

Wet start for girls tournament



It was wet and cool, weather that's unusual for July. But few girls were complaining because the low 70 temperature was much better than the usual 90-plus scorching temperatures that players often must endure. Erica Lautensack, 17, of Arlington (pictured) was one who thrived in the cloudy and off-and-on light rain. The senior-to-be at Arlington High School shot a 2-under-par 70 to take a three-shot lead at Glen Garden Golf & Country Club after the first round of the FWJGA Girls City Junior Golf Championship.

The low 30 girls will form Division I and advance to Ridglea Country Club's North Course for the second round on Tuesday, and the other 18-hole girls and 9-hole girls will play at Diamond Oaks Country Club. After the second round, the Division I girls will be split into Championship and First flights.

Erica's opening score from the red tees was quite a contrast to her opening 81 last year en route to her seventh place finish. She credited her improvement mostly to her short game. "My putting was a lot better. And I got up-and-down just about every time," she said. Her hard work on the short game paid off during last season's school year, too, as she qualified for the state 5A championship after winning here third District 3 individual championship.

Alone in second was Rachel Dahl, 17, of Mansfield. Rachel, on the Mansfield High's 5A girls state qualifying team, competed in the second flight in last year's tournament

Jessie White, 18, also of Mansfield and Marisa Delgado, 17, of Keller shot 74s over the course from the red tees (about 5,375 yards). The 18-hole girls originally were scheduled to play from the white tees, but because of the rain, the girls were moved to the closer red tees to help speed play in hopes of avoiding expected heavier rain later in the morning.

Jessie, a Mansfield High graduate, was runner-up last year. She won her school's district championship this year and qualified for regionals and state. She'll be attending Stephen F. Austin in Nacogdoches this year.

Marisa, a four-year varsity player at Keller Center High School, was the district medalist this past season. She has signed a letter of intent to play golf at Newman University in Wichita, Kan.

Three players are five shots behind Erica. Adriana Morillo, 17, who won the district championship last year playing for Carroll High School, Kellie Martin, 18, who played for Mansfield Legacy, and Kate Tran, 14, of Arlington, shot 75s.

By carding the day's low score, Erica will be presented the first Wendell Conditt Medalist Award after Wednesday's final round at the awards presentations at the Ben Hogan Learning Center. Wendell is a long-time director of the boys tournament and is credited for carrying on the free junior tournament tradition of the boys tournament founder Marvin Leonard. Wendell almost single-handedly restarted the tournament in 1973 after 1972 was skipped when the Fort Worth Men's Golf Association dissolved and quit directing the tournament. He also started the girls event in 1974 with Benita Christensen in charge of the tournament. Wendell has announced his retirement this year from his Executive Director position. Nancy Pennell, who has been directing the girls, also has announced her retirement.

Erica, starting on the 10th hole, carded four birdies and two bogeys. She finished her front nine at 1-over, but notched a 35 on her back nine, finishing with three consecutive birdies. Despite the light rain, which had been falling since Sunday, she said the course wasn't too soggy. The greens were slower, which she liked because she could hit her putts harder and not have to just ease the ball toward the holes.

Leading the 9-Hole Championship Flight were Hannah Vu, 12, of Hurst and Anne Moon, 12, of Fort Worth. Both shot 51s from the Red Tees on the front nine. They lead by three shots.