

Mackinac Island Lakers Place First at Wawashkamo Tournament

By Sean Ely

If someone told the six members of the Mackinac Island Public School golf team that having three first-year players would hurt their chances at success, they could just show their scorecards. They've improved at every competition.

"At our last tournament, we shot the best we did all year," said sophomore Michael Gamble. "That's how it's been every time we compete. We got first place at Wawashkamo on Wednesday. We're really getting to know the different courses, too."

Wednesday, May 16, head coach Mary Patay's Lakers golf team, consisting of junior Woody Beardsley, sophomore Michael Gamble, freshmen Paul Fisher and Thomas Rilenge, and eighth-graders Marie Bunker and Maggie Chambers, went up against schools such as Munising Baptist, Beaver Island, and Grand Marais. They shot their best score ever, keeping it in the 190s, winning the competition. Mr. Gamble said the team ranks in the middle of all the area schools, both in the Northern Lights League as well as teams from DeTour, Pickford, Brimley, and Cedarville.

The future looks bright, with the entire team able and willing to return next year.

"We're still young," Mr. Gamble said. "That's something that's going to help us."

Another aspect of the team is its chemistry. With a small squad, the team was able to motivate each other and stay close as the season wore on.

Coach Patay always had a supportive spirit throughout the season, the team said. She cared about the team and how everyone competed.

"She always encourages us and watches us at the tournaments to see how we're doing," Mr. Gamble said. "She'd encourage us to play as much as we possibly could."

For the girls, she wouldn't let them give up.

"She told us not to get mad, and we should have fun and do our best," Miss Bunker said.

Coach Patay loves this coaching job because of the chances to see the students get better and find confidence in themselves.

"Marie had the best score overall," she said. "She even shot par on one of the holes. That was a huge accomplishment. Marie is learning and getting a lot better. It's great to see. I love working with all of them; they're awesome."

Of their progress, Ms. Patay said, "The fact that they like to go out there and golf so much is



incredible to me. They put pressure on themselves to get better, and they enjoy it. I enjoy working with them. They've really held their own against the other schools. Even when there was snow on the ground, they found a hole that was clear and said, 'This one doesn't have snow, let's shoot on this hole.' That showed a lot of dedication to the sport."

With team chemistry brings that sense of messing around and having fun. The guys would occasionally poke fun at the girls, but were always

there for a helpful hint, too, Miss Bunker and Miss Chambers said.

For the girls, as first-year golfers, the sport has been a constant learning process. Overall, they enjoy the atmosphere and competition that the different meets bring.

At left: Sophomore Michael Gamble lines up a putt Wednesday, May 16, at Wawashkamo Golf Club.

"This is my first year playing golf, and it was hard at first, but it became really fun, I enjoyed it," Miss Bunker said. "I'm still not that good, but I'm learning. I've learned all the new rules, because I didn't really know much about golf, and now I know which clubs to use for what distances."

Both the boys and girls of the team agree that the constant traveling and school interaction helps new friendships form. The girls commented that they have gotten close to golfers from many of the schools they compete against.

Throughout the season, the six

golfers practiced daily, mainly at Wawashkamo Golf Club. Although the season for the girls is over, and soon will be for the boys, they will continue to practice.

"We play all the time and we will in the summer, too," Mr. Rilenge said. "I just love golfing and being out there on the courses."

The four male golfers will compete in the state competition at Bark River June 1.



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