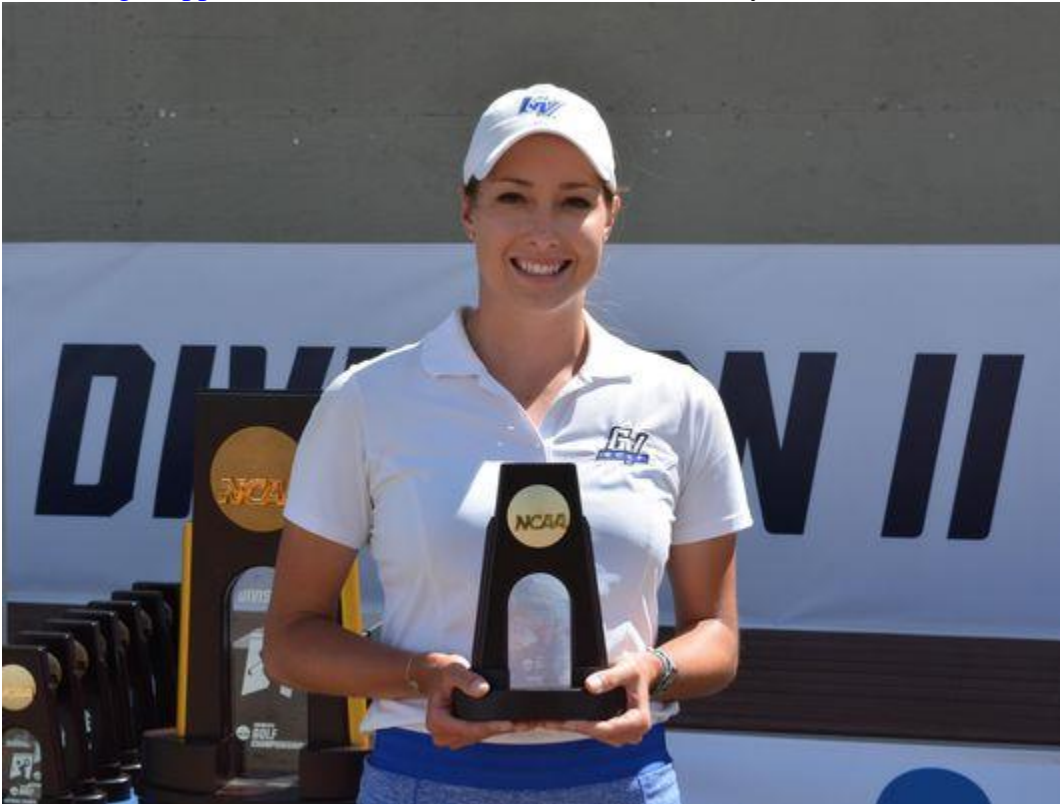


Grand Valley State national champ: 'No idea I had to make that putt'



[George Sipple](#), Detroit Free Press 10:02 a.m. EDT May 26, 2016



(Photo: Courtesy of Grand Valley State)

Grand Valley State senior Gabrielle Shipley sank a 7-foot birdie [to win the NCAA Division II women's golf individual national title](#) on Saturday at Aurora, Colo. Shipley finished with a final-round, three-under-par 69, her best collegiate round. She became the second Laker to win the individual national championship.

Shipley followed that by competing at Westwood Country Club in St. Louis on Tuesday in an attempt to qualify for the U.S. Women's Open. She tied for 16th, following a first-round 82 with a 73 to finish at 155 (plus-11). Shipley spoke to the Free Press about her recent performances and future plans:

■**On winning the individual title as a senior:** “That’s been my goal since I came to college my freshman year, to win the national championship. I knew this was my last chance to do it, and I wanted to work my very hardest up until the tournament. When I got there I wanted to relax and play my game and just be very confident in all my abilities.”

