic participants.

"I want to thank Eryn Cochran, Courtney Marshall, Jasmine Forrester and Carly Gilfilian for taking time from their busy school year to help teach, coach and instruct these young tennis players. I know it means a lot to the kids when student athletes get involved and show interest in their development," said Moss.

There were daily competitions held and the winners competed at the end of the clinic for prizes donated by Zaxby's. The kids also received a T-shirt, which read, "In tennis, Love means nothing." A very clever statement for a very good camp, designed to instruct and encourage tennis, in a time when tennis seems to be in decline among the younger generations.

Joe Collins
Tips from the Range



I have seen many tournaments recently where good putting would have, or did, decide the outcome. Putting is crucial to scoring well and must be practiced to be efficient, therefore; we must look into the art of putting. I think it prudent to look at the whole of putting and not break it all apart because everything works together in a proper putting stroke.

Get your notebook out cause good putting can change the way you look at golf.

Good putting can affect your total score in a round of golf more than any aspect of the game. If for instance a course has a par of 72, then theoretically you will stroke it 36 times on the putting surface. Even if you "one-putt" every green, that still makes the putter the most used club in the bag for any given round. This fact alone means we should focus on putting just as much, or more, than the actual swing.

When I hear that a player is a good putter, then automatically I think of two different abilities this player possess. To be a good putter, then one has to be a good reader of greens and probably has a solid stroke to react to that read. The combination of these elements makes a good putter. If someone says, "He/She is a good sand player." That means they are good putters because if you missed the putt after a good sand shot, then you failed to get up and down. A good sand player is a good putter and a good putter is a good reader of greens and so on.

Putting is very important to all aspects of golf and you will find that if you putt well, you will hit the ball better. It's one of the phenomenon's in golf.

First, let's look at the skill of reading the greens for break. Simply put, this is inspecting the lay of the ground your ball will roll across as it makes its way to the hole. Finding the slope of the lay is a crucial point that has to be dealt with for left and right breaks. The actual lay of the green is the relationship of uphill and downhill from front to back of the green.

Every putt that has break will be influenced by the lay and slope of a putting surface. Logically then, downhill is fast and uphill will be slower. So goes the lay of the green from front to back or back to front. Once you feel comfortable with how the ball is going to roll, you will have to learn to match the

speed of your roll with the read of the green. The only way to master this is through practice to develop feel. It will always be a guess as to how hard to roll the ball but practice gives you feedback and that is what you look for when practicing your putting stroke. Here again, the read will affect speed and speed will affect the read so you have to take a little time to study your putts, generally more time than I see a lot of amateurs taking. It is almost impossible to get a correct read from only one side on the hole.

The stroke itself is simple to understand but difficult to perform. You must take out all the moving parts that you can. Let only your arms swing from under your shoulders. Use no wrist in any part of the stroke and keep your hands quiet. Keep your head perfectly still until the ball is on its way to the hole.

Always make sure that your alignment is correct as faulty alignment will cause the ball to start off on the wrong line. Your sub-conscious will know you are off line and you will pull or push the putt to compensate. Poor alignment is very detrimental to rolling the ball well.

Always make sure that you are in balance as poor balance will cause the putter head to wobble and that will also make the ball start on the wrong line. Center your weight over your ankles and stay steady. Don't rock back and forth. As you look down at the ball, notice you have made a triangle with your arms from the shoulders to the grip.

Focus on this triangle moving back and forth during the stroke and this will help eliminate wrist motion. Do not use your wrist for any part of the stroke.

I hope this helps with putting. Make sure you spend a little time reading the green from both sides of the ball and you will see a different world when it comes to reading greens. Don't be bothered if someone gets on to you for "acting like a pro" because when you start making more putts, and your score starts dropping, you will see them start walking to both sides of the ball to read the green just like you. Let me hear from you.

I know some of you are having trouble with your swing so just ask and let's see if I can help.

Please send your questions to jcollins.tcherald@windstream.net. Remember, practice will make you better and that makes golf more enjoyable. Good luck and I will see you on the course!

MGC competition season ends at State

By Todd Forrest
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Blairsville - The Mountain Gymnastics Center has completed another competition season and is already prepping for 2013-14.

Last month the MGC squads took part in the Zenit Invitational in Canton where nine-year old Emma Patterson picked up a first place all-around finish with a score of 34.55 in the Prep-Op 1 level.

Emma topped the field on the beam and reeled in third place finishes the vault, bars, and floor exercises.

Two 11-year olds placed in Prep-Op 1, Erin Raper and Jordan Swanson. Erin came in second place in her age division with an impressive all around score of 37.125. Swanson was fifth with a score of 35.55.

Sierra Louima, age 12, came in third place after taking first place on the beams. Her overall score was a 37.725.

Prep-Op 2 saw two of MGC's gymnasts take home the gold. Eight-year old Jaylen Hoges came in first on the vault and beam for an overall score of 33.775.

Reagan Ledford dominated the vault and bars in the 10-year old division en route to a 34.45 all-around score and first place.

Laura McGaha came in second in the eight-year old group after placing first on the bars and the floor.

Nine-year old Mia McCombs picked up second after an outstanding performance on the beam.

Kaylie Kendall and Evelyn McBride each placed third in their respective divisions.

Addicyn Dockery and Madelyn Savage each recorded fourth place finishes and Lexi Stephens added another top-10 performance by coming in seventh.

Jacey Lee was MGC's highest placer in Level 3, with a sixth place all-around score. Caymin Thompson was seventh, and Annalyse Kiernan was 10th.

Other MGC participants were Haley Craig in 12th place, Kaitlyn Daves in 13th place, and Brandy Barlow in 14th place.

At the State Meet in Cobb County on April 20th and 27th, Raper came in fourth all around in Prep-Op 1. Nine-year old Olivia Blocker was seventh, Swanson

and Patterson were eighth, respectively and Louima finished 12th.

Hoges just missed a State title in Prep-Op 2, coming in second. McGaha was third, Ledford fourth, and McBride fifth. Dockery was sixth, Kendall was tied for seventh, McCombs came in 11th, Stephens was 15th, and Savage was 17th.

Level 3 saw Thompson lead MGC with a sixth place finish. Kay and Craig were 10th,



The Mountain Gymnastics Center Competition team point toward their goal - reaching the "9.0 Club." The club is for gymnasts who score a 9.0 or a higher in four events - the vault, the beam, the bars, and the floor exercises. Photo/Todd Forrest

Kiernan came in 11th, and Barlow 12th. The team came finished with a total score of 104.265 in Level 3.

The MGC is offering summer camps and are training hard over the summer for the upcoming season in the fall and the State Meet in 2014.

For more details contact the Mountain Gymnastics Center at (706) 745-3325 or visit their website at www.mtngym.com.