

Noble swinging golf clubs with best of female players

By DAVE ARTUSO
Sports Writer

BERNARDSVILLE — As a junior co-captain and No. 1 player on the Wake Forest University women's golf team, Karen Noble had her share of success this season. But now it's summer, and the former Mendham High star is back home and winning again.

Noble, the 1987 N.J. State Amateur Women's golf champion, last week captured her first Women's Metropolitan Golf Association Match-Play Championship at the Somerset Hills Country Club in Bernardsville.

Firing a 77 early last week to collect the qualifying medal for the WMGA tournament, Noble led 31 other golfers out of a starting field of 62 onto the 5,643-yard course for the week's match play.

It was the 20-year-old's second appearance in the WMGA event. Two years ago, she lost in the semifinals at Elmsford (N.Y.) Country Club.

"I was pretty confident coming in," she said Monday. "I knew once I qualified that I'd have a good shot at making it to the finals."

After defeating Shelia Soloman of Alpine, who qualified by defeating two other golfers with par on the first playoff hole, Noble went on to later defeat Reggie Haas of Rye, N.Y., and Westchester Country Club.

In the final, scheduled for 36 holes, the ex-Mendham star toppled Maura Waters of Raritan Valley Country Club.

Noble shot a three-over-par 75 in the morning round of

18 holes. She won the championship when, after 15 holes in the afternoon, she led by four holes with only three remaining.

"My matches got progressively tougher," said Noble, who had defeated Waters in the quarterfinals of the state amateur tournament two years ago. "But I enjoy playing match tournaments. I'm very competitive, and when I lose a hole to someone, that makes me come back stronger for the next hole."

At school this past season, Noble was named the MVP of the Wake Forest team that was ranked 28th in the country.

She finished in the top 20 in seven of nine matches, and was in the top 10 on two of those occasions.

"I was hoping to have won a college tournament by now," she said, "but I am improving. This year, several players who had been beating me, I was beating."

For the summer, Noble she will attempt to defend her state amateur title, as well as play in a state round-robin tournament and stroke tournament.

A big day for her will be July 8, when she tries to qualify for this year's United States Women's Open, to be held later this summer in Baltimore, Md.

"I missed qualifying last year by three strokes, but that was okay because a lot of those players were professionals," she said. "This year, I hope to make it."

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