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Mayhem in Madison: How Prescott girls golf completed an improbable comeback to win third state title

By Reagan Hoverman

The odds of hitting a hole-in-one are approximately one in 12,500. Coincidentally enough, the odds of Prescott overcoming a five-shot deficit in the last two holes on the second day of the 2022 WIAA Girls Golf State Tournament were probably similar to those of making an ace – and both of them happened.

After Prescott's lackluster team score of 352 on the first day of the tournament, the Cardinals found themselves trailing by four shots going into the second day of competition at the University Ridge Golf Course in Madison on Tuesday, Oct. 11.

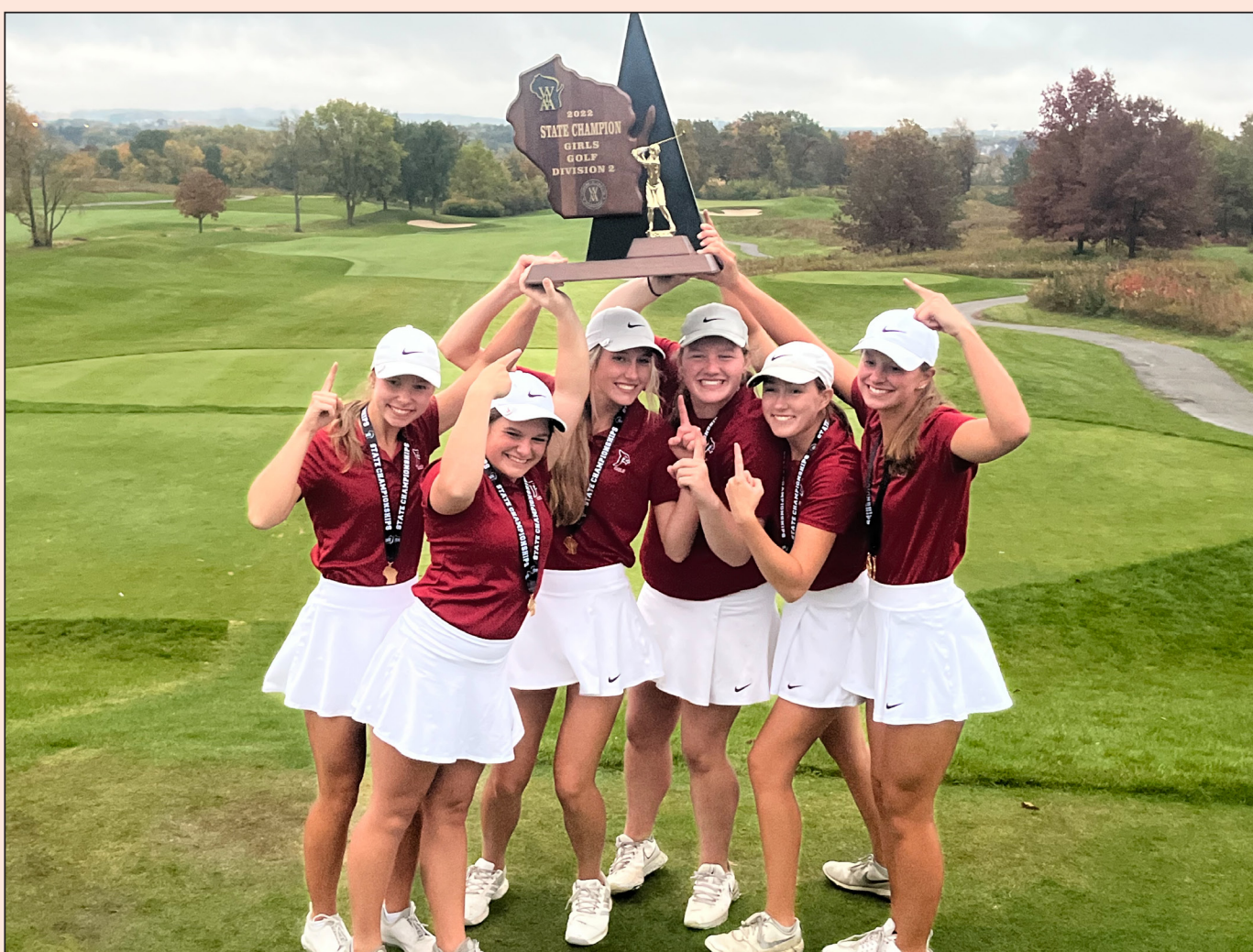
Prescott's deficit grew as both teams made the turn and at one point, the Cardinals trailed by a dozen shots with less than nine holes left to play. Prescott head coach Chad Salay stated that down

the stretch, it looked like The Prairie School, a Racine-based private school, had the Cardinals dead to rights.

