

Longtime assistant Collins heads up 2017 LHS golf squad

By Mike Gilmore
TILLER SPORTS

LARNED – Larned native Dan Collins has seen a lot of golf. He’s rubbed shoulders with professionals Ralph Terry and Bruce Vaughan. He knows greens and grounds. And as a two-decade perennial assistant for the Larned high school golf program, he’s seen a lot of the prep ranks, too.

This spring, Collins returns to head the LHS boys’ golf program with an emphasis on “good practice makes for good play.” LHS’s Don Zimmerman moves into Collins’ assistant spot for 2017.

“I’m guardedly optimistic about this season,” said Collins, who has three seniors returning with two juniors, a couple sophomores and two brand new freshmen. The three seniors are three guys looking for a fourth in the team standings.

Senior three-time state qualifier Colton Massey returns as the Indians’ top-carder in 2017. Last year, Massey opened with four straight tournament titles to earn top-10 honors among the state’s best prep golfers, then followed with wins at Smoky Hills in Hays, Halstead, CKL at Kingman and at Kinsley heading into postseason.

At the Tamarisk course in Syracuse, Massey surrendered individual honors in a four-stroke loss to Syracuse sophomore Will Kullot at regionals, then repeated a 78-stroke effort the next week at the Salina Municipal course in a six-way deadlock for sixth medallist at



Colton Massey (above)
& Brandon Bartz

state.

Senior Brandon Bartz, meanwhile, gave Massey chase throughout the 2016 season, ending with a two-round 89 at the Salina state meet. During the season, Bartz carried a two-round average of 82.2, which put him in the top 15 among Class 3A’s best golfers. Bartz ended the regular season second to Massey at Kinsley by three strokes with a 77; taking seventh medallist at Kingman with an 85 and seventh at regionals with a 92.

Senior Braeden Corman returns at third card for the Indians after finishing with a two-round 106 at Tamarisk. As a team the Indians came in fourth at regionals, helped by freshman Devin Burger’s 113 in his first postseason tourney.

The Indians began the season in JV play Monday in Great Bend; they begin varsity competition on Monday at The Highlands under new management in Hutchinson, where Massey is the reigning medallist.

“The Highlands has always been a challenging first meet for us,” Collins noted. “They’re under new management this year so we’ll see what happens. They’ve taken out a lot of the rough.

In the meantime, the Indian linksters are spending a lot of time on the green. “The bottom line on this golf game is whoever putts the best,” noted Collins. “If we can get three less putts a man, that’s 12 shots for the team. It’s hard for the ones that have played a long time

to keep dropping one or two strokes at a time, but a new guy can improve five or 10 strokes from meet to meet. How well we play this season is how well the new guys learn. A fifth or sixth man that can enjoy playing golf, might have more done for him than someone who might have a lot of skill.

“That’s the thing,” Collins noted. “It’s important for everyone to have one thing that they like to do.”

Other area golfers to watch – This winter, St. John senior Cole Kinnamon’s 40-foot buzzer beater vaulted the Tigers into the Class 2A cage championship game. Last spring, he qualified for Class 2A state golf with a well-placed 3-wood tee shot that set up a three-foot putt, which he sank to win a one-hole playoff over Ellinwood’s Gavin Vink at the Stafford Country Club. Kinnamon and Vink tied for top honors tied at 5-over-par 75. Kinnamon finished his two-round tour of the Salina Country Club at Class 2A state with an 88 for 22nd place. As a team, the Tigers finished ninth at state with a 403.

The Stafford Country Club is considered the Tigers’ home course. Tim Spare remains the Tigers’ lone state golf champion, winning in 2009.

In Class 1A, Pawnee Heights senior Roger Klenke returns to the links as a state qualifier. The Southwestern College golf signee fired a 93 to earn a top-20 finish at Fort Leavenworth’s state meet.



Larned junior Mattie Glover

Lady Indian softball returns strong young lineup for 2017

By Mike Gilmore
TILLER SPORTS

LARNED – The Larned softball squad finished in the middle of the Central Kansas League pack in 2016, bowing to the Plainville Lady Cardinals 7-5 in a rain-soaked Class 3A regional first round game.

But as the Lady Indians prepare for another CKL circuit and a bump back up into the Class 4A Division II postseason bracket, things are looking up for coach Nick Junker in his second year.

Almost all of his starting rotation is back, with the exception of pitcher Tymarra Bryant, who is playing for Pratt Community College. Senior catcher Erin Smith sustained a knee injury during the basketball season, and senior shortstop Allyson Aldrich missed the cage season as well with a knee injury in volleyball, but Junker’s lineup returns six with six letterwinners and some solid sophomores for

the 2016-17 season.

“With returning starters at key positions and great new additions, Larned Lady Indian softball is poised to be very competitive this season,” Junker said.

Larned junior Mattie Glover, who backed up Bryant on the mound last season, pitched the Lady Indians through a run-rule sweep of Nickerson that kicked off a late-season comeback surge after a 2-8 start. At regionals, the Lady Indians trailed Plainville 7-0 with Kayla Garvert on the mound, but staged a fourth-inning near comeback led by Glover’s solo homer. She finished out the game with three scoreless innings.

Joining Glover on the mound will be sophomores Baylea Perez and Monica Clark.

Around the horn – Junior Savannah Racette takes over for the injured Smith behind the plate, joined by junior Selena Ibarra and

freshman multi-position player Lynzi Myrick.

At first base is senior Kelsey Parr, backed up by Myrick; at second is senior utility Madison Erway with Parr and Madison Wares filling in; at short will be Erway, Parr and Perez depending upon who’s pitching. Clark and Erway are also tabbed for third base.

Center field is senior Haley Skelton, with sophomore Alea Makings as backup; in left are Muldrow, Makings and Parr; and in right are Makings and Muldrow.

Parr, Skelton and Erway will dominate the hit-and-run offense, with Myrick and Muldrow tabbed as players to watch as the season takes shape.

With eyes on the weather, the Lady Indians are scheduled to open the season today against Kingman in a doubleheader. They then host Hillsboro Tuesday at Jordaen Memorial Park.

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