

Ryan Linton

2004 IHSA Class AA Individual State Champion



Lake Forest's Linton lost interest in football and became the state Class AA golf champ

By Alan Sutton
Tribune staff reporter

After his freshman year at Lake Forest, Ryan Linton had it all figured out: He'd work out that summer with the goal of making the school's varsity football team.

Linton already had made an impact in the sport. He started at running back and linebacker and had been the placekicker for the Scouts' sophomore team.

But he suffered a dislocated shoulder while—in his words—golfing around with friends.

"I was probably 100 pounds, pretty fat," he said. "Then I got a shoulder injury."

Linton said he lost interest in football and turned to the sport "I was just playing for fun on the weekend with my dad." That sport was golf, and that would lead to the Lake Forest senior's winning an individual state championship, leading the Scouts to the Class AA team title and being named WGN-Ch. 9 Tribune Athlete of the Month for October.

He led off the month by shooting a 72 for a regional title and finishing in the top 10 with a 74 at the Rock Island sectional.

In between those tournaments, he threw in a 68 at Exmoor (in a round that included six birdies and an eagle) to win a quadrangular against New Trier, Loyola and Highland Park.

Linton saved his best for last with an Arnold Palmer like finish at Bloomington's The Den at Fox Creek—the Palmer designed course that hosts the Class AA Finals—the weekend of Oct. 15-16.

After an opening round 74 put him in contention, Linton got off to a miserable start in his

day's second and final round. He double-bogeyed two of his first four holes to fall to 6-over par.

"You've got your work cut out for you now," Linton said he told himself. He was particularly upset after flubbing a chip shot on the par 3 fourth hole. He caught that shot a little fat and plopped his ball into a bunker. That led to a two-putt for a 5.

Linton, who has not yet made a college commitment, didn't change the way he was hitting the ball. He just sharpened his focus for the final 14 holes. He made the turn with a 39 and was two shots behind the leaders. Then Linton played "the strongest nine I played the whole high school season."

He birdied Nos. 10, 12, 14 and 15 to finish with a one-under 71 and win the individual title by four shots.

Scoring Averages

2004	72.0
2003	73.4
2002	72.3

"He's a great athlete," Lake Forest coach Jim Matheson said. "He could've been great at any sport he played."

Linton uses a philosophy that can apply to just about any sport: Practice, practice, practice. He spent most of the summer working on his game at the driving ranges in the northern suburbs. He also worked with local professional Todd Sones of Deer Run and attended the Hutch Harrison School of Golf in Las Vegas.

"You gain confidence working with people like that," Linton said.

Harrison has worked with several pros, including Tiger Woods.

Linton not only is grateful for his instruction, but the support of his parents, Tom and Karen. "They just let me do what I

- 2004 Varsity MVP and Team Captain
- 2004 WGN Chicago Tribune Athlete of the Month (Oct)
- 2004 WGN Chicago Tribune Athlete of the Year Nominee
- 2004 Pioneer Press Golfer of the Year
- 2004 Pioneer Press Athlete of the Week (Oct 4th & Oct 11th)
- 2004 Schoolsports.com The Magazine "Chicago's Best" (Sept)
- 2004 NSC All Conference
- 2003 NSC All Conference
- 2002 NSC All Conference
- 2002 JV MVP and Team Captain (State Team 3rd place)
- 2002 Pioneer Press Athlete of the Week (Sep 15th)

2003-2005 (July 03' - July 05') - Golfweek Ranking 1st in Illinois

2004 6-Time Individual Invitational Champion

-Lake County Invitational	63
-St. Viator Invitational	70
-Wildcat Invitational	71
-Exmoor Invitational	68
-IHSA Regional	72
-IHSA State Championship	74-71