"It was a crazy roller-coaster of emotions and I don't know whether to cry, scream or yell, it was just nuts," Salay said. "Towards the end it just looked like we had no chance, to be honest."

Prescott trailed by nearly a half-dozen shots with less than three holes to play on the second and final day of the state tournament. The Cardinals needed something amazing to happen, a spark to get the comeback started and senior Maddie Reiter provided exactly that.

She stepped up to the 17th tee (the eighth hole because Prescott started on the back nine) and struck a perfectly hit wedge that landed on the front of the green, rolled up near the pin and eventually fell into the cup



(From left): Senior Maddie Reiter, sophomore Gabbi Matzek, senior Madasyn Rundquist, sophomore Jeanne Rohl, and seniors Rhi Stutz and Ava Salay celebrate with the 2022 WIAA Division 2 State Championship trophy at the University Ridge Golf Course in Madison on Tuesday, Oct. 11. Prescott becomes the fifth school in state history to win three consecutive state titles. Photo by Reagan Hoverman

for a hole-in-one. The crowd around the green erupted in celebration and excitement, as with one swing of the golf club, Reiter kept Prescott's title hopes alive. It was the eighth hole-in-one in state tournament history.

The crowd's roar after Reiter's ace echoed throughout all corners of University Ridge and signified that something truly special had just happened. Coach Sa-

lay spoke about how that shot sparked the improbable comeback.

"We had the hole-in-one and that just turned everything around," Salay said. "Momentum swung our way. The girls knew she made a hole-in-one, but they didn't know how much that changed the score complexion. They just kept fighting."

Reiter, one of Prescott's three seniors on the varsity

roster, spoke about that hole-in-one, what it felt like and how it turned around a day that looked like it was destined to end in heartbreak.

"I was so nervous all day because I don't really have a 70-yard shot and I knew it was going to sit right around 70 yards," Reiter said. "I knew we needed something good. I was thinking about sticking it and making bird-

ie, but it kept going, and then it dropped."

Reiter helped jumpstart Prescott's comeback in the closing holes of the tournament. However, Prescott needed more than just Reiter. Senior Rhi Stutz, who played in the tournament's penultimate pairing, also delivered a career-defining moment.

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Elmwood/Plum City senior Lily Webb (#14) and the rest of the Wolves roster jump in celebration moments after winning their first Dunn-St. Croix Conference championship in EPC history against Spring Valley on Thursday, Oct. 13. Photo by Reagan Hoverman



The Elmwood/Plum City offensive line and Spring Valley defensive lines face each other in the cold weather on Friday, Oct. 14, in Spring Valley. The Cardinals and Wolves – two bitter rivals – faced each other for the conference championship in front of a packed home crowd. Photo by Reagan Hoverman



Elmwood/Plum City senior running back Trevor Asher follows blockers and looks for open space during one of his rushing attempts against Spring Valley on Friday, Oct. 14. Spring Valley's defense held Asher to 155 rushing yards, more than 100 below his per game average this season, which contributed to the 14-12 win over the Wolves for the conference championship. Photo by Reagan Hoverman

EPC volleyball defeats Spring Valley to claim DSC Conference championship

2022 title is Wolves' first in its co-op history

By Reagan Hoverman

The Elmwood/Plum City Wolves capped off their best regular season in more than a decade with a 3-1 victory in the Dunn-St. Croix Conference championship game on the road against Spring Valley on Thursday, Oct. 13.

The conference championship is the first in more than a dozen years for Elmwood/Plum City and is the first in co-op history since the two schools joined together to become the Wolves. Entering the game, both Elmwood/Plum City and Spring Valley had undefeated (6-0) records in Dunn-St. Croix action.

For years, Colfax and Elk Mound amassed piles of conference championship trophies while Elmwood/Plum City and Spring Valley struggled to get anywhere near the top of the league. However, both teams spent the last two years building rosters around strong senior classes that culminated in Thursday's rivalry game with even higher stakes – the conference title.

For Elmwood/Plum City head coach Amanda Webb, Thursday night was a payoff four years in the making for her senior class. She spoke about winning the conference championship.

