

16TH ALL-AREA GIRLS' GOLF TEAM

MEET THE FIRST TEAM

**Alaina Bowie**  
Sr., St. Thomas More



**Why she made the team:** Our three-time Golfer of the Year regularly topped the scoresheet for Class 1A's fifth-place program and earned a share of third place individually with a 3-over 147. And, in the middle of her last prep campaign, she committed to Division I golf at Butler University.

**A few of my favorites:** I need concert tickets to see Florida Georgia Line. ... Before I compete, I eat a home-made ham and cheese sandwich and strawberries. ... In my dream career, I would be a firefighter. ... My favorite subject to study in school is statistics. ... My favorite athlete is Christian Yelich. ... My favorite TV show is "All American." ... If I could have dinner with any three people from any time period, I would pick George Washington, Jack Nicklaus and Amelia Earhart.

**Three items on my bucket list:** Travel to all 50 states, go to Europe and learn how to juggle.

**Brooke Erhard**  
Soph., St. Thomas More



**Why she made the team:** Despite dealing with an illness early in the postseason, Erhard proved integral to the Sabers winning a regional and placing third at the sectional. She rated fourth for STM in the two-day state tournament as well.

**A few of my favorites:** I need concert tickets to see Billie Eilish. ... Before I compete, I eat sliced apples. ... In my dream career, I would be a neonatal nurse. ... My favorite subject to study in school is chemistry. ... My favorite athlete is Brooke Henderson. ... My favorite TV show is "Friends." ... If I could have dinner with any three people from any time period, I would pick Marilyn Monroe, Jennifer Aniston and Kim Kardashian.

**Three items on my bucket list:** Travel to Paris, scuba dive and skydive.

**Sammy Miller**  
Sr., St. Thomas More



**Why she made the team:** The frequent No. 2 golfer for a loaded STM club, Miller collected the second-best regional and state cardings for the Sabers, the latter earning her a share of 26th individually.

**A few of my favorites:** I need concert tickets to see Chris Lane. ... Before I compete, I eat eggs and toast. ... In my dream career I would be a physical therapist. ... My favorite subject to study in school is science. ... My favorite athlete is Michael Jordan. ... My favorite TV show is "Grey's Anatomy." ... If I could have dinner with any three people from any time period, I would pick Beyonce, David Dobrik and Zac Efron.

**Three items on my bucket list:** Travel to Bora Bora, swim with dolphins and see the Northern Lights.

**Natalie Schroeder**  
Jr., Watseka



**Why she made the team:** Schroeder was a regular event medalist with the Warriors in 2019 and was their lone sectional qualifier via a third-place 88 in the Class 1A Beecher Regional.

**A few of my favorites:** I need concert tickets to see Dan + Shay. ... Before I compete, I eat a Subway BMT. ... In my dream career, I would be a heart surgeon, saving lives. ... My favorite subject to study in school is chemistry. ... My favorite athlete is Michael Jordan. ... My favorite TV show is "The Blacklist." ... If I could have dinner with any person from any time period, I would pick Michael Jordan.

**Three items on my bucket list:** Travel to Paris, travel to Bora Bora and travel to Ireland.

**Molly Stringer**  
Sr., Monticello



**Why she made the team:** A two-time first-team selection, Stringer paced the Sages to third place in regional play — giving them a sectional team berth — and advanced to Class 1A state solo with an 82 at the sectional.

**A few of my favorites:** I need concert tickets to see Panic! at the Disco. ... Before I compete, I eat Subway and a purple Gatorade. ... In my dream career, I would make a difference in someone's life. ... My favorite subject to study in school is history. ... My favorite athlete is Mitchell Trubisky. ... My favorite TV show is "All American." ... If I could have dinner with any three people from any time period, I would pick Elvis, Arnold Palmer and Jane Addams.

**Three items on my bucket list:** Swim with dolphins, visit Fiji and take a road trip with my friends.

**Allison Tucker**  
Sr.,



**Bismarck-Henning/Rossville-Alvin**

**Why she made the team:** The recent Danville Area Community College signee snared the last individual state slot out of the Class 1A Jacksonville Routt Sectional, thriving despite being her school's lone female golfer.

