

Best of '98

Observerland golf stars receive accolades

ALL-AREA

ALL-OBSERVER BOYS GOLF FIRST TEAM

Steve Polanski, senior, Liv, Stevenson
Adam Wilson, senior, Plymouth Salem
Chris Tompkins, senior, Westland Glenn
Justin Fendel, senior, Westland Glenn
Derek Spicer, junior, Catholic Central
Evan Currie, junior, Catholic Central
Ben Tucker, senior, Plymouth Canton
Jon Johnson, junior, Plymouth Canton

SECOND TEAM

Adam Sonnevall, senior, Redford CC
Jon Luna, sophomore, Catholic Central
Brian Reed, senior, Westland Glenn
Matt Lee, freshman, Farm, Harrison
Nikos Markellos, junior, Red, Thurston
Evan Chaff, sophomore, Liv, Churchill

THIRD TEAM

Brian Grohman, junior, Farm, Harrison
Tony Fotlu, senior, Livonia Franklin
Brian Harnas, junior, Garden City
Randall Bobelge, junior, Liv, Churchill
Roy Rabo, senior, Livonia Stevenson
Mike Barnett, senior, North Farmington

HONORABLE MENTION

Stevenson: Mike Byberg, Kevin Yuhaz, Matt Doronio, Frankie Tim Kofel, Scott Waara, Churchill: Mike Lightbody, Tom Fitzsimons, John Glenn: Rich Sudell, Ryan Shamrock, Wayne: Chad Campbell, Greg Baracy, Redford CC: Josh Davis, Garden City: Matt Vecheta, Nate Blaiscoe, Thurston: Erik Carlson, Steve Porosky, Redford Union: Joel Hickey, David Wink, Farmington: Chris Katchenian, Dan Kimmel, John Knight, Ian Pardomet, Brad Gornie, Harrison: Kenny Lee, Chris Scott, N. Farmington: Brady Dwyer, Brandon Finkel, Salem: Mark Doughty, Ryan Nemmerguth, Canton: Justin Allen, Matt Rosol.

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This may have been the most successful season Observerland boys golf teams have enjoyed statewide.

Five schools did well enough at Division I regional competition to qualify for the state final: Plymouth Salem, Plymouth Canton, Livonia Stevenson, Westland John Glenn and Redford Catholic Central.

And two Observerland individuals survived the rigorous first round at the state tournament to play the second day, including Stevenson standout Steve Polanski, who ended up as the tournament medalist.

Polanski, who has signed with Texas Christian University, is certainly the state's premier player.

But the rest of Observerland boasted other elite-level players, which is why this season's all-Observer team was expanded to nine players on first team, and includes a third team.

In short, the competition's getting awfully good in this area.

Observer boys golf coach of the year accolades go to Salem's Rick Wilson, who guided the Rocks to the Western Lakes Activities Association Tournament championship at Hudson Mills and a second-place overall finish in the WLLA, and a Division I Regional Tournament championship at Giant Oak.

ALL-AREA FIRST TEAM

Steve Polanski, senior, Stevenson: The senior, headed to Texas Christian University on a Den Hegan endowed scholarship, is the leading candidate for Michigan's Mr. Golf after capturing the Division I individual title with a 74-71/145 total at the Maple Creek Course (The Emerald) in St. John's, beating the field by four strokes.

Polanski was also regional medalist at Pontiac Country Club with 4-under 68. He also made All-Western Lakes Conference and was Livonia Public Schools champion.

In a dual-meet this fall at Glen Oaks, he shot a 2-under 33.

His claim to fame, however, was finishing runner-up this summer in the Michigan Amateur, the second youngest competitor ever to reach the match-play final as a 17-year-old. He has also competed in the U.S. Junior Amateur and ranks among the top junior golfers in the country.

Adam Wilson, senior, Ply. Salem: It

was a memorable finish to a fine four-year letter-winning career for Wilson. A team captain the past two seasons, Wilson was steady throughout this year, leading the Rocks with a 38.2 nine-hole average and a 77.0 tournament average. His all-around play earned him all-state honorable mention honors.

Early this season at East Lansing's Forest Aker, he broke the Salem tournament school record — formerly held by current Michigan PGA player of the year Jeff Roth, the pro at Flint Golf Club — by shooting a 70.

Wilson was runner-up at the WLLA Tournament, firing a 76, and he had a 79 at the state regional and an 80 at the state final. He was medalist in four conference dual meets and totaled five top-10 finishes in tournaments. Among the colleges that have expressed an interest in Wilson, an MHSAA Scholar-Athlete Award nominee and son of Salem coach Rick Wilson, is the University of Michigan.

Erik Krueger, senior, Plymouth Salem: Krueger, who shared the Salem team captaincy with Wilson, started the season strongly, went through a slight slump, then ended with a flourish that helped Salem to its best-ever team finish — one that landed him a berth on the all-state team.

