

Graham ready for next level

Written by Deb Egenberger
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KEARNEY—Strong wind gusts added a couple of strokes on a few holes for Swede senior Jackson Graham at the Class B state golf meet in Kearney last week.

“You could hit really good golf shots that turned bad because of the wind,” said coach Don Graham, also Jackson’s dad. “Jackson had a couple of five- or six-foot putts that were right on the hole but the wind took them and blew them off course and they ended up a couple inches off.”

That was pretty much how Jackson’s day went on May 22, the first 18-hole round of the two-day tournament.

The Swede senior finished with one birdie, four pars, nine bogeys and four double-bogeys or more on day one for a total of 88 to open the tournament.

“He got headed in the wrong direction on a couple of holes,” the coach said. “It can be pretty tough to disconnect from the last shot and focus on the next one.”

But Graham kept encouraging his son.

“I just told him there were a lot of bogeys out there on that first day,” he said. “Day two was a new opportunity.”

Jackson was only six shots out of the medal leaders heading into the second day of play at Meadowlark Hills on May 23.

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“He knew going into the second day that he needed a good score,” Graham said. “He shot two pars right out of the gate.”

Then on hole No. 3, Jackson missed the fairway by about 10 feet, ending up in the four- to five-inch rough.

“His club got stuck on that shot and he ended up making a triple instead of par,” Graham said. “Little things just kept adding up.”

Jackson finished day two with an 89 for a two-day total of 177. He was 13 strokes out of medal contention.

Max Rudder of Norris shot 147 as the Class B individual champion, leading the Titans to a team title as well with an overall score of 649 for the two days.



Although Jackson was disappointed, Graham said he came away from the state meet with valuable experience.

He has scholarship offers to play at either McCook Community College or University of Nebraska at Kearney.

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“He has a big decision to make,” Graham said. “Putting himself in situations like playing at a two-day state meet will only help him learn to handle things better next time.”

Not only was it Jackson’s first time to qualify for state golf, it was also his first two-day stroke play tournament.

Jackson’s decision will open his next chapter of golf, Graham said.

“I think he’s looking forward to the next level.”

As a whole, Graham was pleased with the progress the Swede golf team made this season.

“Unfortunately, the biggest strides came from players who have graduated,” he said. “We’ll have to rebuild and move on.”