



LOCKPORT GIRLS REGIONAL GOLF



By Randy Whalen

Yes, every stroke in golf does count.

Just ask the Lockport Township girls golf team.

Led by the top score of medalist, Lizzie Anderson, the Porters pulled off a comeback to tie for second in the Class 2A Minooka Regional on Wednesday, Oct. 7 at Heritage Bluffs Golf Club in Channahon.

For a moment it even looked like Lockport's comeback might produce a regional championship. But in the end, it was Lincoln-Way Central, with a score of 348, which won its fifth regional title in the past six seasons. The Porters and Lincoln-Way West, which had been in front most of the day, both finished with 350 scores.

Lockport, however, got second place based on the fifth player tie-breaker. Only the top two teams and top four individuals from each regional qualify for the sectional. The Porters, who won a regional in 2018 but didn't qualify as a team last fall, will be at the Champaign Centennial Sectional. That will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 13 at the University of Illinois Golf Club.

"Down the stretch, I've never experienced anything like this," Lockport coach Matt Major said. "Both Claire (Ancevicus) and Lizzie pared 18 and they're our leaders. They came through.

"Every stroke counts. The greens were fast and it was a grind, it really was. But that's golf. It will be a lot of fun for the kids to go to the sectional."

Because of a complaint by Lincoln-Way West, there was a 15-minute delay afterward and the official winning team was unknown. Officials from Minooka had to call the Illinois High School Association to determine if Lincoln-Way Central coach, Brian Shannon, had violated a rule after showing one of his players how to swing in a certain situation right before she hit the ball on the final hole.

There was a possibility of the Knights receiving either a disqualification or a 2-stroke penalty for that, which the later would have thrown the standings into a 3-way tie. The Porters would have then been the regional champions, based on the best fifth carded score. Lincoln-Way Central would have got second while the Warriors still wouldn't have qualified as a team because of the least best fifth score. But in the end, the IHSA ruled that the Knights, who finished third in the state in Class 2A in 2018 and fourth last year, did not violate any rule and they were the winner.

The Joliet Co-Op team (356) was fourth. Followed by Minooka (391), Plainfield South (415), Bradley-Bourbonnais (421), Plainfield Central (431), Ottawa Township (434), LaSalle-Peru (440), and Kankakee (551).

Individually Anderson was among the leaders most of the day and the junior played steady down the stretch to finish with the 8-over, 80. That was two strokes better than seniors Morgan Anderson, from Joliet, and Polly Ruhnke from Lincoln-Way West, who were among the actual five players that advanced individually because of a tie for the final spot.

"I didn't play my best," Anderson said. "But even though I didn't play the greatest and still won, it's nice."

Anderson is used to winning as she captured the individual state championship at Homer Jr. High as an eighth-grader. But a bad start and a malfunction of the scoring app didn't help her.

"I bogeyed three holes in a row to start both nine's," Anderson said. "Plus my app wasn't working and I didn't know where I was in the standings. I always like to know and it kind of reminded me of winning it in eighth grade because I didn't know then either. The last four holes I played it safe as I got a bogey and three pars. I knew I had to be there for my team."

Bella Bozen, a junior, shot an 85 for Lockport which tied her for fifth overall. Ancevicus, a 4-year varsity veteran who qualified for state as an individual last season, finished with a 90. Fellow senior Katie Tomczuk and freshman Gianna White both carded a 95. So either one's score could be used for the fourth or fifth golfer and that was key. Senior Fiona Heeney (105) rounded out the Porter golfers.

"It's so crazy and I don't know how this happened," Tomczuk said of the end, which saw the Porters make up three strokes on the final hole. "It would have been over for us and it would have been sad. But I guess in the end I'm the decision-maker and I'm glad it's clear that I had the fifth score."

Ancevicus just missed a birdie putt on the 18th. But salvaged par and that proved to be big.

"My birdie putt lipped out and I didn't even realize how badly we could have needed it," Ancevicus said. "We had played a practice round here and during that, I shot in the 70s. Everyone had a rough day here (at the regional) but at the end of the day it was a good feeling."

The last time Anderson was at the University of Illinois Golf Club, it was not a good feeling. She tore the labrum in her left shoulder and missed her entire sophomore season at Lockport.

"I haven't played there since I tore my labrum on the North Course in May of '19," Anderson said. "I heard something pop in my left shoulder and knew it wasn't good. So I don't know how I will feel playing there but it will be nice to be there with the team."