

Gonder leads Warriors to MVC title

Written by Jim Ecker

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Jabe Gonder played in 15 golf tournaments this summer to get ready for his senior campaign with the Washington Warriors.

It paid off handsomely Thursday.

Gonder fired a 1-over-par 71 to finish second in the individual standings and lead Washington to the team championship of the Mississippi Valley Conference Super Meet at Jones Park.

The Warriors posted a four-man score of 295 and won the tournament by 12 shots over Iowa City West.

Gonder had a stroke average of 81.25 for 18 holes last year, but he hit the links during the summer and came out firing in the first meet of the 2015 campaign.

"I just kind of realized that I don't want to limit myself to a bogey every three holes. I just realized I need to go for par on every hole," he said.

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Gonder said he was happy with his round, but not terribly surprised.

"I wanted it to happen," he said. "It was bound to happen one of these times. I've started my season off with a bang, so hopefully I can keep it going."

Gonder shot a 72 at Jones Park in the City Amateur this summer and topped that by a stroke in the MVC meet. "I like Jones," he remarked.

Gonder was sitting at 1-under par after his first 16 holes, but he bogeyed his final two holes. J.D. Goodfellow of Iowa City West claimed medalist honors with a 1-under 69.

Frank Lindwall, who is Washington's top golfer, shot a 7-over-par 77 and did not crack the top-10 in the individual standings, but the Warriors were so good Thursday that they won the title without needing his score on their tally sheet.

Will Jackson fired a 74 for Washington, Logan Bracey shot 75 and Alex Slattery also shot 75 to give the Warriors a comfortable cushion on a sunny day in southwest Cedar Rapids.

Washington displayed flashes of good golf last season, giving them hope of better days ahead.

"We have seven really solid kids at the top who have all won varsity letters," said co-coach Denny Goettel. "We thought we'd be pretty good."

"They really play well together, they pull for each other and they played in lots of tournaments

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this summer. We really like to see that pay off, and I think it did today.

"When they have a disappointing round, they go to the course and work on it. They don't go to the pool."

Gonder had two birdies and three bogeys. He needed only 29 putts and was solid all day until a couple of putts lipped-out on the final two holes for his bogey-bogey finish.

"I tried to get my putting in shape over the summer," said Gonder. "I used to average 34 putts every round, so I really wanted to get that number down. And today I made some putts.

"My short game was really good today. It was fun."

Gonder played in the No. 4 spot for the Warriors, but showed he's capable of playing at a higher spot than that.

"Just awesome," said Goettel. "He played in so many tournaments. He's a great kid. He's worked so hard. He just attacks the game."

Gonder has played basketball at Washington, but golf has become his main sport and he's looking to play in college at the NCAA Division III level.

"I want to have fun with golf in college," he said. "I love golf, but I don't want it to be my main time-consuming activity."

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Nile Happel of Jefferson shot a 3-over-par 73 and finished third in the standings.

The Xavier Saints tied Wahlert and Cedar Falls for third place in the team standings at 311.

TEAM STANDINGS

1. Washington 295, 2. Iowa City West 307, 3. (tie) Xavier 311, Wahlert 311, Cedar Falls 311, 6. Linn-Mar 313, 7. (tie) Kennedy 314, Dubuque Senior 314, 9. Prairie 321, 10. Iowa City High 344, 11. Hempstead 347, 12. Jefferson 349, 13. Waterloo West 364, 14. Waterloo East (incomplete score).

TOP 10 INDIVIDUALS

Jones Park, Par 70

1. J.D. Goodfellow, Iowa City West 69

2. Jabe Gonder, Washington 71

3. Nile Happel, Jefferson 73

Alec Weber, Wahlert 73

Gus Zuccaro, Dubuque Senior 73

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6. Will Jackson, Washington 74

7. Logan Bracey, Washington 75

Alex Slattery, Washington 75

Rian Weber, Wahlert 75

10. Jake Corkery, Kennedy 76

Cameron Stump, Kennedy 76

WASHINGTON: Jabe Gonder 71, Will Jackson 74, Alex Slattery 75, Logan Bracey 75, Frank Lindwall 77, Connor Neighbors 83.

XAVIER: Luke Winker 77, Tyler Breitbach 77, Sam Martin 78, Matt Neumeyer 79, Brody Robinson 80, Mitch King 84.

LINN-MAR: Jake Sevcik 78, Brent Larson 78, Jack Recker 78, Max Thrune 79, Jordan Bohannon 82, Ben Greif 85.

KENNEDY: Cameron Stump 76, Jake Corkery 76, Jordan Weiss 78, Jonah Beman 84, Parker Kalb 85, Aaron Daughetee 87.

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PRAIRIE: Cooper Reitinger 79, Griffen Clark 79, Cal Clark 81, Bryce Prokop 82, Ryan Oxley 86, Matt Lorenz 88.

JEFFERSON: Nile Happel 73, Adam Van Oort 83, Lucas Brown 95, Austin Schmitz 98, Dawson Gage 104, Carter Schmitz 105.