

Sports

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Mallon rising star on LPGA Tour



Meg Mallon, former Mercy standout, won her second tournament on the LPGA Tour and has earnings in excess of \$300,000 this year.

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

The timing couldn't have been better for Farmington Hills Mercy golf coach Vicki Kowalski and her players.

She planned to take half the team to Toledo this weekend to see Mercy alumna Meg Mallon play in the Jamie Farr Classic, the latest tour stop for the Ladies Professional Golf Association.

Not only will the Mercy entourage see a former Marlin who has made the big time but an emerging star and the hottest name on the women's circuit.

Mallon captured her second tournament and her first major — both titles coming this year — Sunday when she won the LPGA Championship in Bethesda, Md.

"I hope when she finishes her round Friday, she has some time to talk with the girls a while and take some pictures with us," Kowalski said.

"I THINK she can be an inspiration to these girls. All of them are very excited to meet her and watch her play."

Mallon was en route to her brother's home in Groesbeek Pointe Woods most of Monday, driving the new Mazda she received as the top prize. She didn't arrive until late that night and was on her way back to Ohio for an afternoon press conference Tuesday.

The 28-year-old Mallon was tied with playing partners Pat Bradley and Ayako Okamoto on the 18th hole Sunday. The other two missed chances for birdie putts, but Mallon sank a 10-footer to win by one stroke.

The former Birmingham resident and 1981 graduate of Mercy shot a 4-under-par 67 for the final round and, having shot 68-68-71 on previous days, finished 10 under at 274.

The tournament was pre-empted on the local NBC station by the Detroit Tigers game, but Kowalski

golf

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— Vicki Kowalski
Mercy golf coach

watched the tournament from her parent's home in Plymouth where they could pick up Channel 13 from Toledo.

AFTER SHE made a difficult putt on No. 16, Mallon bogeyed No. 17, and "I thought 'Oh, no, she's going to fall apart,'" Kowalski said. "She was closest to the hole (on 18), and I said 'If you can make that other one, you can make this one.'"

Mallon's brother, Paul, and his family went to Monroe to watch the tournament on TV. He had confidence in his sister.

"I thought she was going to win," he said, "because she was there the whole tournament and had as good a chance as anybody."

Mallon won the Oldsmobile Classic in February for her first win since joining the tour in 1987 and received \$150,000 for winning the LPGA. Her earnings this year — \$308,258 — are more than what she earned in the last four combined.

So her brother wasn't surprised by her latest success.

"Not any more," Paul Mallon said. "Last year I would have been but not

this year. I think she believes she belongs there and I do, too."

Kowalski hopes her players not only benefit in terms of mechanics by watching the pros but also sportsmanship through observing Mallon, who was named the most congenial player on the tour in past years.

"THE BEST inspiration is when they see how she interacts with other people," Kowalski said. "She has always been a very nice person, a very generous person. They will see you can be good at this, be competitive, and still be a nice person."

"The whole idea of the congeniality and social aspect of the sport is important, too. For most of the girls, this is going to be a social sport, something they can do with their family and friends."

Mallon, who will participate in a golf outing to raise funds for Mercy Monday, Aug. 12, and be the first inductee into the Mercy Hall of Fame at a banquet that night, is credited with starting the school's golf team.

"When I look back on all the years, I'm grateful for her coming to me and asking me to moderate a golf team," Kowalski said. The Marlin won regional titles the first two years, and Mallon was low medalist while leading Mercy to the championship of the first Oakland County tournament as a senior. "I'm still coaching all these years, and it all started with her."

Kowalski has seen Mallon make great improvement over the years, too.

She averaged 82 for 18 holes when she left high school and was a walk-on at Ohio State because she wasn't shooting in the 70s, Kowalski said. Her scores, as they have on the pro tour, dropped each year and she was All-Big Ten her last two years.

"At the beginning she wasn't even making the (LPGA) cut," Kowalski said. "Last year she really broke through. It's amazing to see the progress she's made and how she has stuck with it."

