

[Golf team has winning coach & winning season](#)



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The Milton-Union High varsity golf team, from left to right, Josh Martin, Mitch Gooslin, Joey Smedley, Coach Andy Grafflin (SWBL “Coach of the Year”), Kevin Brackman, Sam Ginsberg and Nick Simpson.

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WEST MILTON - The Milton-Union varsity golf team had quite the season this year. Not only did they win the league tournament, but they also walked away with the Southwestern Buckeye League (SWBL) championship for the first time in the school’s history. This success is owed in part to the team’s coach, Andy Grafflin, who won the 2011 SWBL Coach of the Year award.

Grafflin currently lives in Milton with Dianna, his wife of 12 years, and his two children, Madison and Maxwell. He is in his 15th year at Milton-Union, where he teaches social studies and government. He has also spent 14 of those years as head coach of the golf team.

On this season, Grafflin said, “We set our goals in May” with the number one achievement being league champions. He credits the leadership of the team’s seniors for reaching this goal. There are many factors that go into a winning season, but, to Grafflin, the secret is practice, practice, practice.

Before their matches, the team would “get together and play the various courses,” Grafflin said. This would help them get a feel for the course and adapt their strategy accordingly. Consistency was another key factor for the team.

“You play six golfers and you keep the four best scores,” he said, “Our four scores were always right together.”

Practices usually involved setting up mock games and focusing on chipping and putting. The team also has a special end of practice ritual, which is based on spelling out the name of the competition. The players were required to make three to four foot putts and, with each successful putt, a letter would be added.

If a player missed, however, the process would start all over again. The puts would be shorter distances for long names and longer distances for shorter names. Grafflin said the exercise not only helped the team practice putting, but also got them focused on the upcoming games.

Grafflin's success as a coach comes from combining two of his primary interests: golf and kids.

"I enjoy working with young kids," he said. "I enjoy teaching this age group and the questions they ask."

He stated that golf is one of his "passions" and that he plays all the time.

"It's rewarding to teach students a game they can play the rest of their lives," he said.

His main focus as a coach is to get in the right state of mind.

"I've played a lot of golf myself, but when you coach, a lot of it is mental, working with the mental game," he said.

Grafflin is grateful to receive the Coach of the Year award, but said he believes the team to be more important. His satisfaction comes from working with the students and aiming for the top.

"It's enjoyable when you work hard and set goals and accomplish them," Grafflin concluded.

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