

Ceresko making impact for women's golf team

By Katie Montgomery
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Penn State women's golfer Ellen Ceresko knows how to use time and patience to her advantage during a golf tournament.

Ceresko proved to be a valuable addition to the Nittany Lions after her collegiate debut during the Starmount Fall Classic Sept. 26 - 28.

"Golf is very laid back," Ceresko said. "You just make sure that you have fun and you have a good game plan. As a freshman going into [the tournament] I didn't have any expectations. I told myself 'Ellen, don't psyche yourself out because you're a freshman and everyone

has to start somewhere." Competing as an individual, Ceresko finished the tournament with a team-best, two-day score of 147 (2-over par) and finished in a tie for fifth out of 100.

Coach Denise St. Pierre was happy with Ceresko's performance.

"She's certainly one of my hardest workers on the team and I like to reward that if the opportunity arises," St. Pierre said. "It just worked out that we could bring an extra person and Ellen was a good choice. I was happy to



Ceresko

see that she took full advantage of being out there and capitalize on the opportunity to represent Penn State."

With such an impressive start to the season, Ceresko is determined to keep St. Pierre happy and perform above par. With the Nittany Lion Invitational beginning Saturday, the women's golf team has the chance to showcase its talent at home and Ceresko couldn't be happier.

"[There's less pressure because] I know the course and it's a lot more relaxing since I'm sleeping in my own bed," Ceresko said.

"But you also have that expectation of doing well since you're on your own course and you

should play well."

But competition and intensity is something the freshman golfer thrives on. Growing up playing sports helped Ceresko become a natural athlete and during her time at North Pocono High School in Jefferson Township, she had to choose between basketball and golf if she ever wanted to excel in the sport, she said.

"I think just naturally, Ellen is very athletic," St. Pierre said. "She has a natural ability to make things happen on the golf course that other people may have to work or practice a little harder to do."

Ceresko proved her athletic ability during her first round as a Nittany Lion when shot a 73 (1-

over par), the second-best round of the team, on a course she wasn't familiar with, Bryan Park Players Course in Greensboro, N.C.

Travelling and playing on the road will help Ceresko improve over her time at Penn State, St. Pierre said.

"We can always improve," St. Pierre said. "Any athlete will tell you that there was a putt missed or a shot missed but I hope more than anything [Ceresko] takes this experience and builds on it and adds confidence to the fact that she can compete and get out there and play with the rest of them."

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Recruit

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was also considering Minnesota and Iowa State among others, said he didn't know what to expect before coming for his Penn State visit. Once he arrived and met the team, though, the high school senior immediately felt like part of the family.

He visited with an academic advisor, met with Tim Curley, Penn State's director of athletics, went to a women's volleyball game with some of the basketball players and was at Beaver Stadium for the Penn State football team's win against Kent State.

"It felt a lot like family and that was really important for my son, away from home, to be able to come there and feel like he could walk in to coaches or to coun-

selors and that everybody was accessible," said John Travis, Ross' father. "So that he felt like it is home."

When Travis announced to his family he was committing to Penn State, John Travis said his daughter, a junior at Minnesota, cried. Not because her brother was going to a Big Ten rival, but because she was happy for him.

"I just think that Penn State has everything that I really needed," Travis said.

Kallman said Travis played mostly guard during his freshman year at Chaska.

However, after a growth spurt in which the coach said Travis grew about five inches in a year and a half, Travis, a forward who can handle the ball, can play all five positions for Chaska, Kallman said. Travis also plays for the 43 Hoops AAU team, which is

coached by former NBA player Chris Carr. Carr played six seasons in the pros with six different teams.

"I think it's truly a blessing to be able to work with an ex-NBA player and just all the stuff that he's provided for me and taught me is amazing," Travis said. "I credit him a lot on helping me get to where I am right now."

In preparation for Big Ten basketball, Travis said he wants to improve his jump shot and get stronger. Because of his growth spurt, Travis had a back injury that forced him to miss some of last season.

