

# Local players test skills with top competitors

## YOUTH GOLF

 By Jeremy Stewart

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A rainy week didn't soften the course at Coosa Country Club too much for the group of junior golfers who took to the links along the banks of the Etowah River on Saturday.

But there were a handful of competitors in the first round of the 2017 Rome Junior Classic who had some familiarity with the punchy condition of the greens as some local players got in on the action at the American Junior Golf Association tournament.

Darlington senior Peter Hinnant led the Rome contingent, finishing with a 1-over 72, four back of the leader. Alex Ross, of Atlanta, tallied five birdies and went bogey-free on the front-nine on his way to a leading 3-under 68.

Lindsey Cordell, Hinnant's teammate on the Darlington varsity team, sits tied for 18th in the boys' standings with a 2-over-par 73. Rome's Hogan Ingram finished Saturday with a 74 and is tied for 23rd.

"I was three-over in the front, and I was just trying to get it back as close to even as I could," Cordell said. "I made a couple of birdies on a few of the easier holes and lipped out a couple of times."

As an eighth grader at Rome Middle, Ingram is the youngest competitor in the field of boys and girls, while Cordell is a freshman. It is the first AJGA event for Model junior Cooper Greer, who was 7-over after a rough finish to Saturday's round.

"There are a lot of good competitors out here. I mean, more than half of them are committed," Greer said. "It just wasn't a good day for me."

"I got a few up-and-downs early, but I'll try to bounce back. It's my first AJGA, so it's nothing to be ashamed about."

The presence of the local players in an event that attracted players from all corners of the country and beyond provided a new challenge for the Rome juniors, but it also showed the strength of youth golf in the area.

"The golf scene is pretty good. Southeast golf is the best you can get, especially around Rome," Greer said. "My friend on my team at Model, Cody Boazman, travels around to play. Hogan is the same. Lindsey too. There are a lot of great players around here. Good competition that will make you better for sure."

Lawrenceville's Jenny Bae went bogey-free on the back nine Saturday to secure her 3-stroke lead in the girls' field heading into today's round. Bae won at Coosa Country Club last year. She holds a 2-stroke lead over Hannah Levi of Mississippi.

Preston Topper, of Suwanee, is just a stroke back of Ross after he posted a 38-31 first round for a 2-under 69.

Today's final round is scheduled to get under way at 8 a.m., however stormy weather is in the forecast for this morning.

### **MORE ONLINE**

For complete scores from the first round of the 2017 Rome Junior Classic, visit **RN-T.com**.



Jeremy Stewart/Rome News-Tribune

Hogan Ingram of Rome watches his putt on the No. 8 green during the first round of the AJGA Rome Junior Classic on Saturday at Coosa Country Club.