

Morris County GC is proud of Noble effort

BY JAMES ZOLTAK

Karen Noble's bid to win the United States Golf Association Women's Amateur championship in Minneapolis failed yesterday, but it certainly didn't go without notice among those present at the Morris County Golf Club in Convent Station.

The 95-degree, 80 percent humidity kept the crowd down at the New Jersey course yesterday, but those who were present wanted to know how their most prominent amateur member was doing in her challenge for the title.

Noble's 6 and 5 defeat to Pearl Sinn of Bellflower, Calif., in the championship match did little to lessen the crowd's pride in her accomplishments.

"She's kind of surprised us all," said Noble's older sister, Anne, who fills in for Karen at a part-time job in the club pro shop while her sister is competing. "She had booked a return

flight for last Thursday. No one really expected her to go quite this far."

But not everyone was as surprised as Noble's sister.

"She's got a great interest for the game," said caddymaster Frank Depta, who has known and played with Karen for eight years. "She practices with great desire and she's got a positive attitude. That's why she wins. She's too good for me — she even outdrives me. Some kids play for a year or two and then they stop. She never stopped. She never lost her desire."

Noble's parents, Rie and James, introduced Karen to golf when she was a youngster.

"It used to be that my mom would beat my sister," said Anne, 22, of her 20-year-old sister. "But in the the past couple of years that has switched."

Rie and James Noble and their 24-year-old son, Jay, the eldest of their

three children, were in Minneapolis to cheer Karen on, leaving Anne at home to hold down the fort.

Morris County head pro David Glenz and his wife, Pat, made an effort to join the New Jersey crowd in Minneapolis. Glenz was eliminated from the U.S. PGA when he failed to make the cut Friday and immediately started trying to find a plane to Minnesota out of Oklahoma City. He has worked extensively with Karen on her game.

Mark Yannotta, an assistant pro at Morris County, who is Karen's personal friend and a regular golf partner, was in her gallery.

"Two other members just flew out there this morning," Anne Noble said.

General manager John Foster said the members insist they enjoy their club's low-key profile, but the course has been in the spotlight in recent years.

Glenz, the state's leading pro, this season has swept to victories in the Karsten-Ping, Dodge Open and the New Jersey Open. And Karen won national recognition by beating three former national champions on her way to the final round of the Women's Amateur.

Two weeks ago, Karen won her second straight Women's New Jersey Amateur Championship to go along with the Women's Metropolitan Golf Association Match-Play title she'd annexed in July.

But family success in golf is no accident. Karen's mother, Rie, won the state Amateur in 1973 and still is one of the state's better amateurs. She would have faced her daughter in the semifinal round of the state Amateur had she survived the quarterfinal round two weeks ago. Mrs. Noble was ousted by Laura D'Alessandro of Toms River,

one of Karen's teammates on the Wake Forest University golf team. Karen, who will celebrate her 21st birthday on Aug. 23, is the captain of the team at Wake Forest, where she will be a senior this fall.

"It's been keeping me busy," Anne said of her sister's success. "A lot of relatives call to see how she's doing. I wish I had a direct line out there (to Minneapolis)."

At the club, those who know her personally had nothing but plaudits for both her skills and her demeanor.

"I've known Karen for four years and I think she's a very nice young girl," said assistant pro Mike Worroll, who described Noble as quietly confident. "I'm very pleased for her. She works hard and she deserves it."

"She's pretty modest," concurred Anne. "They had a surprise party after one of the tournaments and she was

really embarrassed. She blushed."

Worroll, who said that he had worked with Noble on her putting last year, said he has noticed a steady improvement in her game.

"She's gotten stronger," he pointed out. "It seems she's hitting the ball a little farther."

Club member Bob Smith was equally enthusiastic about Noble's achievements.

"She's fantastic," said Smith. "It's great for her, it's great for the club and it's great for the area. I'm going to go call and see how she's doing right now."

"All I can say is that she is a very, very fine girl," said member John McDonough.

"I would have liked to have gone out and caddied for her," added caddy Paul Innis.