Travis is also nursing a foot injury, but Kallman said he thinks Travis is going to be injury-free come the start of his senior season in November.

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Change

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Boone's quick punting foot allowed for only one protector.

In the new model, more pressure is put on the Lions' coverage players, Paterno said. Opposed to putting two gunners — speedy players on the outside of a punt play who run downfield to reduce a punt returner's running room — the Lions use one this season, cornerback Stephon Morris.

The size of the personal protectors also changed from a year ago.

Penn State replaced the stature of defensive back Andrew Dailey with the physiques of two offensive linemen — Troutman and Stankiewicz — and one defensive lineman, Still.

"Just the size differential mattered a lot, and [Clayborn] got through and shed some blocks and blocked the punt," Penn State co-captain Ollie Ogbu said, "and that really did change the tide of the game."

The momentum swing put an end to the Lions' 2009 national title hopes.

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Goalie

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outside the box that made it past Birmingham.

Birmingham didn't let the set-back take hold of his psyche, however, and didn't let up another goal for the remainder of the half.

"It's just the life of a goalkeeper," he said. "You try to forget about it."

All night, Birmingham played aggressively, coming out of the box and disrupting St. Francis' attack, clearing several scoring opportunities.

Warming was pleased to see him coming out of the net with such tenacity.

"The guys told me he never came out of the crosses," Warming said.

"So we're proud of him for trying to test his range and see what he can do."

Warming also added that in one particular play towards the end of the got "clobbered," but

hung in there to make the play.

Junior defender Mark Fetrow, who played with Birmingham in high school, was impressed with his teammate's play, and partially attributed the three goals to the defense.

"Defensively, we didn't look at ourselves well this game," he said. "We need to pick up our play and be more organized throughout the field."

Birmingham ran into some tough luck in the second half.

In the 81st minute, Birmingham did well to punch out a St. Francis corner kick, but only to have it land right at the feet of Red Flash midfielder Tyler Hibbs, who finished the shot from nearly 25 yards out.

But Birmingham ultimately did his job, keeping Penn State in the game even when they fell behind one goal.

The Lions go away on Sunday, and whoever is in between the goal posts has the faith of the team behind them.

"I feel confident in whoever's in goal," Fetrow said.

Soccer

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of the pitch. Fergue deftly avoided a defender then took the corner where he slid a pass right to Corey Hertzog, who finished the play for his ninth goal of the year.

The Lions continued to pour on the shots, but couldn't get any past Valcicak, keeping the Red Flash in the game.

"It was a wonderful performance by him, probably one of the best I've seen with that number of shots on goal out of as goalkeeper," Warming said. "If he doesn't have that performance on the first four breakaways, if he doesn't do that, the game's over in the first ten minutes."

Braga, despite playing on a sore knee, turned in another dominant showing, tallying two assists, five

shots on goal and plenty of hustle plays. Arment took notice of the way his Brazilian teammate was flying around the field.

"He's been doing great he was on both sides of the field," Arment said. "In general we were having trouble finding the wings and he finds the ball himself if he doesn't get it."

After St. Francis took a 2-1 lead, the Lions turned to their defense to provide the scoring punch. Right back Matt Smallwood headed in a Braga free kick for his first of the year, giving the Lions a temporary 2-2 tie.

St. Francis came back to score a go-ahead goal in the 81st minute, after goalkeeper Brendan Birmingham's clearing punch had the bad luck to fall to a Red Flash player's foot. However, Lions centre back Mark Fetrow scored 45 seconds later when a shot by

Patrick Krispin deflected to his feet and he knocked it home.

"Anytime we can get the opportunity, we love to score goals," Fetrow said of the defenders. "It's a defender's dream."

Though they won, the Lions weren't happy they had to dig and gut out a 90-minute win. With a tough road contest with Michigan coming up, Warming and the players said there's plenty of work to be done. For a team that has developed a fast-starting mentality, it may lie with simply converting a few more early chances.

