

Golf teams teeing off 2021 season

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You lose a Politano, you gain another. Such is life for the Otter Valley golf team.

The Otters lost two-time Division II girls medalist Mia Politano to graduation, but freshman Lucas Politano is next in the line of high-level golfers coming out of the family.

Lucas Politano is coming off a summer where he picked up multiple wins in his age group on the Vermont Golf Association Junior Tour.

After just one practice at the high school level, he's already impressing.

"(Lucas) is the most experienced of the young golfers," said first-year Otter Valley golf coach Greg Hughes. "It's very pleasant watching his swing."

Lucas caused quite a story in his first varsity practice, carding a hole-in-one on hole No. 6 on the Neshobe Golf Club layout.

He is 14 years old and already had three holes-in-one.

Hughes takes over the Otters this year, but is no stranger to Otter Valley athletics as a former boys basketball coach. Most Rutland County sports aficionados will remember him for his incredibly successful hoops career at West Rutland School, where he scored 1,655 points.

"I got into golf after high school," Hughes said. "I used to help coach the junior varsity team and assisted varsity (at Otter Valley). I play on my own and play as much as I can."

Lucas Politano isn't the only addition to the Otter program this fall, with fellow freshmen Addison Boynton and Rowen Steen also joining the fold.

Otter Valley has five other boys golfers on the 2021 squad. The most experienced of the bunch is junior Thomas Politano, who like his younger brother, played on the Junior Tour this summer and was very competitive in his own right.

"(Thomas) has played in quite a few matches. He's one of our most experienced golfers," Hughes said.

Matt Bryant, Jordan Beayon and Ben Lufkin are all juniors and expected to contribute.

Hayden Bernhardt, a dual-sport fall athlete also playing soccer, rounds out the boys side.

“He played in states last year,” Hughes said.

Elena Politano, Thomas’ twin, is will the leader on the girls side for OV.

She finished ninth individually in D-II states last fall and was second in the team competition, paired with her older sister Mia.

Anna Lee and Joanna Ray are the two other female golfers on the Otters’ roster.

Hughes likes the nice mix of experience and youth on his roster.

“The returning juniors and seniors have been super helpful,” Hughes said. “I think our team will have good chemistry. The older and younger golfers are learning from each other.”

Otter Valley opens the season on Wednesday at Woodstock.

Jonathan Brisbane is entering his second year as the head coach of the Rutland High team that has produced many a top golfer over the last decade. He was an assistant to former coach Rich Alberti before that.

“The high school is fortunate that we can tap into that golf culture,” Brisbane said.

The Ravens have a few returning golfers, but lost multiple players from last year’s boys Division I runner-up team.

Jason Ryan shot an 85 at states in 2020. He’ll be looked at to play a leadership role for Rutland.

“(Jason) has really caught the bug to want to compete and continue to improve his game,” Brisbane said.

A new face on the boys side that Brisbane is particularly excited about is Sebastian Pell.

Pell has been one of the top Junior Tour golfers in the state and is the next in a strong line of young golfers from Rutland Country Club.

“(Sebastian) has already developed into a good young golfer,” Brisbane said. “He has a lot of potential and a great skill set. He works at it.”

Alexis Landrie competed for Rutland at the girls state championship tournament last fall, tying for 10th, and she returns.

‘She has a lot of potential. She’s a very capable golfer,” Brisbane said.

Abigail Hill is another golfer that could stand out on the female side.

There are a handful of new faces to go with those golfers and Brisbane likes what he sees.

“They are all good athletes. The level of interest at the high school remains high,” Brisbane said.

Tom Joyce will be assisting Brisbane this fall. Joyce is a longtime member at Rutland Country Club.

“It eases the blow of losing Rich Alberti,” Brisbane said.

Rutland opens its season on Wednesday against Burr and Burton at Equinox. The Ravens are hosting the Rutland Invitational at RCC on Sept. 20.

“It will be nice for the kids to be able to travel, so they can test themselves,” Brisbane said.

The Division I boys state qualifier is on Oct. 6 at Stowe Golf Club. The Division II boys qualifier is on Oct. 6 at Champlain Country Club.

The Division I and II girls state championship tournament is on Oct. 7 at Dorset Field Club and the Division I and II boys state championship is on Oct. 14 at Manchester Country Club.