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PERFECT PITCH - Stuart Lelievre of Red Deer's Baked Goods pitches the ball during the third inning of a game against the Pine Lake Cannons in which the Baked Goods won in the last inning.

Jenna Swan/Red Deer Express

Local teen golfer aims to continue winning streak

BY JIM CLAGGETT
Red Deer Express

When it comes to winning streaks in sports the numbers tell a story.

One win is something to be happy with. Two is an indication you are doing something right.

Three gets you feeling very comfortable. But four?

Now that is a whole other level. "It's crazy. I never expected it. I've never won a tournament before," said Clare McMahon who had just finished capturing her fourth straight McLennan Ross Jr. Golf victory in Wetaskiwin.

The teenager who plays out of Balmoral Golf Course, appears to be getting used to the feeling of winning.

She started playing on the pop-

ular junior loop a couple of years ago to get a taste of competition but this year she buckled down, worked hard at her game and is now reaping the rewards.

One of those benefits is a big dose of confidence.

"Being able to come up on the first tee and not feel like, I hope I play good, but instead I know I'm good enough to be here and I'm good enough to maybe win," she said.

McMahon says another spin-off from the hot streak she's on is how it brings out the best in the other players she tees it up against.

She feels it makes her play better because she knows the other girls are going to try their best to end the streak.

The wins at four different

courses, Innisfail, Carstairs, Ponoka and Wetaskiwin, have come within two weeks' time with some improvement in the final score on the card.

Three of the wins were of standard nature but there was a historic four-person playoff for the first time on the junior tour in Ponoka which she said she wasn't even sure she'd be involved in.

"I was going to put my clubs in the car. I didn't think I was going to golf anymore."

But she did have to play and admits she was very nervous standing over the ball on the first playoff hole but that disappeared after stripping a drive down the fairway to the spot she wanted to hit it.

She lipped out an eagle putt but dropped the next one for birdie

and moved on to the next hole with another girl where she put it away for victory number three.

But what is the source of this dramatic streak?

"I guess it's the mental side of it. I haven't hit the ball as well as I have in the past couple of weeks and my putting has improved tremendously because I've been working hard at it. I want to get better."

She claims she is not a mechanical learner when it comes to working on her game. Instead of repeating shot after shot she prefers to 'feel' what the shot should be like before hitting it and it seems to be paying dividends at this point.

She also credits some of her success to the fact she has a full routine before hitting each shot

which simply puts her in the best frame of mind before starting the club in motion, something she says was missing in the past.

"I was kind of like, well that feels ok, now hit the ball," she said. "Now it's like, this is what I need to be doing, this is the shot. I don't want to just hit the green now, I want to get it within 10 feet. I want easy birdie putts. I'm getting greedy."

Her next action on the junior tour will be in Olds this week and she's of course looking for win number five but understands the frail nature of any streak.

"I'm just going to keep playing the golf I'm playing," she said.

It's a formula which seems to be working quite well to this point.

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