"Tonight was amazing and it was fun to watch the kids work together as a team and

never give up. We had a little lull like we always do, but they fought through," Webb said. "They work together and they communicate. This core group of kids have been working together since middle school with my seven seniors and our sophomore."

The Wolves' seven seniors were the driving force in the conference championship victory on Thursday against Spring Valley. Perhaps no senior had a greater impact than setter Lily Webb, who orchestrated the Wolves' offense to perfection throughout the four-set victory.

Although Spring Valley grabbed a 9-8 lead in the first set, the Wolves strung together a small scoring run that culminated in a 12-10 lead which forced a timeout by Spring Valley head coach Kelli Schlegel.

Elmwood/Plum City continued to roll throughout the second set. Strong passing by the aforementioned Lily Webb provided copious scoring opportunities for the Wolves' outside hitters, which they capitalized on to secure a 25-18 opening-set victory. The Wolves took a 1-0 lead in the best-of-five series.

Spring Valley had a chance to even up the series in the second set, especially after the Cardinals took a 16-12 lead which forced a

SV football three-peats as Dunn-St. Croix Conference champions

Cardinals slow down Asher, Elmwood/Plum City in rivalry game

By Reagan Hoverman

The Spring Valley defense held rival school Elmwood/Plum City and its star running back Trevor Asher to 200 yards of total offense in a 14-12 victory to secure the Cardinals' third consecutive Dunn-St. Croix Conference championship.

For Spring Valley head coach Ryan Kap-

ping, the 2022 conference championship is different from the previous two because preseason prognosticators didn't pick the Cardinals to win another league title. Instead, they were picked to finish in the middle of the pack.

"I think this one is special because I don't

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Prescott girls golf head coach Chad Salay gives his daughter Ava Salay, Prescott's #1 golfer, a huge hug after she made a 10-footer for par on the 18th hole to send the state tournament to a sudden death playoff. The Cardinals went on to win their third consecutive state title in the playoff. Photo by Reagan Hoverman



Prescott senior Rhi Stutz gets a high five from head coach Chad Salay after she poured in a long birdie putt on the 14th hole. Stutz's birdie at 14 helped Prescott start its comeback that led to a third consecutive state title. Photo by Reagan Hoverman

State golf

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Stutz went to the 18th tee knowing the margin was razor thin and that Prescott needed her to birdie to give Ava Salay any chance at either forcing a playoff or outright winning the title. Stutz smashed a driver down the middle of the 421-yard par-five 18th hole.

After her second shot landed about 80 yards short of the green in the rough, Stutz hit an outstanding wedge shot approximately six feet past the pin and gave herself a good look at birdie. She read the putt for several minutes before pouring it into the center of the cup for a birdie.

"I knew how important that was going to be. I knew going into the hole that we were down three strokes and that I had to beat my girl," Stutz said after the tournament. "I hit my third shot and started hearing screams, so I knew it was either close or went in. I knew I had to make it to give Ava (Salay) some wiggle room and I made it."

While Stutz made birdie on the 18th, Ava Salay's group was producing fireworks on the 17th green. Ava Salay stuck a wedge close and poured in a birdie to shave another shot off of the lead. Meanwhile, The Prairie School's top golfer Sophia Lawler made double bogey at the 17th, meaning Salay and the Cardinals went to the 18th tee with a one-shot lead.

"I said to Ava when she made a birdie on eight (17) and Sophie (Lawler) made a double, I told her that was a championship putt," Chad Salay said. "That gave us the lead and I said that's why you're a champion."

By the time both Ava Salay and Lawler had made it to the par-five 18th green, Salay was hitting four from the rough while Lawler was hitting three out of the greenside bunker. Salay chipped to about 10 feet past the hole and Lawler blasted a bunker shot to nearly an identical spot as Salay's.

Ava Salay took her time reading the putt, stepped up, and poured in the 10-footer to save par and force Lawler to hole the birdie to force a playoff, and that's exactly what she did. Prescott and The Prairie School went to

sudden death.

"It was funny because it felt great but I didn't really know what it meant at the time," Ava Salay said. "I heard everyone erupt and I didn't know if we won or what happened. My first impression was that we won and then my dad said that we were going to a team playoff."

Salay's clutch putting helped force the sudden death playoff. Both teams went back to the first tee and had all five players on each roster play the hole at the same time. The lowest cumulative score of each team's best four scores on that hole would win the title.

