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Nicki Henry Continues Fundraising with 'Birdies Fore ALS'

By Dan Murray

Even though golf is a big part of Nicki Henry's life, she knows there is more to life than golf.

Henry's Birdies Fore ALS, which benefits research on the painful and deadly disease, continues this year as she is about to enter her senior season at Kenston High School. The All-Ohio golfer is hoping to lead the Bombers to a fifth Chagrin Valley Conference title in the past six seasons but she is also hoping to top her own birdie total from 2009.

For each birdie, Henry makes a donation to ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease) through pledges. The first \$5,000 in pledges is matched each year. She has also raised funds for breast cancer awareness. In 2008, she carded 37 birdies and upped that total to 55 last year, when she raised \$10,000.

"My goal is 65 this year," she said. "I have a strong, personal connection with ALS."

That connection came through her grandmother's battle with the disease, a struggle that ended June 11, just before Henry was to play in the prestigious Hudson Junior Invitational. "It was really difficult for me because I was very close to her," said Henry. "It was tough mentally to play at Hudson."

Henry placed 21st at the event after a sixth place finish last year. She is playing in several summer tournaments, which will showcase her talents for Division I college coaches. "The summer tournaments are what a lot of the college coaches look at," she said. "And I'm very excited for the new high school season and a chance to get back to the state tournament."

A Division I college career is in the cards for Henry, who also has dreams of a career on the LPGA Tour. She hopes to major in sports management in college and has an eye on a possible career as a teaching professional.

Henry and her Kenston teammates will be working with Punderson head pro Kip Freeman, who is taking over the head coaching duties for the Bombers this fall.

"I've been working out with a lot of weight training and cardio work throughout the winter," said Henry. "It has helped me with my distance and my stability."

A new and improved Henry is bad news for the rest of the Chagrin Valley Conference but good news for her Birdies Fore ALS. "My grandmother's passing has inspired me even more," she said. "I definitely hope to continue to raise money for the next few years."

To contribute to Birdies Fore ALS, visit Henry's website at www.nickihenry.com.