

Breaking down barriers: Falcons go low, win first SOC girls golf title

SPORTS

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Minford senior Annie Lawson was named the Southern Ohio Conference Player of the Year following her round of nine-over in Wednesday's SOC girls golf championship.

Members of the Minford High School girls golf team and coach Chuck Miller following their win at the first-ever Southern Ohio Conference girls golf championship at The Elks Country Club. Pictured (T-B): Kylie Pace, Mackenzie Koverman, coach Chuck Miller, Annie Lawson and Alaina McRoberts.



Submitted photo

McDERMOTT — For the second time in as many weeks, golfers from Minford made history and supplanted themselves at the top of the Southern Ohio Conference.

However, unlike their male counterparts whose league championship was the first in 35 years, the Lady Falcons' golf team won its first-ever SOC title in its first attempt of doing so.

That's because in the long and storied history of the Southern Ohio Conference, never before had there been a girls golf championship — until Wednesday.

On Wednesday afternoon at The Elks Country Club in McDermott, 22 girls golfers from SOC member-schools participated in the league's inaugural championship for the sport.

The move to host the first championship event of its kind in league history is a testament to the member schools' coaches who help promote the sport locally, says Dave Stamm, secretary/treasurer of the SOC.

"All of the credit goes to the golf coaches themselves — they promote the sport tremendously," Stamm said. "As a conference, we want our students to have the opportunity to participate in various sports. We believe as a conference, we must have a full spectrum of sports for our students; we can't be simply a football and basketball league. Also, the fact that Shawnee State has a girls golf team helps promote the sport."

One of those coaches Stamm is referring to is Minford's Chuck Miller, who was again named SOC Coach of the Year for the second time in a seven-day span.

For Miller and his fellow league compatriots, their hope is that having this event will continue the attraction to the sport from girls who can carry on with the game for the rest of their lives.

"Each team has had a girl or two from time to time, but this is the first time we have had multiple schools field full teams at the same time," Miller said. "All the girls have been so excited about having girls only matches. The league coaches have done a tremendous job organizing those matches. I hope that this will get more and more girls interested in the game — we try to emphasize that golf is a sport you can play for the rest of your life."

Each of the 22 golfers which competed for their schools completed a nine-hole round with tee times staggered 10 minutes apart beginning at 3:30 p.m.

Leading Minford in its championship team score of 230 were seniors Annie Lawson and Mackenzie Koverman.

Lawson, whose nine-over (45) round earned her Player of the Year honors, and Koverman, whose 17-over (53) round earned her all-league honors, are far from new to the game at the high school level.

Prior to their senior season, both Lawson and Koverman have competed alongside area boys golfers during the regular and postseasons.

Not only did their play on Wednesday help win them a league championship, but Lawson and Koverman's play throughout this and previous seasons has helped set an expectation level for their teammates to follow, Miller believes.

"You can look at almost any championship team in any sport and see the value of senior leadership," Miller said. "Annie and Mackenzie have been playing in, and holding their own, in boys matches for three years. They aren't really vocal leaders — they let their play do the talking. My other girls see the hard work they put in and it makes them work that much harder. It's been really fun to watch."

West's Lexi Deaver fired a 12-over (48) round to finish as the runner-up individual, earning all-conference honors in the process.

The Lady Senators finished tied for 2nd-place as a team with Northwest with a team score of 247.

Northwest's low golfer was senior Jaclyn Burchett, who fired a 16-over (52) round — herself also earning all-SOC honors by finishing in the top six.

Lauren Blevins of Eastern and freshman Ava Messer of South Webster were also named all-SOC — for their rounds of 15-over (51) and 17-over (53), respectively.

Waverly finished in fourth-place as a team with a score of 260.

Aiden Peoples and Ryane Bond each shot 28-over (64) to tie for the Lady Tigers' low round.

Area girls golfers will begin their postseason trek in sectional tournaments on Monday, Sept. 28 — at both Jaycees Golf Course in Chillicothe and Franklin Valley Golf Course in Jackson.

Individual Results

Annie Lawson, Minford — 45

Lexi Deaver, West — 48

Lauren Blevins, Eastern — 51

Jaclyn Burchett, Northwest — 52

Ava Messer, South Webster — 53

Mackenzie Koverman, Minford — 53

Audrey Pennington, Northwest — 61

Hunter Slack, South Webster — 61

Leah Abbott, Valley — 62

Lacy Blevins, Eastern — 62

Maddy Taylor, Northwest — 64

Kylie Pace, Minford — 65

Aiden Peoples, Waverly — 64

Ryane Bond, Waverly — 64

Sara Campbell, West — 65

Rylee Coy, Western — 65

Alaina McRoberts, Minford — 67

Reese Nichols, Waverly — 67

Gracie Vernier, West — 67

Sydni Calihan, West — 67

Sophie Simonton, Waverly — 67

Caitlyn Montavon, Northwest — 70