

# Golf Team Looks to Finish Strong in Spring Season

By Cole Schuessler

Men's and Women's Golf features a different dynamic than almost all other collegiate sports. With both a fall and spring season, Concordia's golfers will have had around five months (October to March) since they last hit a golf ball in NCAA play. The Golden Bears golf teams have used this break positively though, getting stronger and building team camaraderie. As the spring season draws nearer, the teams and individuals hope they can build off their fall season and continue on to postseason play this spring.

The men and women's golf team's often practice and work out together, so Concordia employs one head coach for both teams. Taylor Auman, former CSP golfer and 2013 graduate, took over the teams in the middle of the fall season, officially being named head coach in September 2015. Auman was a graduate assistant for the golf team the past two years, and she received her MBA in healthcare management in August before being named head coach of the team a month later. "It's a lot more fun being the head coach, and being able to run the show," Auman said. "I like to have fun with the athletes." With past experience in the program and being a similar age to the players, Auman has knowledge in the team's opponents, different courses, and what her athletes are going through. She views the golf program as a family. "I really look at the team as a whole, not separately men and women. They practice together, they work out together, and they hang out together."

Though the camaraderie throughout the golf program is viewed as a strength, it doesn't play as much of a factor during regular season play on the course, where men and women compete separately. The women

start with the Holiday Inn Express MWSU Spring Invite in Missouri on March 13-15 while the men kick off the spring season in Kansas with the Ichabod Invitational on March 14-15.

The women's team has gone to NCAA regionals the past seven years and is lead by senior and NCAA nationals participant Rachel Gray. Gray also listed the family like aspect of the team as a strength saying, "If one girls plays badly, you've got the rest of your team to pick you up. We're really good at building each other up and keeping each other accountable for practice." Gray leads the team with an average of 77 strokes a round, 5th in the NSIC. Junior Savannah Stone and sophomore Kari Opatz also finished in the NSIC's top 15 for individual strokes per round. The Concordia women finished second in the fall half of the NSIC Championship and look to continue their success on April 23 and 24 in the spring half as the conference season comes to a close.

The men's team goes into the spring season led by a pair of seniors, Garrett Emond and Nick Auman. Emond is 20th in the NSIC and leads the team at 76.6 strokes per round while Auman is a close second at 76.8. Other significant contributors are junior Chance Maiers and sophomores Alex Uloth and Deion Kelly, all averaging under 80 strokes a round. The Golden Bear men's golfers finished 8th out of 11 in the first half of the NSIC championship and look to finish out the spring season strong with the second half of the championship on April 8th and 9th.

## Fess Steps Down Assistant Rises to Power

By Tony Kohanek

Spring semester of the 2015-2016 Concordia University year has begun and winter sports are still continuing to fight for postseason. Concordia University came into 2016 with a record of 5-7 coming off of four straight losses before leaving for winter break. During winter break some startling news happened as veteran head coach Paul Fessler stepped down and handed the team over to assistant coach Amanda Behnke. "It was sad to see Coach Fessler go, because not only is he a great guy, but he also coached me for 3 years when I attended Concordia" said Behnke. "I truly respect him and enjoyed being around him. I also learned a lot from him so I was excited for the opportunity to become the head coach."

Amanda Behnke is a Concordia alumni and a former women's basketball player, playing three years at Concordia, from 2005-2008, after transferring from Winthrop University. After leaving Concordia she traveled overseas to play basketball over in Australia for 4 years. When Behnke came back Coach Fessler invited her to come be apart of his staff as a graduate assistant, to which she gladly accepted. She got promoted to head assistant prior to the 2014-2015 season, when former head assistant Kachine Alexander took an assistant job at NDSU.

On January 2nd in Coach Behnke's debut as head coach against University of Minnesota- Duluth, Concordia lost 74-64 with a tough 3rd quarter being out-scored 24-14. The team would lose its next 3 games including Behnke's home debut against Augustana,

71-80. Finally, she broke through the barrier winning her first game as a head coach against Minnesota Crookston, 80-73. She went on to win the next two games, before heading back on the road and dropping a closely contested game to Sioux Falls on January 22nd, 64-69.

In response to how the season started Coach Behnke said, "After the transition we started out a little slow. I think it was emotional for all of us, and a change. But after a few adjustments, and both the players and myself getting comfortable in our roles, we really started to click. The last few games they have played so well, and I couldn't be more proud of the girls for their effort and heart. The biggest thing is to trust each other and once that happens a lot of good things can come out of that." Coach Behnke says that being a head coach is "a completely different role, but I knew I had to be ready for this job, take care of the players and do the best job I can."

Coach Behnke said the team's plans moving forward are, "to play every game with heart and effort. No matter whom we are playing we need to outwork every team. Take every practice day by day and every game, game by game." The decision has not yet been reached to if Amanda Behnke is to remain the head coach or not and probably won't be made until the season is finished. Behnke is thankful for the opportunity and hopes to remain the head coach.