**A few of my favorites:** I need concert tickets to see Taylor Swift. ... Before I compete, I eat Kar's trail mix and lots of fruit. ... In my dream career, I would be a radiologist. ... My favorite subject to study in school is science, such as anatomy and biology. ... My favorite athlete is Brooke Henderson. ... My favorite TV show is "Friends." ... If I could have dinner with any three people from any time period, I would pick Taylor Swift, Post Malone and Brooke Henderson.

**Three items on my bucket list:** Go to Italy, get my pilot's license and backpack across Europe.

ALL-AREA FIRST TEAM

ATHLETE	YR.	SCHOOL
Alaina Bowie	Sr.	St. Thomas More
Brooke Erhard	Soph.	St. Thomas More
Sammy Miller	Sr.	St. Thomas More
Natalie Schroeder	Jr.	Watsseka
Molly Stringer	Sr.	Monticello
Allison Tucker	Sr.	BHRA

ALL-AREA SECOND TEAM

ATHLETE	YR.	SCHOOL
Lainey Banta	Sr.	Tuscola
Anna Duden	Jr.	Armstrong-Potomac
Mia Kirby	Jr.	St. Thomas More
Ashley Long	Jr.	Monticello
Cassie To	Jr.	Champaign Central
Ainsley Winters	Fr.	Mahomet-Seymour

ALL-AREA HONORABLE MENTION

**BLUE RIDGE** — Ashlyn Voyles, Soph.  
**CENTENNIAL** — Camryn McClard, Jr.  
**CHAMPAIGN CENTRAL** — Dominick Fuentes, Sr.; Emily Fuentes, Jr.  
**CISSNA PARK** — Emily Hylbert, Jr.  
**FISHER** — Sidney Hood, Sr.  
**GIBSON CITY-MELVIN-SIBLEY** — Katie Kamman, Sr.; Abby Spiller, Sr.  
**HOOPERSTON AREA** — Payton Armstrong, Soph.; Alyssa Yaden, Sr.  
**IROQUOIS WEST** — Adelynn Scharp, Fr.; McKinley Tilstra, Soph.  
**JUDAH CHRISTIAN** — Lexie Saathoff, Fr.; Emma Shumard, Sr.  
**LeROY** — Charly Warlow, Sr.  
**MAHOMET-SEYMOUR** — Sylvia Byron, Sr.  
**MILFORD** — Baelee Luce, Jr.  
**MONTICELLO** — Claire Weber, Jr.  
**OAKWOOD** — Joie Sollers, Sr.  
**PRAIRIE CENTRAL** — Ella Compton, Fr.; Katelind Winterland, Jr.  
**RANTOUL/PAXTON-BUCKLEY-LODA** — Peyton Huls, Sr.  
**ST. THOMAS MORE** — Tessa Tomaso, Jr.  
**SULLIVAN** — Alyssa Shriver, Soph.; Erin Wallace, Sr.  
**TUSCOLA** — Makenna Fiscus, Fr.  
**WATSEKA** — Allie Hoy, Soph.  
**WESTVILLE** — Mackynzee Woodard, Soph.

BOWIE

Continued from D-1

Juxtaposing the fun element is a more relaxing, soothing aspect of golf for Alaina.

"For some reason, when she goes on the course," Tiffany said, "she says her mind goes quiet."

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Those non-result factors explain, then, why Tiffany was nervous about Alaina pursuing college golf.

Despite the scores. Despite the fact colleges large and small appealed to Alaina later in her prep tenure.

There was a realistic chance Alaina just wouldn't play past high school.

"The intention was never to play college golf. That was never it," Alaina said. "It was to play maybe when I was older, or to get a club in my hand and then I could drop it."

From an outside perspective, it's hard to picture Alaina eschewing golf given all her plaudits. From the interior, that viewpoint is flipped.

"I can still drop it to this day," Alaina admitted. "Just realizing that is this new level of freedom that I always remind myself, 'Alaina, you don't have to be out here when it's 40 degrees and raining. This is all on you.'"

