

# Richards, Otter Valley win D-II golf titles

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The Otter Valley boys golf team poses with the Division II state championship trophy on Thursday at Manchester Country Club.

Adam Aucoin / Staff Photo





North Country's Austin Giroux holds the Division I medalist plaque after his 3-under par round on Thursday in the boys golf state championships at Manchester Country Club.

Adam Aucoin / Staff Photo

MANCHESTER — Family was at the heart of the Division II boys golf state championships on Thursday at Manchester Country Club.

Brothers Thomas and Lucas Politano were part of the D-II team championship for Otter Valley, the first for the program since 1969. The pair keyed the Otters with the second and fourth best rounds of the day in the division.

The Politano brothers finished behind U-32's Riley Richards, who joined his older brother Bryson Richards, now playing at the University of Rhode Island, as a D-II individual medalist for the Raiders.

"I had a really good time with my teammates," Riley Richards said. "It's good that I finally won one because I just started golfing seriously a few years ago. It's good to follow my brother and win one."

The younger Richards shot a 3-over 75 on the par-72 course. Richards' round started slow with a bogey and double bogey, but he quickly turned it around.

He played his best golf on a difficult back nine, where he sank two birdies. He had 12 pars in his round.

"My short game was really good. I got up and down from a lot of places, which was really good because it saved me," Richards said.

Otter Valley's Lucas Politano, a freshman, was a shot back at 4-over 76 to earn runner-up honors. Politano birdied the 3rd and 15th holes.

Among the individuals who qualified at last week's state qualifier, Peoples' Timothy Whyte shot 12-over and was third overall in D-II. He had a birdie at the turn on 10.

Stowe's Chace Newhouse shot 15-over, fourth among individual qualifiers and sixth overall. The Raiders' JP Marhefka and Woodstock's Ethan Dean shot 22-over, tied for fifth among qualifiers and tied for 11th overall. Harwood's Cam Forbes was the final individual qualifier and shot 28-over, good 21st overall.

Otter Valley ran away with the Division II team championship, with its top four guys combining to shoot 55-over. The next best team was Stowe, shooting 77-over.

"We've known all year that we had a chance to win, so it feels good that we actually did," said the Otters' Matt Bryant.

"The entire season we were pushing each other up and teaching each other how to do our best," said Thomas Politano.

The Politano family has become their own mini pipeline in Otter Valley golf. Recent OV graduate Mia Politano is a two-time D-II girls medalist and was a team runner-up with younger sister Elena Politano. Elena has multiple top-10 individual finishes at states as well.

Their siblings Thomas and Lucas have held up their end of the bargain on the boys side. Thomas made sure to give credit to Lucas when it came to getting the Otters to Thursday's competition.

From Lucas' opening high school practice where he sank a hole-in-one at Neshobe Golf Club, it was clear the freshman was special.

"Coming in second with a 76, Lucas brought us all together," Thomas Politano said. "He's the reason we were able to go to states."

“We all played well and we have to come back next year and do the same.”

Outside of Lucas Politano’s effort, three other scores contributed to the Otter championship. Thomas Politano finished at 13-over in a tie for fourth overall in D-II, Matt Bryant shot 16-over in seventh and Jordan Beayon 22-over in a tie for 11th.

Hayden Bernhardt was also competing for OV and shot 55-over.

Behind Otter Valley and Stowe was Peoples Academy (95-over), U-32 (96-over), Harwood (99-over) and Woodstock (105-over).

In Division I, Burr and Burton won the team crown among the seven teams that qualified. The Bulldogs shot 41-over, which gave them a one stroke win over defending champion CVU at 42-over.

A pair of 79s from Caeden Herrington and Nick O’Donnell paced BBA. The Bulldogs had six birdies as a team.

All of the Redhawks’ scorers were in the low to mid 80s. Bryce Bortnick had the best score of the bunch at 8-over 80.

South Burlington was close behind the top two clubs, shooting 46-over. Sawyer Bond was their low score with at 7-over 79.

Spaulding was within 10 strokes of the lead pace at 50-over. Garrett Cameron shot 2-over 74 to pace the Crimson Tide.

The other D-I teams competing were Essex (52-over), Colchester (59-over) and Mount Mansfield (81-over).

North Country’s Austin Giroux won Division I individual medalist honors, following last year’s co-medalist effort.

Giroux was the lone golfer to shoot under-par on Thursday, shooting 3-under 69.

The North Country senior took advantage of the front nine, sinking four of his five birdies across those nine holes.

“I had confidence going into the back (nine), and after that, I just wanted to make pars coming in,” Giroux said.

One of his most impressive shots of the day came off the tee on par-4 7, where his drive landed him on the green. He missed the eagle putt, but drained the birdie putt.

“It was doable to get it there and there wasn’t much trouble around the green, so I sent it,” Giroux said.

Spaulding’s Cameron was not one of the individual qualifiers heading into the tournament, but his 74 was second among D-I golfers on Thursday. Cameron had two birdies on the front nine and buried another on 17.

BBA’s Herrington was second among individual qualifiers and tied for third overall with his 7-over 79.

Essex’s Parker Martisus, third among qualifiers and tied for eighth overall, shot 10-over

Rutland’s Sebastian Pell, fourth among qualifiers and tied for 12th overall, shot 12-over. In his first state tournament, the freshman had a birdie on the ninth hole.

“It was a good experience. I was nervous at the start,” Pell said.

BBA’s Dylan Poddick (13-over) was fifth among qualifiers and tied for 17th overall. South Burlington’s Ethan Borick (16-over) was sixth among qualifiers and tied for 22nd overall. Mount Mansfield’s Oliver French (17-over) was seventh among qualifiers and tied for 26th overall.

## TEAM SCORES

### DIVISION I

BBA (329): Caeden Herrington 79, Nick O’Donnell 79, Dylan Poddick 85, Dillon Callen 86. CVU (330): Bryce Bortnick 80, Zach Vincent 82, Jason Douglas 83, Conor Malaney 85. SO. BURLINGTON (334): Sawyer Bond 79, Evan Marchessault 84, Jack Mayer 84, Andre Bouffard 87. SPAULDING (338): Garrett Cameron 74, Brady Lamberti 84, Evan Peloquin 88, Ned McCarthy 92. ESSEX (340): Parker Martisus 82, Ben Peake 82, Justin Prim 86, Max Foster 90. COLCHESTER (347): Jacobi Laferty 80, Austin Daigneault 84, Evan Baird 89, Zach Davis 94. MT. MANSFIELD (369): Max Gosselin 88, Oliver French 89, Tyler Meadows 91, Colby Garrapy 101.

### DIVISION II

OTTER VALLEY (343): Lucas Politano 76, Thomas Politano 85, Matthew Bryant 88, Jordan Beayon 94. STOWE (365): Chace Newhouse 87, Bo Graves 90, Luke Farley 94, JP Marhefka 94. PEOPLES (383): Timothy Whyte 84, Ashton Tibbits 85, Hayden Tibbits 103, Norris Duff 111. U-32 (384): Riley Richards 75, Sawyer Mislak 93, Andrew Ognibene 107, John Mekkelsen 109. HARWOOD (387): Parker Davey 94, Will Burkes 96, Adyn Oshkello 98, Jack Lansky. WOODSTOCK (393): Will Coates 93, Ethan Dean 94, Owen Kross 98, Liam Harper 108.