

BC3's Fischer among trailblazers in first WPCC women's golf tournament



Julia Fischer, a freshman and the first woman on the Butler County Community College golf team in more than 14 years, prepares to putt Sept. 19 in a match against the Community College of Allegheny-North and Westmoreland County Community College at Lake Arthur Golf Course near Butler.

45-year-old league creates inaugural battle for females

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(Butler, PA) Fresh off No. 2 at Lake Arthur Golf Course, where Julia Fischer correctly reads a right-to-left sloping green and curls a 10-foot uphill putt to within 1 foot of the cup, the Butler County Community College freshman approaches the tee box on No. 3.

As opponents Maggie Risher and Kylee Surike look on, Fischer retreats behind the tee on the 294-yard par-4, turns 90 degrees counterclockwise, and quickly takes one and only one practice swing with her driver.

“That’s her routine,” BC3 golf coach Bill Miller said. “She takes one swing behind the ball. She does that on all her shots.”

Fischer then squares to the tee and strikes a laser-straight line drive that sails over two sand traps yawning in middle of the fairway and lands exactly 150 yards from the flag. She would later win No. 3 against Risher, of the Community College of Allegheny County-North, and Surike, of Westmoreland County Community College, with an adept wedge shot – after one practice swing – from a sand trap squeezing the green, setting up a successful 10-foot putt – after one practice swipe – to save par.

“If I take too many practice swings,” Fischer said later, “I might jinx my shot.”

Fischer, the first female on a BC3 golf team Miller has coached for 14 years, has a shot to win inaugural Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference women’s golf championship Oct. 7-8 at The Links at Spring Church in Apollo.

The 36-hole women’s tournament, a first in the 45-year-old WPC, will pit the conference’s only three females – Fischer, Risher and Surike – against one another with more at stake than that in the Sept. 19 regular-season tri-match at Lake Arthur Golf Club.

“I think it is really good for our conference, for the growth, and especially for our region too, getting more females involved with golf,” said Dick Holler, the second-year Westmoreland coach.

“I hope it is something we can build on”

WPC coaches recognize that Fischer, a 2017 graduate of Freeport Area High; Risher, a 2017 graduate of Moon Area High, and Surike, a 2016 graduate of United High in Armagh; had been playing in regular-season matches since Sept. 1 and should have the opportunity to compete for a title, Miller said.

Each is averaging a score of 100 over 18 holes.



Julia Fischer, a Freeport Area High graduate and member of the Butler County Community College golf team, smiles Sept. 19 in a match against the Community College of Allegheny-North and Westmoreland County Community College at Lake Arthur Golf Course near Butler.



Maggie Risher, left, is a freshman on the Community College of Allegheny-North golf team. Kylee Surike, right, is a sophomore on the Westmoreland County Community College golf team. They will battle Butler County Community College’s Julia Fischer for the Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference women’s golf title Oct. 7-8 in Apollo.



Julia Fischer, a freshman on the Butler County Community College golf team, tees off Sept. 19 in a match against the Community College of Allegheny-North and Westmoreland County Community College at Lake Arthur Golf Course near Butler.

something like that.”

Fischer is believed to be only the second female golfer in the history of a BC3 program that formed in 1968, according to Miller and Charles Dunaway, who coached the team from 1968 to 1999.

The freshman said she has confidence playing at The Links, where on Sept. 15 she fired a 95, her best round of the season – and in her drives that average 175 yards.

“They are pretty solid,” Fischer said. “They usually go straight and far. And I can hit them consistently.”

Surike agrees.

Fischer “hits it really straight,” Surike said. “She is never really in trouble, left or right. She just doesn’t try to overpower it, so she is never really in trouble.”

“We have always promoted golf to be for men and women,” Miller said, “and we finally have representatives from three different schools. I am excited and I hope it is something we can build on.”

The championship, Holler said, “gives them something to play for at the end of the year other than just going out and playing in a match and posting a number. Now they are competing against other females.”

Risher said she was a senior on Moon Area’s first girls’ golf team, which formed in 2016.

Surike said she competed with boys on United’s squad, and that as a senior, she was joined on the team by one other girl, a freshman.

Fischer, who said Freeport’s was a co-ed squad that included an average of three girls, added that she was thrilled to learn about the debut of the WPCC women’s golf tournament.

“I never have had the opportunity to go to a tournament before,” Fischer said.

Surike was “really excited” and Risher, “super-excited. This will be the first time I will get to participate in

While Risher said her drives are the strongest part of her game, she is at a disadvantage in the tee box against Fischer and Surike.

“They can hit farther than me, driving-wise, but I think I can do it,” she said. “I am pretty close to them.”

Skill on fast greens could make difference, BC3 coach says

The 4,920-yard, par-72 layout at The Links will test all parts of the trailblazing females’ games, Miller said – and in particular, their putting.

“They must have the ability to get into the right spots on the greens, which are typically quick,” Miller said. “If you do get above the hole or in some cases, in the wrong spot, that could lead to a three-putt, or worse. That certainly is an area that can come into play. They are going to want to make sure they hit the ball straight off their tee and get into their approaches, but I think the putting will be the key there.”

Regardless of the champion, Fischer, Risher and Surike represent the future of women’s golf in the WPCC, Holler said.

The season-ending tournament “bodes well for women’s sports in general and gives us an opportunity to build that up as far as involvement for all the colleges within our conference,” Holler said. “I think it is great exposure for women’s golf, especially in Western Pennsylvania. There are a lot of students who come to campuses who have an interest in wanting to golf, but some of them never really do it because they are looking to see if other schools have female golfers.”