

No golf regrets

By Mark Opfermann

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Marni Achterhoff got tired of playing soccer.

She had thoughts of giving tennis a try.

But when it came time to make a decision four years ago on what sport to play, she picked golf.

Looking back, it turned out to be a wise choice.

Achterhoff returns for her fourth year on the Mona Shores varsity girls golf team with high expectations after winning Division 2 all-state honors last year. She plans to commit this month to a golf scholarship from the University of Detroit Mercy.

Not bad for someone whose experience in golf prior to high school paled in comparison to the hours she logged playing soccer and basketball. An only child of Tom and Linda Achterhoff, her love for sports comes from her dad, who was an athlete at North Muskegon.

"I played soccer for eight years, but stopped the fall of my eighth grade year. I lost interest," Achterhoff said. "It wasn't as fun as it used to be. Going into my freshman year, my grandma loves tennis and I thought about that briefly. But I heard the golf team was a lot of fun and I decided to go with it. ... Golf is my life now."

Shores coach John Brainard noticed early that Achterhoff's athletic ability — she also played basketball and volleyball at Shores — would be a big help. Achterhoff won all-conference honors her

Up close with Marni Achterhoff

- **Who:** Mona Shores senior golfer Marni Achterhoff.
- **Favorite athlete:** Annika Sorenstam.
- **Favorite class:** Spanish IV.
- **Favorite food:** Cheesy potatoes.
- **Favorite TV show:** Friends.
- **Hobbies:** Hanging out with friends, going to movies, sports.
- **Future plans:** Attend the University of Detroit-Mercy on a golf scholarship and pursue a degree in education.

first two years, but her game really took off at the end of last year.

Achterhoff averaged 86.8 for the season and barely qualified for the state finals with an 86 in the regionals.

But in the state finals at The Meadows in Allendale, she shot her best two rounds of the season (79, 81) to finish tied for sixth. It was the first time she had broken 80 in high school and would have done it in the second round too had it not been for a double bogey on the last hole.

"I was shocked about making all-state. It opened my eyes to what I can do," she said. "I can get better. It might add a little pressure for this year, but going to state is my best memory so far."

Ironically, it came while she was nursing a shoulder injury. Late last season, Achterhoff suffered a strained right rotator cuff while playing basketball. While the injury only needed rest, it is still bothersome.

"I've lost some flexibility," Achterhoff said. "It's a little tight. But when I'm playing, I completely forget about it."

Achterhoff credits getting

extra help from Grand Rapids teaching pro Charley Vandenberg as a boon to her game.

"Before, I had an over-the-top swing. I sliced the ball and lost quite a bit of distance. Now I have a slight draw. He's given me the confidence to get better and reassures me."

They met last in March and Achterhoff is working on her grip and balance.

Brainard sees her breakthrough last year as a constant work in progress.

"I think she finally played up to the competition," he said of Achterhoff's last-season flurry. "She played all year with Laura Kueny and that made her better."

"Things went her way in the state finals. I think it was a combination of everything. It couldn't happen to a nicer girl. She's been wonderful and I hate to lose her after this year."