

Men's golf team drives its way to successful start

BY MAC BALL
Sports Editor

Coach Joe Franks and the men's golf team began the season with flying colors. The athletes are sitting in first place in conference despite having somewhat lower expectations coming into the season.

Last season, the team finished ninth in the state tournament after winning the regional tournament and finishing second in conference. Five seniors: Ryan Parrish, Adam Friedman, Zach Pulliam, Jake Williams and Gerrick Polinsky, deserve much of the credit, as they played in the top six during their sophomore, junior, and senior seasons. Now that they have graduated, and only one returning starter remains: Bryan Griffin.

Starting for the Whirlies all four years of

his high school career, Senior Captain Griffin aspires to earn what only one other person has been able to do, sign Coach Frank's golf bag four times. Franks only allows players to sign the bag if they played in the state tournament that season. Griffin has played in it the past three years and has a very strong chance of doing so again at the end of this season. Even if the overall team does not qualify for the state tournament, he can still make the individual roster and play as a representative for the Whirlies.

Thanks to the team's rich history with coaches Joe Frank and Phil Weaver, the team may very well still make regionals and states. Franks has taught social studies for nearly 30 years, while Weaver

retired from his position as a guidance counselor seven years ago. Both have coached the golf team for almost 15 years with teams winning the Metro-4AA Championship five times and Franks winning the Coach of the Year Award each year. Whirlies have made it to the regional tournament 13 times and the state tournament nine times. Showcasing their talent at the state tournament for the past three years, the golfers finished 11th, 11th, and tied for ninth, respectively.

Next year, both coaches plan to retire after the season, and Coach Franks plans to retire as an educator as well, after 30 total years of teaching.

Other than Griffin, the team players fluctuate in the bottom half of the top six who play in



Junior Rex Humphries prepares to hit his drive while playing in a conference match. Humphries has played the number six spot for the Whirlies throughout the season, adding depth to the group as it rebuilds from last year's state tournament team. *Lifetouch Photo*

"A" team conference matches. Generally, junior Kyle Webb plays #2, followed by freshman Alex Burris, sophomore

Mackenzie Cole, and juniors Casey Foster and Rex Humphries.

Other players include Gordon Dick, and Banks

Wilson, sophomore Tate Overbey, and freshmen Coleman Fairburn, Noah Williams, and Harrison Punyan.

Women's varsity soccer team kicks its way to a great start

JACOB SECHTER
Opinion Editor

Women's varsity soccer players have been dominating the field. Although they have only played a few games thus far, their talent is bringing them quite a bit of success. They won three of four scrimmages and tied in the other. Scores were 1-0 against Northern; 2-0 against Williams; 4-0 against Yancey; and 2-2 against Ragsdale. Then the Whirlies defeated Northwest 6-2. Obviously, the athletes' combination of skill and experience is proving them to be quite a challenge to any

competitors who cross their paths.

Many factors contribute to their success, but one of the most important is teamwork.

"Teamwork is a huge asset on the field. You must work together by communicating to one another. This creates a rhythm on the field and helps everyone play together better," said senior Lauren Greeson, who has been playing soccer since she was three.

"You can't win a game by yourself; everyone contributes to win, and that's why I love it," said senior Alex Hill.

Naturally, close friendships develop on this team of dedicated girls.

"My teammates are some of my best friends," said Hill.

Coach Herk Degraw also deserves credit for the team's success.

"What makes him a good coach is that he is so involved in helping us get better, and he will do everything in his power to do this. He always gives constructive criticism," said Greeson.

Hill agrees wholeheartedly: "He's easy to talk to and knows a lot about soccer to help us succeed."

Even so, success does not come easy.

"The hardest part of being on the team is keeping your priorities straight. During the season, school and soccer must come before all social events," said Greeson.

She has found her own way of handling the stress of keeping up with school work while playing a sport.

"I just make sure to prioritize what needs to get done first. After soccer, I do not waste time when I come home. I start on my

work right away, so I won't be up working all night."

Hill says she handles her school work easily, but "waking up early on game days to go eat breakfast" is her least favorite activity.

Both girls claim that the most rewarding part of being on the team is experiencing a victory.

"Beating other teams and having a good time with all of my teammates doing it is the best. My most memorable experience playing on the Whirlie soccer team was last year in a double-overtime against Page on their home field. We scored a goal with only a couple minutes left to win the game," said Greeson.

Although neither of the girls will play for her respective college soccer team, they both want to play for a club team.

"I started playing soccer at age three because my parents signed me up. Ever since then, I have been motivated to keep playing because it has become my passion, and I enjoy it. The feeling of success when we win makes it that much better," said Greeson.



Internet graphic

Congratulations:

To the senior males who won the first Powder Puff volleyball game, hosted by the Whirlie Athletes in Action, on Wednesday, February 22.

To the Administration for hosting a great afternoon of recreation and food for the faculty on their Staff Development Day on Wednesday, March 14.

To all the basketball fans who chose the NCAA Final Four accurately and to those who actually picked the winning team!