

Bikes and golf just didn't mix

Lynette Brooky gave up motorbikes for golf — and now she is New Zealand's newest golf champion.

PLUCKY Lynette Brooky, the 22-year-old who wowed the golfing world when she swung and putted her way from oblivion to winning the New Zealand women's matchplay golf championship in Paraparaumu recently, says being unknown was an advantage.

It meant she wasn't under the same pressure as her competitors who were top women golfers from this country as well as Australia and Canada.

With her golf-mad family cheering from the sidelines, Lynette balanced the pressure with dogged patience, perseverance and concentration to take the title.

Her triumph was also a victory against the strong wind and rain which lashed the course, distressing many players.

And she managed to whack those last balls the correct distance and in the right direction, despite a "dead arm" from hours of holding up an umbrella.

The fact that her win was on home territory made it even more special.

Lynette played at the Paraparaumu beach course last year. But when she was not considered for the Wellington team, she decided to move to Auckland to try her luck there.

Everything fell into place for the keen young golfer. She joined the Grange golf club in Papatoetoe, found a good coach as well as support, encouragement and friendship in the Auckland golfing scene. Lynette even met her golf-playing fiancé, Ray.

But it was her radical change of image that prompted her acceptance into the golfing world, says Lynette, who reckons she failed to make the Wellington team "because I was a rebel and rode motorbikes".

Looking very much the clean-cut, conventional sportswoman wearing training shoes, long pants and Bob Charles-style shirt, Lynette says she used to wear leather gear and ride around on her Kawasaki 650cc motorcycle.

"I had to flag the bike away — it wasn't the right image," she says with a slight hint of regret.

Having relinquished her rebel status, she moved to Auckland with "a fighting feeling. I came here to prove I could do it".

She may talk, play, work and dream golf now, but this young woman was not always so enamoured of the game despite growing up in a family of 10 golf fiends.

The Brooky family would drag a reluctant Lynette to play an obligatory three rounds of golf a year, but until about five years ago she preferred to play softball, and when she was very young she played rugby for a boys' team.

Lynette first played golf at the Titahi Bay club, where players had to dodge the sheep droppings and sheep had to dodge the flying golf balls.

She says her father told her she was ready to play at serious competition level and gave her the confidence to try her hardest.

"I put a lot of time into it (golf practice). The first thing is that you've got to enjoy it," she says.

While we have all heard of golfers returning red-faced and fuming after a bad day of golf, even the best players have their off-days. Lynette says she isn't beyond an angry outburst. But she has not gone as far as breaking a golf club in two like some male players she has seen.

She tries counselling herself before a tricky shot by talking to herself... "c'mon Lynne, let's do it... think of your rhythm,

grip, stance", she mutters to the amusement of onlookers.

Her preparation for a competition is meticulous, too. She spent a week playing on the Paraparaumu course before the championship started, and discussed with her father and brother how to play each hole.

During the championship, her brother, Martin, caddied for her, suggesting which club she should use for each shot.

She battled through the second round challenge by Canadian Terrill Samuel to win on the 37th hole. While her opponent, according to news reports, was visibly upset by the foul weather, Lynette says she tried to play with it.

Few observers expected Lynette to go further than the second round match against New Zealand representative Lisa Aldridge. But even fewer gave her any chance of winning outright.

Lynette says she played the last three holes in a trance — though she had earlier pictured

herself in her mind's eye winning the matchplay golf championship.

Her personal triumph was also a national one — she is the first Kiwi in six years to win the trophy for New Zealand's top women's golf competition.

Back in the golf shop at the Titirangi golf course where she works part-time, Lynette says her dream is to be chosen to represent New Zealand. But she realises one big win is not enough to merit this and she has to prove herself in other competitions.

While some consider golf a game for the lazy who want to exercise by strolling at a leisurely pace across perfectly manicured courses, Lynette says she will have to join a gym to get fit enough for future tournaments.

"People say I could be a top golfer," says the champ who's on a single handicap of two. "I believe I could be, too."

— JENNIFER LITTLE