Prescott sophomores Gabbi Matzek and Jeanne Rohl both made par, while Ava Salay, Stutz and Reiter all made bogey for a cumulative score of 18. The Prairie School's entire roster made bogey for a score of 20, meaning the Cardinals had completed the improbable comeback and secured a third consecutive state championship.

Prescott's scores include Ava Salay's 74, which secured her second consecutive WIAA Division 2 Individual Girls Golf State Championship, as well as Stutz's round of 74. Matzek posted an 89, Reiter posted a 95, and Rohl rounded out the scoring with a 101.

The victory moved Prescott into one of the most elite clubs in Wisconsin high school sports history. The Cardinals became the fifth school in state history – for both Division 1 and Division 2 – to win three consecutive golf state championships.

"This is just a legacy changer for these girls and those seniors to get that third," Chad Salay said of three-peating as state champions. "There can't be more than 30 girls in the history of golf that have three titles individually. Maddie (Reiter) and Rhi (Stutz) and Ava (Salay) are three of them."

The victory means that some of the most important seniors in program history, including Salay, Stutz, and Reiter, go out on top one final time as state champions. Their contributions to the program runs deeper than just the championship-caliber scores they shot. It includes the work ethic they instilled deep in the fibers of the program and the rich tradition of success they built in Prescott that will continue for years to come.

need to be and are very well coached," Birtzer said. "They took away our best player and that's a credit to them. They flowed well and were always there."

With a player as talented as Asher, Spring Valley was simply hoping to slow him down, not contain him. He got the Wolves on the board with five minutes left in the first quarter with an eight-yard touchdown run to make it 6-0 Wolves. The two-point conversion was stuffed at the goal line.

After both teams had multiple drives stall out, Spring Valley got the ball back with just under ten minutes remaining in the second quarter. The Cardinals responded with a five-minute drive that featured steady carries by juniors Diego Schmitt and Wyatt Goveronski at the running back and quarterback positions. Goveronski capped off the drive with a one-yard TD carry to make it 6-6. Elmwood/Plum City blocked the ensuing PAT.

Spring Valley broke the tie coming out of the half when the aforementioned Schmitt broke loose on a 25-yard touchdown run. That run capped off a three-minute, 65-yard scoring drive that gave the Cardinals a 14-6 lead.

After the Cardinals' score to start the second half, both defenses began playing well, and the middle of the third quarter and start of the fourth turned into a defensive stale-



FROM HORSEPLAY to Heroes

BY GREG PETERS



A friendship was born between RFHS Wildcat Maddy Doerre and Brookfield Lancer Mckenna Wucherer with a ball to the face. Photo courtesy of Monica Weick

Don't judge a book by its cover

President Ronald Reagan once said, "I've noticed that everyone who is for abortion has already been born."

Upon reading, you either clench your elephant-sized fist in mandate or your limousine is filled with inflated fuel as you mule into battle. Either way, you judge. Such is human nature.

In the arena of competition, your enemy is right across the aisle, or in this case, the net. It's not a normal setting to strike up a new friendship when court is in session. We're conditioned to find fault in our enemies, to seek the worst. It fuels the fire in our competitive spirit. It is the reason trophies were invented.

But sometimes, friendship begins in the most inauspicious manner.

Such is the case with Maddy Doerre and Mckenna Wucherer.

Wucherer is a starting freshman outside hitter for the Minnesota Gopher volleyball team. Last year, her senior season for Brookfield Central, she was the #1 recruit in the entire country. Wucherer is 6'1" and her waist is routinely near the top of the net when she winds up for a kill. The ball makes a different sound coming off her hand, like the difference between a bazooka and BB gun. The mix of talent and tenacity was the reason Wucherer was selected to represent the United States 18U team at the world championships in Mexico last fall where she was named the tournament's top outside hitter. She took a three-week hiatus from her high school team to compete. Without her, the Lancers were 11-8. When the best 17-year-old outside hitter on the planet returned, Brookfield Central was undefeated and made their first-ever WIAA State Tournament appearance. Their first-round opponent was the River Falls Wildcats.

At this time last year, Maddy Doerre was a senior right-side hitter for the Wildcats. Doerre was a three-sport athlete with no intentions to play any sport at the college level. She knew the state tournament would be her last official competition on a volleyball court. The finality of the state tournament for Maddy would have a much different meaning for her than it would for Mckenna.

It would be an ending that would smack her in the face, literally.

