

Noble aiming to make

By LLOYDE S. GLICKEN

Time and travel will tell the tale for Karen Noble.

She plans to spend the next 15 months in considerable travel and competition to solidify her position as one of the nation's top woman amateur golfers. And that experience, she said, will lead to a decision on whether to turn pro.

The graduate of Wake Forest University, who added a second straight Women's Metropolitan Golf Association Match-Play Championship to her bag of trophies last Friday at the Bonnie Briar Country Club in Larchmont, N.Y., plans to play the state and national circuits heavily in hopes of making the U.S. Curtis Cup Team, which will engage Great Britain/Ireland at the Somerset Hills Country Club in Bernardsville in August of 1990.

"Now that I have graduated from college, I intend to concentrate on golf," said the resident of the Brookside section of Mendham, a one-handicap golfer at the Morris County Golf Club in Convent Station. "I hope I can have the kind of year I had in 1988."

That year, for the 21-year-old daughter of James and Rie Noble of Florham Park, was one of the finest seasons produced by a woman in the history of New Jersey golf. It started when she won the WMGA Match-Play for a first time, took the New Jersey Women's Amateur for a second time and reached a climax when she went to the final of the U.S. Women's Amateur at the Minikahda Club in Minneapolis, Minn.

Although 1989 started slowly for the 5-5, 125-pound blonde — she was ousted in the first round of both the North

and South and the Women's Western Amateur championships — her accomplishments in the last month seem to have gotten her on the right track.

She said she did not play as well this spring as captain of the Wake Forest golf team as she had in the fall, and conceded that she was disappointed "when we failed to qualify for the NCAA championships."

"In fact, we did not qualify during my four years at Wake Forest," said Noble, who, in addition to graduating on May 15 with a degree in political science, was voted the golf team's Most Valuable Player.

Returning to her home last month afforded her an opportunity to work under the guidance of Morris County pro David Glenz. Noble's game responded. That was proven at Westchester's Bonnie Briar when she retained the Women's Met title, waltzing through six matches, including her 7-and-5 triumph over Mary Eichhorn of Spring Lake in a rare all-New Jersey final of the time-honored match-play event.

"I was pretty much disappointed with the way the season started," Noble conceded, "but winning the Met Match-Play felt a lot better. Except for my putting, I think my game has returned."

She'll leave tomorrow for Colorado Springs to play in the Broadmoor Invitation, one of the top match-play tournaments on the women's amateur circuit.

Next will come the U.S. Women's Open at the Indianwood Golf and Country Club in Lake Orion, Mich., July 13-16. Noble earned an exemption for the Open by virtue of her runner-up finish in the 1988 U.S. Women's Amateur.

On July 18, Karen and her dad will play in the MGA Father-Daughter at Echo Lake. She plans to seek the WMGA

U.S. Curtis Cup team

Stroke-Play Championship July 24-25 at Essex County; that would require only a one-position improvement. Noble finished second last summer.

Then the schedule calls for her to play in the U.S. Women's Amateur July 31-Aug. 5 at Pinehurst's No. 2 course in North Carolina, a tournament that won her national recognition a year ago. Last August, she swept through a string of upsets in Minneapolis before she lost in the 36-hole final, 6 and 5, to two-time and current U.S. Women's Amateur Public Links champion Pearl Sinn of California.

Before she was beaten by Sinn, Noble was a giant killer. She sent three former champions to the sidelines — Carol Semple Thompson, Ann Quast Sander and Michiko Hattori, the 1985 winner who also was the low amateur in the Women's Open at Plainfield in 1987. In a tense semifinal against Japan's Hattori, Noble extended the match by sinking an eight-foot putt for par to halve the 18th hole and then closed out with a four-footer for birdie on the 19th.

Watching attentively, as she does at many of Karen's tournaments, was her mother, who has won the Garden State Women's Elizabeth Goss Round Robin, Stroke-Play and Better-Ball Match-Play titles, the latter seven times, including five in a row from 1968 through 1972 with Mrs. Joseph Ru-vane.

Mother and daughter will split when Karen plays in the national Amateur and Rie competes in the concurrent New Jersey Amateur.

"I never offer any advice," Rie noted. "I'm there to offer support. That's what it was Friday at Bonnie Briar. I just watched; she knows what she's doing."

Karen, when she needs help, goes to Glenz, the New

Jersey PGA Player of the Year six times.

"Since David began working with me five years ago, he completely turned my game around," she said. "He has taught me everything — shotmaking, putting, golf course management, game strategy and, most importantly, the proper mental attitude. Without his help, I don't think I ever would have been able to achieve what I have."

Noble's concentrated schedule over the next several months, which also will include the Women's Trans-National in Columbia, S.C., the week after the U.S. Amateur and a trip to Florida in January to play on the women's Orange Blossom circuit, will be for a two-fold purpose.

"I want to make the Curtis Cup team," stressed Noble, who regards the honor as her "most cherished dream." And she is looking forward to playing in the 1990 Women's Amateur a week later at the Canoe Brook Country Club in Summit.

Should she attain Curtis Cup membership, she would be the first New Jersey golfer to be selected since Maureen Orcutt of White Beeches and Charlotte Glutting of Rock Spring were on the 1938 squad. They also were the only Garden Staters ever selected, although each was a member of more than one team.

In the meantime, she'll dig into the rigors of tournament golf and travel.

"I want to see how I like traveling so much on my own and how I do against good competition," she said. "If I'm selected for the Curtis Cup and I'm playing well, I'll try for the pro tour. I definitely want to make a career in golf and to that end I intend to turn pro eventually, but not before I find out what it's all about."