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# Golfing Cardinals taking flight

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CLAREMONT — Golf is a year-round sport at Stevens High School.

When its players aren't practicing, teaching or competing outside, they're training indoors on a golf simulator. The Cardinals' continued commitment to improvement has paid dividends with the team heading into the NHIAA Division III postseason tied with Sanborn for the No. 4 seed.

Victories were few and far between when Ryan Seaver took over the program in 2015, but things have changed over time. Led by top golfers Finn Allen and Dylan Adamovich, the Cardinals finished the regular season 23-7, their best mark during the coach's tenure.

Seaver, who has helped established consistency, fundraising and a passion for the sport within his program, lives in Walpole, N.H., and teaches physical education at Springfield Elementary School in Vermont. He spoke during a recent phone interview about the Cardinals' successful season, which followed last year's 6-18 finish and subsequent absence from the state team tournament.

"We have serious helpers," Seaver said, when asked about the roots of the program's turnaround.

One of them is Marie Allen, who facilitates youth golf in Claremont through the First Tee of New Hampshire program — an initiative Stevens' players are required to help out with.

"On a Monday morning in the summer, all of our high school and middle school kids are down (at Claremont Country Club) working with elementary kids on their golf swing," Seaver said.

Stevens graduate and co-coach Ian MacDonald has been another key contributor along with swing coach Brian Stowell who owns a golf simulator.

“(Stowell) is constantly working on their swings, and we’re kind of in there perfecting things in the winter,” Seaver said. “It’s just not like a dead season; they go in when they want. He gets them in there; he teaches them. ... When they start in the spring, they’re ready to go.”

MacDonald, whose team went 17-10 and took fifth at states when he was a senior in 2016, also worked indoors with Stowell during his time as a Cardinal.

“Having that technology growing up helped a lot of kids and me, myself, improve, I feel like, at a better rate,” MacDonald said. “Seeing the numbers and seeing where we can improve instead of just trying to play by feel ... the sky’s the limit with technology these days.”

The Cardinals have also enjoyed a gradual upgrade in equipment during Seaver’s tenure thanks to an annual golf tournament that he helps organize. What started several years ago as a fundraiser for Newport and Sunapee has grown to include Stevens, Lebanon, Kearsarge and Windsor.

The Cardinals have used resulting funds to purchase memberships, clubs, polo shirts, bags, shoes, gloves, tees and balls for the student-athletes.

Look good, feel good, play well: The formula seems to be working, with a postseason berth firmly in hand.

The state tournament is set for Oct. 15 at the Mount Washington Resort, where Stevens will hold a practice round on Sunday with top-seeded Derryfield (30-0).

Allen (No. 1) and Adamovich (No. 2) — both juniors — will be followed on the card by Reeve Wilkinson at No. 3, C.J. Naugler at No. 4, Cedric Allen at No. 5 and Matt Eagan at No. 6.

“The best thing about this group is every single one of them is back next year,” Seaver said.

The top 12 out of the 20 teams in D-III qualified for the state meet, including Lebanon, which is part of a three-way tie for the 10th seed.

Seaver was the first coach Doug Beaupre hired when he became Stevens’ athletic director a half-decade ago, and the latter has noticed the program’s steady improvement ever since.

“When Ryan takes over a program or he’s on the coaching staff, he’s going to do whatever he can do to make sure that his team is prepared and the kids are prepared, and he wants to put them in the best possible situation,” Beaupre said. “And with Ian MacDonald’s help, they’ve really done well.

“Both the coaches and all the players have certainly put a lot of time in. You go up to the golf course during the summers and you’re bound to run into two or three of them just out playing. They’ve been doing well, but there’s a reason why they’ve been doing well — it’s because they’ve been putting an awful lot of time into their game.”

**Notes:** Stevens faced its 30 regular-season opponents over the course of 10 matches. ... The D-III individual state championship is set for Oct. 20 at Beaver Meadow in Concord. The contest will include the top 20 finishers (with ties) from the team tournaments. ... Unlike the regular season, which features Stableford scoring (for D-III and D-IV only), the postseason contests will employ a standard stroke-play format.