

Lions eye title with Kahler as coach

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Linn-Mar Lions will be aiming to win the boys state golf title Saturday at Elmcrest Country Club with Hall of Fame coach Steve Kahler by their side.

The Lions found themselves tied for third place Friday after the first round of the 36-hole tournament, just six strokes behind Waukee heading into the final round.

Kahler, who coached the Linn-Mar boys golf team from 1985 through 2012 before retiring as a teacher and coach, is back at the helm of the Lions as one of their acting head coaches in place of Bill Hoefle, who apparently was relieved of his duties a few weeks ago.

Linn-Mar Athletic Director Scott Mahmens declined comment Friday on why Hoefle is no longer coaching the team. Hoefle did not answer his cell phone Friday afternoon.

Max Thrune fired a 4-over-par 74 to lead the Lions and Jake Sevcik was right behind with a 75.

Andrew O'Brien of Waukee was the only golfer to match par with a 70 as the contestants battled fast greens and windy conditions.

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"I'm really happy with the way the kids battled today," said Kahler, a member of the Iowa High School Golf Coaches Association Hall of Fame. "The course really won. The scores were really high.

"The greens were fast, they had the course playing long for the kids today, with a little bit of wind coming out of the north. So that's why the scores were a little higher than people probably expected."

The Washington Warriors stand in sixth place at 319, a full 16 shots behind Waukee. Frank Lindwall led the Warriors with a 7-over 77 and Connor Neighbors provided an 8-over 78.



The Xavier Saints are in ninth place in the 12-team field at 326. Luke Winker led the Saints with a 77.

Throne was relatively happy with his 74, considering the conditions. He is tied for fourth place with Ben Epperly of West Des Moines Valley.

"It started out windy and cold this morning," he said. "The wind was blowing pretty quick. A lot of people were just trying to hang in there.

"It got nicer throughout the day, but the greens were quick and the course was playing tough. They were fast. I didn't think they would be that bad.

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"The first couple of holes I was blowing them by a couple of feet and I was like, 'Wow.' It was like putting on cement."

Linn-Mar has given itself a chance to make a run for high honors Saturday.

"We're happy," said Kahler, who is leading the Lions at the state tournament for the 10th in his career. "Our goal today was to try and shoot around 300. We were a little higher. Like I said, the course was a little tougher today.

"The other goal we had was to try and move into the top-3 groups and we're there. We're happy where we are. I know the guys think they can play a lot better tomorrow. So I hope they do that and we ought to be right there."

Tripp Kinney of Waukee and Max Gogel of Davenport Assumption are tied for second place at 2-over 72. Then come Thrune and Epperly at 4-over-74.

Dowling is in second place at 307, four shots behind Waukee and two shots ahead of Linn-Mar and West Des Moines Valley. Waukee has won three state titles in the past five years with crowns in 2010, 2012 and 2014.

Thrune called his 74 "a good score" for the opening round.

"I'd like to be a lot lower. I left a lot out there," he said. "But considering the conditions and the rest of the field, you can't complain about being in fourth place right now. I'll play my best tomorrow and hope my best is good enough."

TEAM STANDINGS

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1. Waukee 303, 2. Dowling 307, 3. (tie) Linn-Mar 309, West Des Moines Valley 309, 5. Ankeny Centennial 316, 6. Washington 319, 7. Johnston 321, 8. Davenport Assumption 323, 9. Xavier 326, 10. Des Moines Roosevelt 334, 11. Burlington 336, 12. Pleasant Valley 344.

TOP 10 INDIVIDUALS

Par 70

1. Andrew O'Brien, Waukee 70

2. Tripp Kinney, Waukee 72

Max Gogel, Assumption 72

4. Max Thrune, Linn-Mar 74

Ben Epperly, WDM Valley 74

6. Jake Sevcik, Linn-Mar 75

Chris Winkel, Centennial 75

Hank Weresh, Dowling 75

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Corey Matthey, Sergeant-BL 75

10. Willis Gaer, Roosevelt 76

Jack Hurley, Dowling 76

Jace Mueller, Burlington 76

LINN-MAR - Max Thrune 74, Jake Sevcik 75, Brent Larson 80, Andrew Wood 80, Jack Recker 81, Jordan Bohannon 83.

WASHINGTON - Frank Lindwall 77, Connor Neighbors 78, Joe Slattery 81, Jabe Gonder 83, Logan Bracey 84, Alex Slattery 84.

XAVIER - Luke Winker 77, Brody Robinson 82, Tyler Breitbach 83, Mitch King 84, Matt Neumeyer 84, Sam Martin 85.