

Sabrina Bonanno once again finding joy in playing golf



Ridgewood graduate Sabrina Bonanno was named Second Team All-Sun Belt in 2016 after her sophomore season at Arkansas-Little Rock. (Nelson Chenault / Arkansas-Little Rock)

By **Heather Rule**

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The sophomore slump.

That's what happened to Sabrina Bonanno, who went through a self-proclaimed slump this past season as a sophomore with the Arkansas-Little Rock women's golf team.

The Ridgewood graduate struggled this past year with things such as bouncing back from a couple double bogeys late in a round. Afterward, she'd tell her coach that she played great, except for a couple bad holes.

"And it just really mentally got to me," Bonanno said. "Because I would make the smallest mistakes that would make my scorecard look 10 times worse than I really played."

Those struggles have not carried over into the summer, however.

Bonanno shot a 1-under 70 at the U.S. Women's Amateur Qualifier in Northbrook on Wednesday, July 6, earning one of seven spots in the U.S. Women's Amateur Championship in Pennsylvania, which started Monday, Aug. 1.

Bonanno missed the cut at Rolling Green Golf Club, firing back-to-back 78s and finishing with a 14-over 156.

In June, she reached the semifinals of the Illinois Women's Amateur Championship.

"It was definitely a different ball game this summer," she said. "I just, to be honest, I left school coming home just hoping that I'd be able to fix what was going on.

"I just started to basically enjoy the game a little more."

During her sophomore season, Bonanno said she put unnecessary pressure on herself, and that can be attributed to college golf's team format. She said she has to try to pick up her teammates when someone else is having a bad day on the course.

She competed in all 11 events as both a freshman and sophomore for Arkansas-Little Rock. She was named Second Team All-Sun Belt in 2016 after being named First Team All-Sun Belt and Sun Belt Freshman of the Year in 2015. She had six top-20 finishes as a sophomore. Her highlight was a 1-under 69 in the Oral Roberts/Stephen F. Austin Spring Break Invitational in March, and she tied for fourth in the tournament.

So, it could be argued the season wasn't an entire slump.

"She knows what she has to do," said Giuseppe Bonanno, Sabrina's father. "She's got a good head on her shoulders."

Sabrina Bonanno describes herself as a consistent and reliable player. Even on bad days, she usually doesn't shoot over 80, and she'd like to see that number drop to 75 next season.

For now, Sabrina Bonanno's discovered a new mentality toward the game. She knows it's OK if everything doesn't go her way, because there's still a lot of golf to be played, she said.

"I wasn't happy with golf when I hit my slump sophomore year," she said. "But right now, I'm happy with it. I'm hitting the shots I want to hit."

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