

Suwanee's Lauren Lightfritz wins Georgia Girls' Championship

FROM STAFF REPORTS

ROME — Heading into the final round of the Georgia Girls' Championship, 36-hole leader Lauren Lightfritz of Suwanee was in new territory. A two-day total of 139 (5-under-par) was the lowest score she had ever posted in a tournament.

But Lightfritz was rock solid for a third-straight day and took home the title after posting a final-round 73 for a total of 212.

"It was the best I had ever played for two days, but I wasn't really nervous on the first tee," said Lightfritz. "I got off to a good start with a par on my first hole and then the birdie on the second hole really settled me down."

Lightfritz, a Mercer University commit, had tournament officials wondering if she was going to capture the all-time scoring record for the championship as well. At the turn, Lightfritz was

7-under-par for the championship and on pace for the overall record, but a back-nine 39 prevented her from breaking the 210 mark set by Norcross' Bailey Tardy in 2013.

When asked what it meant to win the championship, Lightfritz said, "I feel honored. It shows that I can accomplish my goals. It was a big goal of mine to win this tournament and I am happy that all the hard work has paid off."

Finishing in second place was last year's champion Payton Schanen of Milton. Schanen posted a final-round 70 to vault up the leaderboard and was the only other player to finish under par for the championship.

In third place was Melanie Talbott of Woodstock. Talbott's amazing up-and-down from behind the difficult green of number 18 allowed her to finish even-par 216 for the championship. Rounding out the top four was Alis-

sa Yang of Norcross. Yang improved each day of the event posting rounds of 75, 72 and 70 for a three-day total of 217.

With top four finishes, Lightfritz, Schanen, Talbott and Yang will receive invitations to represent Georgia in the annual Georgia-South Carolina Girls' Junior Challenge Match to be played at Palmetto Golf Club in Aiken, S.C. next month.

"I really like our chances," commented GSGA Women's Committee Chair Belinda Marsh. "We have a great group of players and more importantly a great group of young ladies that will represent our state this year."

The Georgia Girls' Championship also featured five supplemental divisions in addition to the championship division.

In the first division, Lizzie Reedy of Marietta took home first place after firing rounds of 72-75-71 for a total of

218. Reedy will serve as the first alternate for the Georgia Team in the Georgia-South Carolina Girls' Junior Challenge Match. Christina Yang of Suwanee and Carol Pylon of Macon finished second and third, respectively, with totals of 221 and 224.

In the second division, Jenny Bae of Maysville finished in first place with a 54-hole total of 226. Bailey Buie of Waycross and Alison Crenshaw of Suwanee finished second and third, respectively, with totals of 228 and 229.

In the third division, Woo Wade of Dunwoody took medalist honors with a score of 235. In the fourth division, Ayanna Habeel of Decatur fired exceptional rounds of 76-77-75 for a total of 228 to take the division title.

Finally, in the fifth division, Rylie Marchman of Waynesboro fired 252 to take first place.

Buford's S.M. Lee wins junior title in record fashion

FROM STAFF REPORTS

AUGUSTA — S.M. Lee of Buford went wire-to-wire to win the Georgia Junior Championship by eight strokes over runner-up Spencer Ralston of Gainesville Wednesday at West Lake Country Club.

Lee finished the 54-hole competition at 16-under-par 200 after rounds of 63, 67 and 70. Lee's 200 winning score sets the 54-hole record for the Georgia Junior Championship. The previous mark was 201 held by Scott Wolfes of St. Simons Island in 2009. Lee also set the record for lowest 18-hole score with his 63 in round one.

Suwanee resident Grant Sutliff also finished in the top 10 with a ninth-place finish as he shot even par for the tournament.

During Monday's opening round at West

Lake Country Club, Lee's start was as hot as the weather as he notched an eagle, eight birdies and just one bogey.

His 9-under-par 63 was better than all others by seven strokes. Round 2 was no different as Lee extended his lead to eight strokes after 36 holes via six birdies and a bogey.

On Wednesday, Lee carded a birdie on one, bogey on two and a birdie on three. He added birdies on five, six, and a bogey on eight to turn at 2-under.

On the backside of the golf course, Lee went birdie-bogey-birdie-bogey on 14-15-16-17 to go even par on his final nine holes.

The top eight finishers earn a spot on the Georgia-South Carolina Junior Challenge Match team, which will be played at Berkeley Hall in Bluffton, S.C., July 24-25.

Duncan

•From Page 1B

a state runner-up finish. Gotfredson believed that "no one really thought (they) could do it outside of (their) team," and Hebron Christian presented itself as a significant competitor throughout the season.

However after the state meet, the Providence boys cross country team finished as state runner-up for the first time.

Gotfredson finished in the top 10 individually.

"We didn't even know at the beginning of the season if we were going to make it to state," Gotfredson said. "Then to get second was just such a testimony to all of our hard work. What kept me going was the fact that I wasn't just running for myself. My teammates were counting on me. This is one of the moments we live for as runners."

Although Gotfredson performed well at the state meet, his finish at state was only one of his many accomplishments throughout the season. He finished sixth at the

Region 8-A Championships, took first at the Heroes Invitational and reached his personal-best time at the Asics Invitational that put him on the all-time top 10 board at Providence Christian.

Gotfredson pushed to better himself throughout the season and contributed his successes, including the coaching staff and his basketball experience. By the end of his senior year, his hard work led to a college scholarship to run cross country.

"When I started, I had absolutely zero aspiration to make it, but second of all, I had no idea it was coming," Gotfredson said. "I would say it was definitely unexpected. At the beginning of the season I was really struggling to keep up with everyone. At the end of the season, I was just shocked at the results I got. A coach reached out to me. Because of that, it just kind of all clicked. That's when I was like, 'I think this is what God has for me. This is the plan, so I'm just going to



Providence Christian's Duncan Gotfredson poses for a portrait at Providence Christian Academy in Lilburn. Gotfredson earned a scholarship at Presbyterian College after running his first season of cross country as a senior. (Staff Photo: David Welker)

go along with it.' I was blessed."

