

Callison, girls' team, eye state golf meet



Photo by Denise Ahrens
Senior Lauren Callison reads the green before making a putt in a meet last season.

By Colby Gast

As the golf season opens up, Durant senior Lauren Callison and the girls' team look to finally break through and qualify for

state after falling short the past two years.

Last season, Callison missed a state bid by just two strokes.

Callison dominated throughout the regular season, setting a 18-hole school record with a score of 84 along the way and breezing through the first round of regionals. But one poor round in Callison's eyes in the second round stopped her bid to qualify.

Along with Callison, the team also came up just short, finishing third behind the two state qualifiers, Easton Valley and East Buchanan.

"Finishing just short of state the past two years has really pushed me this off-season to continue improving and make that jump to where I really want to be," said Callison.

Callison also believes Durant has the team this year to make it all the way.

"I think as a team we have come a long way, and we had some girls posting better and better scores as last season went on," said Callison.

"I think it's definitely in our reach to make it to state as a team this year."

Head Coach Denise Ahrens also believes she has the team this year to make a state run.

"We have a strong group returning," she said.

The Wildcats will be returning five of the seven golfers from last year, including Callison, senior Leah Feuerbach, junior Kila Wink, sophomore Bailey Scott, and sopho-

more Kyleigh Barclay, but Coach Ahrens has a total of 15 golfers coming out this year.

Callison recently signed to play golf at St. Ambrose University next season, and she has been working in the offseason with the St. Ambrose coaches on a new swing pattern, along with playing on a golf simulator whenever she can.

"I imagined what it would be like to be done after my senior year, and I didn't like it," said Callison.

"I felt like my golf career was far from over. I think I could have way more potential at the next level if I continue to work hard, and I'm very excited for what's to come."

Callison has a few goals in mind for this season.

"First of all, I want to make it to state, but I also want to break my own record," Callison said. "I don't think an 84 is the best I can do."

Callison enters the season as the 19th-ranked girls' golfer in class 1A.

On the boys' side, Coach Casey Strub may have lost graduate Collier Rockow, his number one golfer who finished ninth in the state tournament two years ago, but Coach Strub comes into this year encouraged by a slew of new and returning golfers.

"Seventeen kids have signed up for golf this year," said Coach Strub.

"I think it will be great for the competition aspect for our team. Every player on the team will be pushed by their teammates

to make varsity."

Coach Strub understands that he can't just replace a golfer and leader like Rockow, but he hopes that Rockow left an impact on the returning golfers.

"He had a strong work ethic towards golf that hopefully rubbed off on some of the young players last year," said Coach Strub.

Four of eight golfers are returning from last year's roster: sophomores Cameron Utter, Colton Buesing, Hunter McCoy, and Tayte Schroeder.

Buesing is especially excited for the new season and has been preparing for it ever since the last one ended.

"I have been golfing two to three times a week when it is warm outside," said Buesing, "and whenever it isn't nice enough to golf outside, I will go golf on my grandpa's golf simulator in his shop."

Buesing's best nine-hole score last year was a 53, and his best 18-hole score was 113, but he hopes to lower those scores this year.

"An expectation I have for myself is to shoot under 100 at most of the meets," Buesing said.

Buesing was introduced to the game of golf by his grandpa. They would golf every once in a while, but that eventually led to Buesing's love for the game.

"I like that golf is a fun and challenging sport and that you can play it all throughout your life," said Buesing.

Coach Ahrens set to retire at end of school year

By Lauren Callison

Coaching, officiating, and teaching, Mrs. Denise Ahrens has experienced it all.

After 24 years of teaching math in the Bennett and Durant school districts, she will retire after this school year. But Mrs. Ahrens, who started coaching girls' golf in 2015 and has led two teams to the state meet, hopes to keep coaching the girls' golf team next year.

She has been coaching many different sports since she was just 18 years old and has also spent many years on the other side, officiating for various sports as well.

"The thing I have enjoyed most about coaching and teaching is working with the kids," said Mrs. Ahrens in a recent interview.

"I have always enjoyed being around sports and helping young kids learn the game."

She first coached a youth softball team while attending Scott Community College. She graduated from the University of Iowa where she got a teaching degree.

"After being asked to coach the youth softball, I enjoyed it, and I continued coaching," she said.

Officiating and teaching has helped her to be a better coach and understand all perspectives of the game.

"It was in college, 1989, that I started to officiate as well," said Mrs. Ahrens. "I officiated the intramural games and was a part of that officiating association."

She has since spent time umping high school softball games, men's fast pitch games in Dixon and Donahue, and has officiated some junior high volleyball and softball games as well.

Mrs. Ahrens' impressive school coaching resume spans more than three decades at several area schools.

She was assistant softball coach at Bettendorf High School from 1989-1994 and assistant girls' basketball coach at North Scott High School from 1989-1992. From 1992 to 2001, she coached three sports at Bettendorf Middle School.

From 2001-2004, she taught at Ben-

nett and coached junior high basketball and was the assistant varsity volleyball coach.

In 2005, she began teaching at Durant and over the years has coached junior high volleyball, basketball, and softball, as well as fresh/soph volleyball.

In 2015, she added golf to her coaching resume and led the team to state that year, which included her daughter, Whitney.

She also led the 2021 girls' golf team to the state tournament, and Paige McKee made it to the state tournament as an individual in 2017.

Golf has since become her favorite sport to coach.

"It is fun seeing athletes who do not know much about golf when they start and then gain so much knowledge about the game and improve their skills," she said.

That 2021 team included Durant 2022 graduate Karissa Hoon, who played collegiate golf at North Iowa Area Community College and currently works at Suncourt in Durant. Hoon was also coached by Mrs.

Ahrens in volleyball.

"She has always been one of my favorites both as a teacher and coach," said Hoon. "As a coach she is very supportive and is always wanting the best for each athlete."

Hoon and Mrs. Ahrens regularly get together to play a round of golf in the summer but will be seeing more of each other as Hoon will serve as a volunteer golf coach for the varsity team this spring.

"We both knew the connection was there to potentially start coaching together one day," said Hoon.

They both look forward to working together this season.

"We have a large number of athletes out this year, and I can't wait to see the potential we have," said Hoon.

Mrs. Ahrens finds comfort in impacting athletes and students, like Hoon, throughout her career.

"One thing that makes coaching and teaching worth it is when your past students and athletes tell you how much they appreciated you and your help," said Mrs. Ahrens.

Raynor Door's girls' track athlete of the month



2370 West Lake Blvd.
Davenport, IA 52804
563.391.9566 – phone
www.raynorqc.com

Senior Mariah Alpen has been running track for eight years. She competes in the 100-meter hurdles, long jump, and relays. She wants to make state for long jump and in a relay. Her favorite part about track is seeing all of her progress throughout the season, running relays, and socializing with her friends on the track team.



Alpen

Peel's Inc. golfer of the month



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

Senior Lauren Callison has been golfing for four years. Callison's personal best is an 84 for 18 holes, which is also a school record. She wants to make it to state and set a new nine-hole record for Durant. Her favorite part of the sport is playing new courses.



Callison

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



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

Junior Colby Gast has been running track for four years. He won a state title as a freshman in the 4x400-meter relay. He hopes to make it to state again for any race Coach Knipfel puts him in and wants to break personal records. His favorite part about track is making new friendships with people from other schools.



Gast

Apex Ink and Apparel's junior high athlete of the month



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

Eighth grader Jordan Enfield has been running track for three years. She competes in the 400-meter dash, 200-meter dash, 100-meter dash, and long jump. She also plans on competing in high jump this year. Her favorite part about track is running the 400-meter dash.



Enfield