

BC3 chases 7th WPCC golf crown in row

Sept. 5, 2019

(Butler, PA) For the first time in his memory, Bill Miller has only one golfer returning to a Butler County Community College team he has coached since 2003.

“It could be the first time,” Miller said. “Or one of the rare times.”

That one golfer returning, however, is Neshannock High graduate Carmen Oliva.

Oliva, who in a spring 2019 season helped to lead the Pioneers to their fourth National Junior College Athletic Association Division III Region XX crown.

Oliva, who in May was named to the all-Region XX squad.

Oliva, who in June competed in his first NJCAA Division III national tournament in Chautauqua, N.Y.

Oliva, who in the fall of 2016 won the Western Pennsylvania Collegiate Conference individual championship.

“He will have to be our leader,” Miller said. “He can help the others going into a golf match with what to expect, with ideas and helpful hints of how to play certain courses and holes.”

October is “when it counts”

Oliva is ready to assume the leadership role, which he described as “being the main guy. Helping out the others.

“We are going to play at most of the courses we played last spring. I know the courses pretty well. So I can tell my teammates about the course, what not to do and what to do.”

With a roster featuring freshmen Beau Rusnak, of Knoch; Jake Cuny and Camden Seybert, of Butler; Ben Rhoads, of Allegheny-Clarion Valley; and Jocelyn Dias, of Armstrong; Miller said he too will have to give the Pioneers “as much information as possible to acclimate to the season, like what to expect at the golf course. Not that I don’t always do that, but now it is a little more important.”

It will be for BC3 to win its seventh consecutive WPCC team championship and 11th since 1972.

“With one returning player, that will be a challenge,” Miller said. “Hopefully with new players in with high school experience, that will give us a shot.”

The Pioneers will use September matches – the season opener is scheduled for noon Sept. 6 against Westmoreland County Community College at Valley Green Golf Club in Greensburg – to “gear up for the first week of October,” Miller said.

The WPCC championship is set for Oct. 5-6 on the par-72 course at The Links at Spring Church, Apollo.

“Hopefully by then we will be at our peak performance,” Miller said. “That is when it counts.”

Pioneers finished 15-3 last fall

BC3 returned two players in fall 2018 and for the first time since 2006. The Pioneers finished 15-3 in fall 2018 and Miller was named the WPCC’s coach of the year for the fifth time since 2013.

Oliva averaged 79 for BC3 in the spring 2019 season, and 82 in the four-round NJCAA Division III national tournament, where he finished 42nd.

“Carmen is real strong around the greens,” Miller said. “He chips and putts very well. He is consistent. Level-headed. He doesn’t allow himself to get up or down. When he comes in after a match, I can’t tell whether he has played well or not played well.”

After winning the WPCC individual championship in 2016, Oliva returned for the spring 2018 season at BC3. The Pioneers’ Chris Kier, of Knoch, was the WPCC champion in 2014 and Anthony Lewis, of Butler, claimed the title in 2017.

Dias is the second female golfer at BC3 in Miller’s tenure as coach, following Julia Fischer, a Freeport High graduate who played for the Pioneers in the fall 2017 and fall 2018 seasons.

Dias’ strength is her 230-yard tee shots, which, she said, reflects her motion.

“When you are moving your hips, that is where all your power comes from,” she said. “A lot of people try to swing with their arms more and it doesn’t work out. It took a lot of practice and people talking to me to try to fix that, but I think it is finally good.”

Dias “hits a long ball,” Miller said. “Nice swing. I always thought Julia hit long tee balls, but Jocelyn hits it farther.”

BC3’s fall season concludes with the WPCC championship. The Pioneers’ spring season features regional play, regional tournaments and possible national championship appearances.