

Tigers' Johnson Captures SWC Individual Girls Golf Title, Edwardsville Second As Team, Alton Fifth

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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CASEYVILLE - Nicole Johnson fired a second round 71 for a two-day total of one-over-par 143 to win the individual championship of the Southwestern Conference Girls Golf Tournament, but O'Fallon tied a school record set in the first round Sept. 1 at Belk Park Golf Course to help the Panthers win the team title.

O'Fallon matched their team record of 294 to win the conference title with a two-day score of 588, with the Tigers coming in second at 631. Belleville East came in third with a score of 685, Belleville West was fourth with a 735, Alton came in fifth with a 744, and Collinsville was sixth with a score of 751.

The Tigers performance over the two days of the tournament was very good, and head coach Libby Koonce couldn't have been any happier with her golfers.

"Between those two days, we had two excellent scores in both rounds," Koonce said. "I'm really proud of them."

Johnson's championship made both player and coach very happy as well.

"I am so happy for her, and she's really excited about it, too," Koonce said. "I am really proud of her."

The other Tiger golfers had some very good days as well.

"Grace (Daech) had a good day," Koonce said, "Riley Burns had a good day, Sydney Weedman played a good round. All six of my varsity golfers shot below 90, the highest score we had was an 86, and that's really good."

The Panthers won the meet with their record-tying performance, and Koonce gave O'Fallon tremendous credit.

"I'm really excited for them," Koonce said, "breaking their school record at Belk Park, then tying it at Far Oaks, and I don't mind losing if it's to the best. Right now, O'Fallon is the best, and hats off to the Panthers 100 percent."

Johnson was the individual winner, with Panther golfers claiming the second through fifth spots. Chloe Davidson was second with a 144, with Dylan Kirchoff third at 145, Reagan Martin fourth with a 149, and Maddie Vanderheyden fifth, carding a 150. Daech and Alton's Natalie Messinger tied for sixth, with both shooting a 157, the Lancers' Sydney Nelson came in eighth with a 160, Burns placed ninth at 161, and East's Ellie Eversman came in 10th with a 169.

Weedman came in 11th with a 170, while Morgan Landry shot an 183, Bailey Vorachek fired an 184, and Sophia Rankin had a 207. Outside of Messinger, the Redbirds' Riley Kenney fired an 180, Josie Giertz had an 188, Olivia Boyd shot a 219, and Samantha Eales carded a 240.

Ricki Merlak led the Kahoks with a total of 180, followed by Abby Fister at 186, Maya Clark shot an 187, Kiley Belobraydic had a 199, Sammi Qualls fired a 208, Anna Belobraydic had a total of 221, and Carstyn Jones carded a total of 226.

The Tigers, Redbirds and Kahoks, along with the other area Class 2A teams, now set their sights on Kokopelli Golf Club in Marion for the regional tournament, which will be held on Wednesday, Oct. 6. Koonce is very excited for the upcoming regional, and is looking ahead to it.

"We're really excited for the regional," Koonce said. "We get to travel for the first time this year, and the girls are really excited."