His signing took place in the library at Provi-

dence Christian with friends, family, teachers and the administration. Gotfredson's sister, who is a current student at Presbyterian College, also attended his signing.

At the signing, Gotfredson gave credit to his friends for encouraging him to chase after something new, to his parents for their support, and specifically, to his dad for pushing him throughout his athletic career. He was the only individual on the team to sign this year, and it made him feel unique to be the only one.

"It's very rewarding because I feel like it's a reward not just for running, but also my hard work in basketball throughout my whole career," Gotfredson said. "It was just a cool thing to be able to continue to do what I love for the next four years. That's just such a blessing, and I'm very excited for that. It's a big honor to be able to compete on the next level."

Gotfredson is looking forward to competing at the next level for

a sport he is passionate about. Previously, he never respected running as a sport, but now that he has become a runner, his opinion has shifted drastically.

"I like to think about where I potentially would be if I had started earlier, but I also know it is God's plan. He had me find it this year for a reason," Gotfredson said. "It's hard to get mad and beat myself up when God used it to encourage me my senior year when I really needed it. Yes, I would've loved to have started earlier just to see where I would be. I'm just blessed to have found it in the first place, so I really have no complaints."

This experience has taught him that "just when you think you've got it figured out, you don't" because "anything can happen, so don't close any doors."

His scholarship has served as a door he failed to close, and as a result, Gotfredson will further his athletic career running cross country at Presbyterian College.

GSA

•From Page 1B

to know these girls from the ages of 9 and 10 before coaching them himself at U14. Playing under coaches from England, Brazil, Sweden and France has allowed Chapman to "maximize their bodies" as athletes and train and develop these athletes to the highest level.

"It's been exciting because you see the development as soccer players and as human beings," Chapman said. "They become from young girls to young women, and now their futures are all set for

them. It's exciting times for them."

The idea of all 19 of them playing for different college teams after nationals is unfamiliar to them. However, it is also remarkable because each girl on the team will be attending a D-I school to play soccer. The colleges include Georgia, South Carolina, Auburn, Virginia, Florida, Duke, West Virginia, Notre Dame, Georgetown, Elon, Villanova, UNC-Greensboro and Furman.

"There's 19 of us, and all of us are going D-I,"

Cisic said. "We're all getting better playing with each other, which is just going to prepare us for the next level. I think that's pretty cool."

The team is excited to play on the college level, even if that means competing against one another.

The girls intend to evolve into even better players, focus on their strengths and weaknesses, and improve their fitness in order to compete and excel at the next level.

Although a few girls on the team have committed

to and will play for the same universities without having to enter college soccer alone, Stevens and Carlson, a Parkview product, were especially excited to both have the opportunity to play for Duke after graduating from Gwinnett high schools in 2016.

"Me and Emma, we're best friends and we happened to commit to the same college — Duke University — to play," Stevens said. "Obviously, that's so exciting to be able to be with her. We're going to be comfortable

going in. We're not going to be thrown into somewhere where we have to meet all new people, so I think playing with her is going to be awesome these next four years."

Carlson followed up Stevens' statement with the fact that the two will be able to support each other as friends and teammates on and off the field. She also expressed her gratitude in the fact that they will be able to help each other with schoolwork — "because it's Duke."

"I just think it'll be re-

ally good because we can support each other, and we're just really lucky to go to such a good school for soccer," Carlson said.

All of the girls look forward to the level of competition and adjusting to college soccer, as well as college life as a whole. However before each girl heads off to her designated Division I destination, the team has to take care of nationals first.

According to Chapman, there's only one goal and that's to win it all because "no one cares who finishes second."

Money

•From Page 1B

of Brookwood (2012) and Austin Meadows of Grayson (2013), as well as Compensatory Round A picks Matt Olson (2012) and Josh Hart (2013) of Park View.

Those players were drafted high enough that the money was too much to pass up, and each of them went the pro baseball route. It's a testament to the amount of baseball talent in this area, which is

being scouted more heavily and is producing more talent than ever.

Unfortunately for area college programs, the top level of that talent typically bolts for the pro baseball money — with good reason. It's certainly taken its toll on college baseball.

Georgia is the perfect example. Of the 34 players on this spring's roster, just one player is from Gwinnett, senior Jared Walsh of Peachtree Ridge. Of the 32 players on Georgia Tech's

roster, the only Gwinnett products were freshman Trevor Craport of Norcross and senior Devin Stanton of Wesleyan.

Gwinnett's highest drafted player this year was a college player, but he played outside of the state — Providence Christian's Christin Stewart, a first-round pick of the Detroit Tigers who starred at Tennessee.

On the move

Linked together by their

basketball talents for years — they were three of the nation's top 15 prospects in the Class of 2013 — Gwinnett's trio of Diamond DeShields, Kaela Davis and Lexie Brown are linked by something else.

All three have transferred from their initial college.

DeShields, a Norcross grad, was the national freshman of the year at North Carolina, but wasn't happy and transferred to

Tennessee, where she will be eligible this season.

Both Davis, a Buford grad, and Brown, a North Gwinnett grad, will have to sit out the 2015-16 season with their transfers after two seasons with their first college team. Davis is going from Georgia Tech to South Carolina and Brown from Maryland to Duke.

Davis and Brown also switched schools during their high school careers — Davis from Norcross to

Buford and Brown from Orlando Dr. Phillips (Fla.) to North.

Hopefully, the new locations work out for each of the three players, who all will likely be playing in the WNBA in the future.

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