Krueger averaged 40.0 strokes for nine-hole matches, but his 18-hole tournament average was a sparkling 77.2. What's even more impressive was Krueger's timing: He was medalist at the WLLA Tournament with a 75, tied for medalist honors (with John Glenn's Justin Fendel) at the state regional with a 77, and got a chance to play as an individual the second day of the state tournament with an opening round of 76. His second-day score matched his first, placing him fifth overall.

Three times Krueger was medalist during the dual-meet season, and four times he had top-10 finishes in tournaments. He, too, will likely play collegiate golf, although where is uncertain.

Chris Tompkins, senior, John Glenn: Making his second straight appearance on the All-Observer team, the left-hander is headed for Eastern Michigan University.

The team captain and four-year letter winner led Glenn with a dual-meet average of 37.6 where he was medalist nine times. He averaged 77.3 for 18 holes.

Tompkins tied the school record with a 34 against Farmington and set a school record for 18 holes by taking medalist honors in the Western Wayne Invitational with a 71 at Huron Meadows.

Tompkins, who helped lead Glenn to its first-ever state meet appearance, shot 77 in the finals, missing the second-day cut by one shot.

He also shot a 76 at the Pinckney Invitational at Rush Lake.

Justin Fendel, senior, John Glenn: The senior was Division I regional champ at Giant Oaks by firing a 77, the first player in Glenn history to earn medalist honors.

The three-year varsity performer averaged 40.6 per nine and 80.2 per 18 holes this season. During his last eight matches, Fendel came on strong, averaging 39.5.

In the Plymouth Best Ball Tournament, Fendel combined with Tompkins for a 70.

At the state meet, Fendel shot a respectable 79, just three shots off the cut.

Derek Spicer, junior, N. Farmington: Spicer was voted the most valuable player on the North team for the second year in a row after leading the Raiders with an average of 39.7 strokes per dual meet.

Spicer also averaged 78 in tournaments, made the all-conference team for the second time and was the medalist in the Oakland County Division II Tournament.

"Some can talk it but can't walk it," North coach Daryl Case said. "Derek says few words but certainly can walk it."

"Everybody on the team looks to him for leadership. He sets a very good example for our new players and even our established players."

"I think Derek has that burning desire to compete and improve that all good players have to have. He works hard during the season and the off season to improve his skills."

Ben Tucker, senior, Plymouth Canton: A year ago, Canton came out of virtually nowhere to capture the WLLA title. The Chiefs surprised no one this season, but they still finished third in the WLLA Tournament and made their first-ever trip to the state tournament — and Tucker was a major reason why.

A steady performer throughout his senior season, Tucker averaged 39.2 strokes in nine-hole matches and 77.3 for 18-hole tournaments. An all-conference selection, he shot a 77 to tie for fourth at the WLLA Tournament and was fourth at the state regional with a 78. His 77 on opening day of the state tournament left him one stroke shy of qualifying as an individual to play the second round.

"He's the best tournament golfer I've ever coached in my five years," said Canton coach Tom Allus, noting Tuckers seven sub-80 rounds. "He shined brightly in tournaments. He had a great season."

Jon Johnson, junior, Plymouth Canton: While Tucker was the Chiefs' leader this season, Johnson — who made great strides, according to his coach — will be their man of the future.

Johnson earned all-WLLA honors by firing a 76 at the conference tournament,



Steve Polanski
Livonia Stevenson



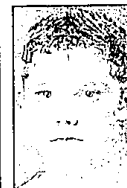
Adam Wilson
Plymouth Salem



Erik Krueger
Plymouth Salem



Chris Tompkins
Westland John Glenn



Justin Fendel
Westland John Glenn



Derek Spicer
North Farmington



Evan Currie
Catholic Central



Jon Johnson
Plymouth Canton



Ben Tucker
Plymouth Canton

ment, tying him for second with Salem's Wilson. Three times he was Canton's dual-meet medalist; he had a 40.4 nine-hole average. His 18-hole tournament average was 80.0, which included rounds of 80 at the state regional and 82 at the state final.

"He made vast improvement from his sophomore to junior years, the greatest amount of anyone on our team," said Canton's Allie. "I told him I expect him to be one of the premier players in the league next season."

Evan Currie, junior, Catholic Central: Currie averaged 40.4 per nine holes with a season-best 34 against U-D Jesuit at the Country Club of Detroit.

Three times he recorded 37s in dual meets and his best score in a tournament came when he shot 77 for 18 holes at the Brighton Tournament, earning a top 10 finish.

Currie placed fifth in the Catholic League Meet with a round of 81 at St.

John's Golf Course in Plymouth. He duplicated that score at the Class A regional at the Pontiac Country Club, helping the Shamrocks place second and earn a state meet berth.

Paired with eventual champion Steve Polanski of Livonia Stevenson, Currie finished with a round of 82 at the state meet, missing the cut for the second day of play.

He was CC's medalist in six matches or tournaments. Currie's youthful appearance is deceiving, according to coach Bill Hayes, who counts his competitiveness as one of his strengths.

"He plays in the band, still has a paper route, looks like he's 12, and opponents think they can beat him, but after three or four holes in they're impressed with him because he's always there," Hayes said. "He's a fierce competitor. He hits it straight down the middle and his short game is probably the best part of his game."

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