"Playing the game, it could have been, eight, nine to nothing in the first fifteen minutes," Fetrow said. "But when you let a team hang around like that you can have a game end up 4-3, which defensively, we hate."

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Niness

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you can do it,' and I almost cried," Niness said. "I teared a little bit because she's one of my really close friends and I felt like the pressure was now on me."

Rewind to earlier in the week, and a hamstring injury in practice limited Niness' ability to practice leading up to the road trip.

Pair that with fellow defender Emma Thomson switching to centre back and the emergence of freshman defender Bri Hovington, and Niness found herself the odd player out in a crowded backline.

"I couldn't even play and I couldn't really actually practice," Niness said. "I don't know if I was going to be completely out or what. They also talked about putting me at other positions because whenever they need something here they kind of throw me in there."

However, the forward turned defender gets frustrated at times and would prefer to not be the jack-of-all-trades player. But with

no spot in the lineup available, Niness was on the bench for those two games — until Marton's injury opened up a spot.

As for not knowing if she was permanently out of the lineup or not, Niness's coaches wanted to see a little more out of the junior.

"She was trying to do too much on the ball and we limited her role and she wasn't accepting it," coach Erica Walsh said. "Then she eventually figured out, 'I'd rather accept it and play, than not,' and that was a good step forward."

And though her coaches explained the switch from forward to defense last year, assistant coach Ann Cook admittedly said they only talked to her a little bit about not starting for the Washington and Portland games.

"We probably didn't explain it nearly as well as we needed to," Cook said. "But we just talked to her about making a change and we felt like we needed to keep her there a little bit longer before we kind of threw her to the dogs again."

However, sometimes it takes one step back to take two steps

forward. For Niness, that may just be the case as her coaches saw her make adjustments in practice.

"I think she definitely questioned the move and wondered why it was happening," Cook said. "But she's a pretty self-aware player and was willing to take a step back and work a little harder."

Unfortunately for Niness, an injury to her good friend proved to be her way into the lineup — albeit a painful entrance back in.

With concerns about her teammate and friend running through her head, Niness stepped in against Portland, and she has filled in admirably ever since.

Though the team has missed the leadership provided by Marton, having Niness there to fill in has helped avert the disaster of losing such a key player.

"She's done a good job with her play," Walsh said.

"It's the leadership we miss the most. You can't replace a leader like Lexi Marton but you can hope that the rest of them can step up a little bit more."

Niness has done exactly that.

Knowing Marton has left big shoes to fill, Niness has teamed up with the rest of the backline to help the Lions overcome the injury.

And although it's been difficult replacing the player she had previously leaned on for help, Niness and the backline have helped Penn State allow only two goals since the injury.

"She was our main communicator back there," the Berwyn native said.

"She's all around and that one to tell you a step. She was a huge piece of our defensive line and having her out has been really hard. She was the one who helped me out when I was confused when I played next to her."

In the team's 5-1 win over Bucknell two weeks ago, Niness played every minute while helping lead the defense in the rout.

And despite the team's loss in the next game against Dartmouth, Walsh still praised Niness for better accepting her role by simplifying her attack and holding onto the ball.

"It's just nice to know she is

comfortable playing the position, has played it and can step right in and be a big presence for us back there," Cook said. "It is essential with Lexi gone."

Most recently against Michigan State, Niness was instrumental in helping shut down the Spartans' star forward Laura Heyboer during the Lions' 1-0 victory.

Now that Big Ten play has begun, Niness will be counted on as an upperclassman to help lead the defense and Penn State in its quest for a 13th straight Big Ten title.

Originally switching positions and bouncing back from riding the pine have proven she is definitely capable of doing just that.

"I think she's done really well," Cook said. "She's willing to learn, willing to work and willing to do what it takes to be on the field and be successful."

"To her credit, she did a really good job in the early part of the season and now I think she has stepped in and it's been as seamless as possible."

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