DiBitetto repeats as champion

Athena junior shoots 68 to win second straight Section V title.

BY STAFF WRITER
BEN JACOBS

PERINTON — Andrew DiBitetto felt good on Monday, and not even a slow start could prevent him from defending his sectional golf title.

After bogeying the first two holes, the Greece Athena junior shot 6-under-par the rest of the way to finish with a 68 in the Section V Golf Tournament at Midvale Country Club.

"It feels good. I wasn't exactly coming out here trying to win," DiBitetto said. "Your first goal is always to try to qualify (for states). After the fourth hole, my swing felt good, and I got on a roll from there."

DiBitetto birdied the third and fourth holes and didn't see a bogey the rest of the day. He didn't panic after the first two holes and tied his lowest round in competition.

"I wasn't too worried," DiBitetto said. "I've played here before, and I knew there's a bunch of birdie holes out there. So I just kept focused and kept plugging away."

While he didn't make any spectacular birdies — his toughest birdie putt was a 25-foot downhill slider on the eighth — he did need a solid short game at times.

"There was a stretch on the back — holes 11 to 13 — and all those holes I had to scramble and get up and down to make par," DiBitetto said. "It's a good thing he did, because he wasn't the only player posting low numbers. Honeoye senior Scott Harris shot 70, and Batavia's Nick Grasso finished third with 71."

Paired with Spencerport's David Chong and Attica's Stephen Goodridge, DiBitetto did not know he needed to go under 70 to win.

"The only one that I knew of was Nick Sortino," DiBitetto said. "I knew he shot 35 on the front, but that's only because we're good friends and I saw his dad. Other than that, I had no idea."

Harris' 70 was even more impressive when you consider that he's playing baseball this spring. In fact, after the golf tournament he had to go play in Honeoye's sectional baseball game against South Seneca.

Harris arrived in the third inning and went 2-for-2 in Honeoye's 21-5 win.

"His game was not only wonderful today, but his competitive golf was played in the summer months," said Honeoye coach Bil Saxby. "We played our matches in September and October."

During the fall, Harris was a key part of an undefeated team that has now won 43 straight matches. Harris averaged even par in Honeoye's 16 matches this year.

"He's truly a wonderful golfer as, obviously, Andrew is," Saxby said. "It was fun to watch them today."

Last year, DiBitetto shot 75 at Sodus Bay Heights Golf Club to edge his older brother, Tony, by two strokes. Last year, however, he didn't have to recover from a serious injury.

DiBitetto broke his right wrist through the growth plate during Athena's 2-1 loss to Brockport in the Section V Class A hockey championship.

"The first thought at that point, because it was in the game, was the team and that I wouldn't be able to play the rest of the game," DiBitetto said. "But it wasn't long after that golf clicked in my mind."

Due to ligament damage, he needed a long cast to prevent him from twisting his elbow.

"At first I didn't know how long it would take to heal or if it would need pins there," he said. "But when the doctor said it would take six or seven weeks and everything would be fine, it was just a relief."

Of course, DiBitetto didn't quite wait six weeks to start golfing again. After about three weeks, he was able to get a short cast and start swinging again.

"I went to Jon Hoeger (Brook-Lea) — the pro that I work with — and he gave me some one-handed swing drills and also some whiffle balls I could hit into a bucket in the basement," DiBitetto said. "DiBitetto struggled through flu-like symptoms to finish second, with a 76 at the Tournament of Champions on Thursday, but now he has some momentum to take into the state tournament. That tournament will be June 1-2 on the Robert Trent Jones Golf Course at Cornell University."

"My main goal would be to go out there and try to win," said DiBitetto, who shot 70 and finished fourth last year.

He doesn't have any more high school tournaments before, but DiBitetto will be able to stay competitive. He will try to defend his title in Ridgement Country Club's President's Cup this weekend.

With four tournaments in 19 days, DiBitetto is just preparing for an exciting summer.

"The summer is definitely going to be packed. I'm gone every week in July and August," he said. "Hopefully, some (college) coaches will be there and can take a look and will like what they see."

E-mail address: bjacobsb@DemocratandChronicle.com

SECTION V TOURNAMENT
At Midvale Country Club (top nine qualify for states)
1. Andrew DiBitetto (Greece Athena) 69 2. Scott Harris (Honeoye) 70 3. Nick Grasso (Batavia) 71
*qualified on first playoff hole
**alternate, won 2nd playoff hole