NFWB repeat champ

The North Farmington-West Bloomfield baseball team returned to Allen Park this year to win its second straight championship in a Micky Mantle tournament last weekend.

NFWB won four games to extend its unbeaten record to 14-0 this season.

Craig Peterson pitched NFWB to a 5-2 victory over Huron in the first game, scattering five hits and striking out three. Jason Farrell pitched two innings of scoreless relief.

John Heller and Adam Wood led the offense with two hits apiece.

Monroe gave NFWB its hardest challenge in the next game, but NFWB prevailed 2-1.

Mitch Rivet gave his best pitching performance, a complete game in which he allowed only three hits. NFWB also had three hits and its lowest run total of the season.

NFWB faced once-beaten Flint Grassi (11-1) in its third game, but Derrick Fox allowed just three hits in another solid pitching effort by a NFWB hurler as the team advanced with a 7-1 victory.

Charlie Goode was 3-for-4, and Doug Gaughan had two hits and two walks.

NFWB faced Flint Grassi again in the final, winning the rematch 5-3. Peterson got the call again and pitched well once more, giving up five hits and striking out four.

Heller and Matthew Wolf provided three hits each, and the NFWB defense wiped out a bases-loaded threat by Grassi in the sixth inning.

Observerland players excel in all-star game

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Plymouth Salem's Scott Niemiec had the kind of senior year most baseball players only read about in fantasy books.

Niemiec was a key member of the Class A championship team, was selected the first-team, all-state catcher and Tuesday was named the most valuable player of the annual high school all-star game.

His storybook season was complete with a clutch, game-winning hit as the East came from behind to beat the West 3-2 in Tiger Stadium. Niemiec's two-out, three-run homer in the top of the ninth inning cleared the 340-foot fence in left field.

"It's been unbelievable," Niemiec said after he was called to home plate to accept the MVP award. "I was shocked. I was just glad to be here. It turned out great. Everything has been going so well."

With his heroics, Niemiec also made his friend and Plymouth Canton ace, Scott Kennedy, the winning pitcher. Kennedy held the West hitless and scoreless in the last two innings.

baseball

"AS SOON AS he crushed the ball, I knew it was gone," Kennedy said. "Then I had to come in and finish the job."

"(Getting the all-star decision) just made my whole year. It was quite exciting. It won't really hit me until I think about it some more."

Lutheran Westland pitcher and Japanese exchange student Makoto Iwata made a key contribution for the winners, hurling three innings of shutout ball, and Gary Devine of Farmington Hills Harrison started in center field for the East.

Niemiec, who started at catcher, played two innings and reentered for the seventh inning, almost didn't get a chance to bat in the ninth.

He hit a flyout to right in his only other trip and needed two-out singles by Brighton's Ron Hollis and Southgate's Joe Weldenbach for him to get another turn. Plus, Hollis was nearly thrown out at third on Weldenbach's hit, but the third base-

man couldn't make a play. "It was one-two on (Weldenbach)," Niemiec said. "I knew he'd hit the ball. It was a question of whether he was going to be out or not."

"THE FIRST pitch (from loser Chad Kukla of Essexville-Garber) was a fastball — down low — and I didn't swing. On the next pitch, he grooved one to me and I took it." Niemiec also made a putout at the plate in the seventh inning to prevent two runs from scoring on Dan Beemer's RBI single that made it 2-0.

After retiring the side in order in the eighth, Kennedy gave up a lead-off walk in the ninth but ended the game with a flyout and a double play.

His first game action came in the third inning when he replaced Devine in center field. Kennedy has played the outfield previously in his career but had only pitched for Canton this year.

"It surprised me when (East manager Glynn Conley) called my name," he said. "I wasn't sure he

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Gary Devine, former Harrison all-star, nearly beat out an infield grounder for a hit on this third-inning play in the all-star game.

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