So what was the tipping point in Alaina determining the college golf path was hers to travel?

"My concern was if that was Alaina's happy place, where her mind went free, why would you sell that?" Tiffany said. "But she explained to me that the thrill of competition is something she can't live without. ... She has to have competition and drive."

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Alan Dodds can attest to that point.

The second-year STM girls' golf coach and his star pupil engaged in an "informal match" at

Decatur's Hickory Point Golf Course just before the 2019 campaign began. It was the location of the Sabers' first regular-season meet.

Alaina played back on longer tees than she would in prep competition. Dodds started each hole on the men's tees.

The two found themselves nearly deadlocked approaching the 18th hole.

"It was friendly for 17 1/2 holes," Dodds said, "and then when we realized where we stood."

Then, Alaina's competitive nature spilled out.

"I'm standing over a 3-footer (to putt), and she's like, 'Coach, if you make this — well, you're probably not going to,'" Dodds said with a laugh. "I was like, 'Come on. Where's the love?'"

But Dodds did convert the critical tap.

"I parred the last hole," Dodds said. "I think I got you by one shot."

"Wow," Alaina responded with a grin. "He's using the flex on me."

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Dodds has been around plenty of high school athletes and parents on various golf courses. And he contends he's never seen a family-golf dynamic quite like what the Bowies possess.

"The difference ... is not getting into the details of golf," Dodds said, "and so it feels unconditional whether she's playing well or she's playing poorly. The sport's the same, and it's not second-guessing the technical parts of the game."

It's easy to know Dodds isn't exaggerating when Tiffany pulls up a photo gallery on her phone.

Not filled with images of Alaina holding one of her clubs. Instead, filled with images of something else it's easy to find on a golf course.

"This is what he's talking about," Tiffany said. "I take pictures of bark on trees while Alaina's golfing."

Alaina doesn't react to this with frustration or

disgust. Far from it.

"It wasn't, 'What'd you shoot? What'd you get? Par, bogey?' She didn't care," Alaina said. "That was OK with me. It was an escape to talk more about emotions, because that's what golf is."

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Ample emotions are associated with a kid finding the right college for them. Even more so when playing a sport at that school also is on the table.

The Bowies recognized that, but also brought a highly analytical element to Alaina's search. They started with a list of more than 800 colleges from which to choose, highlighting any institution in the United States that carried women's golf.

The early stages of this process weren't easy on Alaina. She insisted on conversing with any coach who took the time to reach out to her first. Past that, there was much work required to narrow down her list.

"People see this figure of online perfection in every school," Alaina said. "How are you supposed to compare a school that looks 10 out of 10 to another school that looks 10 out of 10?"

Tiffany had an idea. "This happened multiple times," Alaina said. "We were on the edge of campus, and she slows down the car. I don't even know if it was stopped or in park, and she's like, 'Get out of the car.' And I'm like, 'Mom, we're on the edge of campus. We're supposed to be driving to this building. I have the map here in my hands.'"

"She's like, 'Get out of the car and find it. I'll meet you there.' ... If I wasn't comfortable walking to the three blocks it was away, then why would I go to school there?"

Indianapolis-based Butler is a small, private school with roughly 5,000 total students, situated about two hours from the Bowies' Mahomet home.

Alaina said after her

verbal commitment earlier this year that the Bulldogs staff's willingness to let her college experience be about more than golf piqued her interest. Tiffany believes campus size also played a role.

"She'd remind me, 'Alaina, it's not about finding the perfect school. It's about finding a school that fits for you,'" Alaina said. "So that made me feel better."

The way Alaina's college recruitment played out is a microcosm of how family has affected her time in golf.

It's hard for Alaina even to consider a hypothetical in which her family isn't involved in her day-to-day life. And just how different her future could look.

"The constant level of support, sometimes I don't always feel like I need it because I'm a teenager and I want to do stuff on my own," Alaina said. "But then they're always there to pick me up, and I can't imagine life without them."

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with Ann Rhoton



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