

WMGA MATCH-PLAY GOLF

Montclair's Aitken does it her way

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TENAFly — Montclair's Helen Aitken isn't flashy, nor is she an attention grabber on the golf course. But she is consistent.

Drive after drive, approach shot after approach shot, Aitken attacks the game in a methodical manner.

Montclair's Maura Waters is flashy. She can boom a drive, stick a shot a foot away from the pin, and nail the putt that looks impossible to read. The problem with flash, though, is that once the bright light goes out, it takes a little time before its brilliance is seen again.

Such was the case Thursday during the final round of the Women's Metropolitan Golf Association Match-Play Championships at Knickerbocker. Aitken spent much of the 36-hole finale playing methodically, content to be the tortoise to Waters' hare. Her consistency proved too much for Waters to overcome as Aitken scored a 6 and 5 victory to earn the title.

The victory marked the first time in 16 attempts that Aitken, 49, has earned the WMGA Match-Play crown. It was her first trip to the finals after four semifinal losses.

"If I get playing in a groove the way I have been this week, I'll hit the ball solid, like I did today," Aitken said. "My tee shots were in play today and I was hitting my irons well, too. I was a little tense with my putter, though. My putter is traditionally weak and though I had some nice putts today, I was still shaky.

"It was easy for me to lay up on a lot of my putts today because unlike Maura, I am not an aggressive putter.

Almost everyone at Montclair is a tentative lay-it-up putter because we are so used to the greens there. So you tend to be a tentative putter everywhere, and that helped today."

Aitken was up four after the morning round of 18. Waters, a runner-up in the 1988 WMGA Match-Play Championship and the 1992 State Amateur winner, was struggling off the tee. Waters' woes continued in the afternoon, as she sprayed drives to the left or right rough on almost every hole.

Aitken built a seven-hole lead after eight holes in the afternoon and looked to be headed for a quick victory, but she ran into trouble as she did in the semifinals. Waters battled back to win two of the next three holes and appeared to be making a match of it. Aitken, though, did not allow Waters to complete her comeback, finally winning the match on the 13th hole.

"Helen didn't leave the door open," Waters said. "I haven't been driving the ball well all week, but I have been winning because everyone I played left the door open for me to win. Helen didn't.

"I was just overswinging off the tee today. My swing just isn't grooved the way it should be right now. I had to scramble all week because of it and you can't do that once you get to this point and expect to win. Your luck runs out."

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Newton's Diane D'Alessio captured the Sanford Cup by defeating Alpine's Helen Bernstein, 8 and 6. D'Alessio is a sophomore at Fuhrman University and is one of the most promising female amateurs in the state.