

# Durant varsity golf teams ready to tee off

By Carlie Jo Fusco

Spring is here, which means our golf athletes are getting ready to hit the course.

Last season, the girls' golf roster was filled with three seniors and two freshmen.

Sophomore Lauren Callison is the only returning athlete for the golf team. Coming into a season with all new teammates, Callison will be taking on the leadership role.

She finished last season with a nine-hole low of 47 and an 18-hole low of 96.

"Three seniors out and three new golfers in," she said. "As the only one with any experience, I will be filling a leadership role that I didn't have to last year."

As a teammate, Callison is already seeing improvements from the newcomers.

"The new golfers have already made visible improvements in open gyms and off-season work," she said.

"They will learn a lot this season, and I hope they continue to improve as the season goes on, but more importantly, just enjoy the sport of golf in general."

Over the off-season, Callison has been working to improve her short game. As she was three strokes shy of making state last season, she will be pushing herself to make it this year.

"That has brought a higher level of competitiveness into this season for me," she said. "Last season, I really just tried to improve as much as I could as the season went on. I wasn't as competitive as I am now."

Head Coach Denise Ahrens says that Callison is responsible for most of the recruiting. Her goal for the team is to keep improving every time they're out on the course.

"I want to see the girls keep improving and to get excited about golf," she said.

The girls' first meet will be on April 3 at the Wahkonsa Country Club against Wilton.

The boys' golf team, however, has four returning athletes and four newcomers.

Head Coach Casey Strub's last appearance at the state golf tournament was in 2017 when Leo Callison made a solo run his senior year. However, Coach Strub has high hopes this season.

"Our team's long-term goal this year is to make it to state," he said.

While he doesn't think any of the boys specifically stand out, he knows that the returning members have put themselves to work during the off-season.

"I do know that a few of the returning golfers have put in a lot of extra work in the off-season with one-on-one training," he



Photo by Coach Denise Ahrens

Sophomore Lauren Callison marks her ball at the DeWitt tournament last season.

said.

Returning senior Elliott Fortin finished last season with a nine-hole low of 44 and an 18-hole low of 94.

Fortin wants to keep improving on his nine-hole game along with his driving and putting skills. As a leader, he believes that the motivation within the team is to have consistency.

While the team motto hasn't been established, Fortin would like to switch mindsets from last season.

"I would like to establish a more competitive side of the team instead of just having fun," Fortin said.

The boys' first meet will be in Solon at the Lake McBride Golf Course on March 31.

## Formula From page 1

Durant will stand under the new classification system. Durant played in Class 1A last year with an enrollment of 170 students grades 9-11 but was one student away from the Class A enrollment total of 169 students.

The new classification system, which only applies to football, takes into account the number of students who receive free or reduced lunches at school districts statewide.

That number is multiplied by 40 percent, then that final figure is taken off of the total enrollment count.

For example, if a school had 200 students in grades 9-11 and had 50 students receiving free or reduced lunches, that num-

ber of 50 would be multiplied by 40 percent for a total of 20.

That means 20 students would be taken off of the enrollment number of 200 for a new enrollment total of 180 students.

According to Mr. Chizek, the formula takes into account the economic status of students who may not go out for football because they must take care of family members like brothers or sisters or get a part-time job to help support the family.

This fall, the IHSAA classification committee, which consists of around 15 superintendents, principals, and athletic directors, changed the classification system after it was put on the back burner due to

COVID-19.

The IHSAA has adopted this classification system from the state of Minnesota, which implemented it 10 years ago.

Under the new system, Mr. Chizek believes if two teams playing each other are economically alike, the score margins should be closer, and the games should be more competitive.

The topic of football classifications has always been a popular conversation at the classification committee meetings, but it had never talked about actually modifying the school's enrollment number.

"This is the first time that we are actually talking about modifying the school's number rather than just what their enrollment is," said Mr. Chizek.

"That is based on a membership survey that was sent out to superintendents about right before COVID hit."

The modified enrollment figures have been sent out to school districts to verify, but 30 districts have been arguing with the Iowa Department of Education that the data it sent out was not correct; therefore, the numbers are not final, and the final classifications cannot be disclosed at this time.

"The athletic director at Durant has seen your preliminary numbers, but it

doesn't say what class you are in," said Mr. Chizek.

"No one in the River Valley Conference or anybody statewide actually knows where they are at right now because those numbers are not final."

As of right now, football is the only sport that will be affected by the new classification system.

"Football is a numbers game," said Mr. Chizek.

"It takes 11 to play offense, and 11 to play defense, and some programs right now are struggling with their numbers."

He said he believed "there's going to be pressure to expand this into other sports."

If the new classification system works out for football, Mr. Chizek could see this criteria applying "across the board" to all 10 IHSAA sports. If a girls' sport were to adopt this new criteria, Mr. Chizek believes it would pertain mostly to volleyball.

"As far as the girls' athletic union, the sport that they're particularly looking at right now, if they were to adopt it, would be just volleyball," said Mr. Chizek.

"I understand that's what they're hearing there from their members. Their biggest concern in volleyball is social economics."

Durant's Head Football Coach Joel Diederichs has not yet developed an opinion on the new classification system; however, he is interested to see what class Durant will play in next season.

More than 34 percent of Durant students are eligible to receive free or reduced lunches. The state average is 38 percent, according to Mr. Chizek.



Photo by Kylie Meyermann

Coach Tom Compton huddles with Wildcat football players. Next year, the team could drop a class size.

### Arty's Ice Cream and Grill's boys' track athlete of the month

Sophomore Conner Schwarz is running the 100-meter dash, the 200-meter dash, and the 400-meter dash this spring for the Wildcats. His goal this season is to make the 4x400-meter relay or be an alternate for state. Schwarz also hopes to not get injured again this season. He participates in track to get faster and hang out with his friends.

**Schwarz**

609 W. 5th St.  
Wilton, IA 52778  
563-732-2222

### Peel's Inc. golfer of the month

Sophomore Lauren Callison has been golfing her whole life. Last year, she was three strokes shy of making it to the state meet, which is now a motivation for this upcoming season. Her personal record for nine holes is 47, and her personal record for 18 holes is 96.

**Callison**

755 W. Iowa 80 Road  
Walcott, IA 52773  
(563) 468-5460

### Today's Dentistry coach of the month

Coach Denise Ahrens is the varsity girls' golf coach and the assistant volleyball coach at Durant High School. She started coaching softball in her hometown when she was 18 years old, and she has been coaching at Durant since 2005. She said, "I enjoyed working with young people and being around sports events." Other sports she has coached include basketball and track.

**Ahrens**

502 9th Ave.  
Durant, IA 52747  
(563) 785-4541

### Apex Ink and Apparel's girls' track athlete of the month

708 5th St., Durant, IA 52747  
563-785-6223

Junior Macyn Huston plans to run the shuttle hurdle relay and the 100-meter hurdles this spring. Huston said, "I enjoy being able to compete against other schools as well as staying in shape for other sports." Huston wants to set a PR and make it to state.

**Huston**