

## **FOUR SHARE FIRST-ROUND LEAD AT 3-UNDER 69 IN 120TH WOMEN'S WESTERN AMATEUR AT PRESTWICK G.C.**

**FRANKFORT, III.** (Tuesday, July 21) – Four players shot 3-under-par 69s on Tuesday to share the first-round lead in the 120th Women's Western Amateur at Prestwick Golf Club in Frankfort, Illinois.

Blair Stockett, of Jackson, Mississippi, and Brooke Biermann, of Wildwood, Missouri, took the early lead following the morning rounds, finishing most of their play before lightning and rain forced a delay at 12:20 p.m. After play resumed at 1:45 p.m., Canadian Mary Parsons, of Delta, British Columbia, and Marissa Wenzler, of Dayton, Ohio, led the afternoon wave to tie Stockett and Biermann for the lead heading into Wednesday's second and final round of stroke play.

Stockett, 19, a Mississippi State senior, returned from a five-month competitive layoff to card five birdies in her opening round.

"This has made me not take competing for granted," she said of the long break due to the COVID-19 outbreak, adding that her mindset was to stay in the fairway and keep the ball in play. "Just keeping it simple, keeping the ball down the middle was important for me."

Biermann, 17, the 2019 Women's Western Junior medalist, also was glad to have an opportunity to get back to competitive golf.

"I've been practicing as much as I can ... but I know everyone has been going through this," she said. "My mindset today was to play one hole at a time ... and be patient."

A bonus for Biermann was her first-round pairing. "One of the girls in my group was actually on my future team at Michigan State," said Biermann, who has committed to play at Michigan State after she graduates from Lafayette High School in Wildwood, Missouri, next spring.

Parsons, 21, a senior at Indiana, birdied three of her last eight holes to tie Stockett and Biermann at the top of the leaderboard.

"Last week I was at the North & South, and that course was very tight, so it helped me prepare. I missed the cut by one," said Parsons, who is looking to make Wednesday's cut to 32 for match play. "It's like a stress relief just to get outdoors now. Just getting out and seeing other people while playing has been great."

Wenzler, 19, a sophomore at Kentucky, was the last of the four co-leaders to complete her round, closing with a birdie and three pars over her last four holes.

"Usually the score is what is going on in my head, but today it wasn't," said Wenzler, who also competed in last week's North & South Women's Amateur at Pinehurst. "I was just kind of taking every shot as it was. I was focused on playing the course smart."

Heading a list of four players tied for fifth at 2-under-par 70 is Antonia Matte, 18, of Santiago, Chile, who was the 2019 Women's Western Amateur runner-up.

Asked about her thoughts coming into this year's event, having come so close to victory a year ago, Matte said she's staying focused on the tournament at hand. "I'm trying to think that this is a new tournament and not think about last year," said Matte, who had been practicing at her home while quarantined in Chile. "Now is now. I am very focused on what is happening in the moment ... I just want to play well."

Kate Lillie, 2016 Women's Western Junior champion, posted an even par 72, three strokes back of the lead in a tie for 16th. Playing in her first event of the summer, Lillie, of St. Charles, Illinois, was excited to be returning to competitive golf.

"The last few months have definitely felt weird with everything going on," said Lillie, 21, a University of Minnesota senior. "So being back and doing something I am so comfortable with, makes me feel like things are going back to normal."

Leading in-state players in the field with a one-under 71 was Missouri sophomore Brianne Bolden, 19, of nearby Mokena.

A total of 25 players in the field of 120 matched or broke par in the first round. The field will be cut to the low 32 following the second round of stroke play Wednesday, with the first two rounds of match play set for Thursday morning. Following the quarterfinal and semifinals rounds of match play on Friday, the 18-hole championship match will be played Saturday morning.

The list of past Women's Western Amateur champions reads like a "Who's Who" in women's golf, including current LPGA stars Ariya Jutanugarn, Stacy Lewis, Brittany Lang and Cristie Kerr.

This is Prestwick's first WWGA tournament since the 1972 Junior Championship – won by a 15-year-old Nancy Lopez. She went on to become one of the best players in the history of professional golf and was inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame in 1987.

For more tournament information, including daily pairings and live scoring, visit [womenswesternamateur.com](http://womenswesternamateur.com).