The Lancers and Wildcats had fought to a fifth set, but the match was slipping away for Maddy Doerre and her team, as Brookfield and Mckenna Wucherer just took over down the stretch. Great players find a way to take over a game. The Lancer match point from Mckenna was an absolute cannon down the line. There was a thud made from Mckenna's right hand and whack when the ball hit Maddy Doerre's nose about 9 feet away. It was a millisecond lightning and thunder combination.

The blood spurted on Maddy's face was a

red exclamation point on her volleyball career.

How is it even possible to return a hit from Mckenna Wucherer at point-blank range?

"You pray," said Doerre, "You send up a prayer and my prayer didn't get answered that time."

But, as they say, God works in mysterious ways.

"Before I knew her, across the net, she's just this fierce competitor," said Doerre, "I thought she'd be mean and all those things you think when you're playing against someone."

"I couldn't really celebrate with my team until I found out she was OK," said Wucherer, "Volleyball isn't going to last forever, but the relationships will. It's the little interactions like that, that can go a long way."

Maddy Doerre's bloody nose had dried up, but a friendship was just beginning to cultivate.

"Girls never do that (see if other girls are ok)," said Doerre, "They win. They're done. It's like let's go. That wasn't Mckenna at all. She's actually this super nice person and we ended up becoming friends and I found out what an amazing person she is."

"You have to make the most of every little interaction and make the most of every moment," said Wucherer. "Because the people that are going to be there for you are the people you meet along the way."

Doerre and Wucherer have been following each other on social media and share words of encouragement, as they are both college freshman and living in new cities. Maddy attends UW-La Crosse and is majoring in radiation therapy to help cure cancer patients. Mckenna's mom passed away from cancer.

"Now it's (the bloody nose) a funny moment and we're going to be open to reach out to each other," said Wucherer.

"I could not have asked for a better person to hit me in the face, honestly," said Doerre.

Asked if she would keep everything the same way, Doerre laughed and said, "I would. I'd take it right in the face."

Mckenna's reaching out to Maddy may have been easy to do, but it's also extremely easy not to do. One act of kindness may have the ripple effect to last a lifetime.

Don't judge a bloody book by its cover; you might want to open it up and find out what small interactions are inside.

As American poet Emily Dickinson wrote,

"If you take care of the small things, the big things take care of themselves."

Maddy Doerre's younger sister, Olivia, is a freshman defensive specialist on this year's Wildcat volleyball team looking for their seventh straight WIAA State Tournament appearance. The "Road to the Resch" begins for River Falls this Saturday night in the region finals.

Kapping stated that they didn't do anything special defensively to gameplan for Asher, instead, their players stayed home and limited explosive scoring opportunities and big creases.

"Truth be told, we tried to read our keys at the line and not focus solely on him," Kapping said. "We wanted to try not to make big creases for him because he's so patient at finding those openings. We wanted to make him have to run through tackles to get his yards."

Limiting Asher was the key to success for Spring Valley on Friday night, as the Cardinals improved to 8-1 overall for the season and 7-0 in Dunn-St. Croix Conference action. Kapping spoke about the upcoming playoffs.

"I feel like we're playing good football right now, so that's exciting," Kapping said, "We should have guaranteed ourselves a home game next week and now we take it one week at a time. We try to play football as long as we can. We want to hang around as long as we can."

Spring Valley will have a first-round home game against Hurley on Friday, Oct. 21. As for Elmwood/Plum City, the loss drops the Wolves to 6-3 overall for the season and 5-2 in league play. They will host Boyceville on Friday, Oct. 21, at 7 p.m. The Wolves defeated Boyceville 24-21 earlier this season.

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think these guys were expected to and we were projected to be back into the pack this year and not out in the lead," Kapping said. "It's been a tough road with senior injuries, but the sophomores have stepped up and grown up and we just tell the kids, focus on one day at a time and get better. I think we've done that."

Spring Valley's defense was able to do something that no other team had done this season – contain Asher's dynamic running ability and force the Wolves to have another player beat them. The Cardinals limited Asher to 155 rushing yards and six yards per carry, both a season low for him in the Friday, Oct. 14, contest.

Going into the game, Asher averaged 260 rushing yards per game and more than a dozen yards per carry. He also led the entire state in rushing yards and touchdowns. While Asher finished the game with over 150 rushing yards and two touchdowns, it paled in comparison to what he had done throughout the year. Elmwood/Plum City head coach Mike Birtzer gave credit to Spring Valley's defense.

"They are very good at being where they