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In the books

By **NICK WILSON**, The Eureka Reporter

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As the regular season drew to a close at the Benbow Golf and Country Club on Monday, nobody on the McKinleyville team was aware of the historical moment that that took place – the school’s first-ever Humboldt-Del Norte Conference title.

McKinleyville head coach Pat Clancy was modest about his role in the team’s accomplishment and considered the achievement a culmination of hard work and rare talent.

“This is really about the kids,” Clancy said. “As a coach, I’m merely a facilitator. The boys are the ones that got it done in the end.”

After Monday’s win, which was the team’s seventh consecutive, McKinleyville advances to the North Coast Sections playoffs along with Eureka, and plays at the Les Schwab Tires North Qualifier at the Rooster Run Golf Course in Petaluma May 5.

Also, coming as no surprise is the fact that Eureka’s ace, Andy Clayton, finished on top of the individual standings with a total score of 517 – 33 strokes ahead of McKinleyville’s Spencer Stephens, who finished second.

Arcata’s Matt Cendejas and Marley Dellamas, as well as Fortuna’s Brandon Head also had strong individual performances this season, earning them spots as conference representatives in the NCS playoffs.

The second half of the regular season was all Clayton as he cruised to victory in the final four events, clinching an NCS playoff bid in the process.

The journey to the top was not all smooth sailing, however, and after a disappointing first half of the regular season, Clayton took inventory of the things he needed to improve in order to finish the season strong, coming out for the remainder of the season with an entirely new approach.

“The mental aspect of my game was much more solid and steady in the second half,” Clayton said. “I just tried to stay focused on my game and think about the big picture, rather than allow the minor battles to weigh me down.”

Eureka head coach Duane Peterson was also pleased with Clayton’s play down the stretch, and looks for the league champ to maintain his even-keel demeanor.

“We were always confident that Andy would be No. 1,” Peterson said. “He really stepped up his game in the final events

and proved that he is capable of shooting well on a regular basis – the kind of consistency that he’ll need in the postseason.”

As the playoffs approach, Clayton may have a leg up on his competitors as he will be competing in the NCS playoffs for the third time and knows how to handle himself in demanding courses and circumstances.

“For Petaluma, I’ve been working on my short game and hitting the ball lower to keep out of the wind that is typical on the course,” Clayton said. “Other than that, I’m going to try to play smart and stay focused on whatever task is at hand.”

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