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High school regional golf tournaments are normally tight, with each golfer's every shot coming with at least some pressure.

It might have been that way early on for the Providence Grove High School girls golf team earlier this week at the 1-A/2-A Central Regional Tournament, but midway through the 18-hole event at the Stonebridge Golf Club in Monroe, there was very little pressure on the Patriots. They had jumped into that big of a lead.

Led by regional champion Caroline Wright, who carded a five-stroke win with a 75, the Patriots earned the regional crown and a trip to the 1-A/2-A state championship, which begins Monday and concludes Tuesday with the second of the two-round championship.



*2022 Regional Champion Caroline Wright. Photo provided.*



*Coach Wes Luther following the Patriots regional championship win. Photo provided.*

"We had a general feeling when we finished nine

holes that someone would have to do something special to beat us," second-year PG coach Wes Luther said. "You don't see a whole lot of team golf on TV. This was exciting for us because it was a team effort. Everyone had to do their best for us to win and we not only won, but won by a lot."

As in 22 strokes.

The Patriots, with junior Morgan Heilig firing a 95 and sophomore Anna Holloway a 111, rolled to the team championship with a team total of 281, 22 strokes better than Union Academy, which placed second. Wright, Heilig and Holloway will represent the Patriots at the state meet next week. PG's Megan Oakley just missed qualifying individually by only one stroke.



*Patriots junior Morgan Heilig. Photo provided.*

"We had the best team average there by five strokes, so I knew if we played our average, we would be there," said Luther of his team, which just missed qualifying last season.

The Patriots were ready for the tournament this season.

"The one thing that really helped this year was playing a couple of matches with Asheboro and Oak Grove, there were some close matches there," Luther said. "I try not to put a lot of pressure on the girls. Go out and enjoy it and have fun. If you dwell on one mistake, you're going to make another and you shoot high numbers and you're out of contention. Just have fun."

The Patriots have been led by Wright all season long.

"She is stroking the ball really well," Luther said of Wright, who finished second in last year's regional tournament. "Overall, she's a very good player and when the course is playing short, she can chew it up. She plays smart golf. She knows where to put the ball."

She certainly did in the regional.

"Last year, the girl who won had me going into the 17th hole, and it fueled me, motivated me to do better," Wright said. "She got me by only two. This year, I was just trying to stick to my plan. During the practice round, I took some notes and used those."

Winning the regional championship was a goal Wright achieved.

"It was very overwhelming," Wright said. "I knew I was capable, but when I saw the scores, I was really excited. I was really excited that we qualified as a team, too."

Two Eastern Randolph golfers, Mackenzie Gee and Madison Canoy, also advanced to the two-day state championship, which will be held at the Foxfire Resort and Golf Club in Jackson Springs. The event will be on the 'Red' course.



*Providence Grove sophomore Anna Holloway teeing off. Photo provided.*

If PG is going to have a chance to add a state championship to its already impressive season, some things must happen, according to Luther.

"We are going to have to play better," Luther said. "We will need Caroline to do what she does and maybe a couple strokes better. We are going to have to find a few shots, be a few shots better with every player."

There's no reason to think that can't happen.