■**On not being told she needed to hit the putt to win:** “I didn’t even know it came down to the last putt on the last hole, which I think was definitely a blessing. If I was standing over that 7-footer knowing I had to make it for the national championship it would have been a lot more of a shaky stroke. (Laughs.) I had no idea I had to make that putt. I knew it was very close going into the last day. I didn’t think of numbers. I didn’t think of how everyone else was playing. I didn’t look at any scoreboards all week because I just wanted to focus on my game.”



Shipley fired a six-under 282 and won the NCAA title by one stroke. (Photo: Courtesy of Grand Valley State)

■**On the realization that her collegiate career is over:** “I feel like it still hasn’t hit me 100% yet. I’ll realize it when everyone else is going back to school and I’m not.”

■**On her performance in St. Louis:** “I had a really rough first round, but I came back the second round and shot one over par. I definitely was a little bummed with my first round. I’m a little happier coming back and definitely shooting a lot better. My ball striking was just so low on the first 18. I was scrambling for par on every hole. ... It was definitely a scrambling first 18. I mean I’ve definitely had a really busy week. I definitely gave all that I had last week and I don’t know if I was run down and tired. You can’t win them all.”

■**On plans for the summer:** “I’m still going to try and qualify for the U.S. Am, still playing in the Michigan Open. I’m still playing in one of the GAM tournaments. I’m playing with my sister in the Atlas Cup this weekend up north. I’m going to try and qualify for a Symetra event.”

■**On future plans:** “I’m turning pro at the end of the year. I’m going to go to qualifying school in August in California. That’s Round 1. I have to play my way into Round 2 and Round 3. Round 3, if I play well I’ll have either LPGA status or Symetra status for next year.”

GVSU's Gabrielle Shipley eyes LPGA after national title

By [Dan. D'Addona](#)

May 30, 2016 8:48PM



Grand Valley State golfer Gabrielle Shipley won the NCAA Division II national championship last week. Now, she eyes bigger courses. Dan D'Addona/Sentinel staff

ALLENDALE — Gabrielle Shipley never looked at a scoreboard, never looked at her place and never focused on any numbers.

She was too focused on her game.

The Grand Valley State senior used that focus to play at the top of her game and claim the NCAA Division II national championship last week.

“I won it and my life hasn’t changed, but I still can’t believe I did it,” Shipley said. “I beat everybody there. This was my dream when I came in. It is so nice to accomplish something like that after four years. It is definitely an amazing feeling.”

Now she is focused on her future.

Shipley, a Hastings native, will play this summer as an amateur and could play in a Symetra Tour event before heading west to participate in the LPGA Tour qualifying school.

“Hopefully I will make it past stage one to stage two (of qualifying school) and hopefully finish stage three at LPGA International in December and get my LPGA Tour card. I just have to play well for three tournaments,” she said. “But If I could get my LPGA Tour card, it would be amazing. I could just start the next stage of my life.”

The national championship was a huge step in Shipley’s play and confidence.

“It is definitely a confidence booster,” Shipley said of winning the title. “If I have a bad round, I can realize that I did this and, I can do it again. I have accomplished so much and I need to just remember that and try to replicate those times.”

And replicate that focus, which sets Shipley apart. The focus that didn’t allow her to realize that she was tied for second after the second day, tied for first after the third day and leading the final day of the NCAA tournament.

“The second or third round, I had to control my mind. I was setting up myself for birdie opportunities a lot. I didn’t want to picture myself with the trophy because you are never supposed to do that. But my brain would get close to that point and I would have to pull it back,” Shipley said. “I hit a lot of fairways and a lot of greens. My shots were a lot closer to the pin the second and third day. I was in the zone on the last day, thinking of every shot, not the next shot. I didn’t know (I was winning). I didn’t look at any scoreboards until I had signed my card on the last round.”

It wasn’t easy to keep that focus, but everyone around Shipley knew not to say anything. It is the way she has always been and a major reason for her success.

“I try to never look at numbers. My team and my family know I don’t like to talk numbers, so if they did it, they knew not to do it around me. If I walked by a scoreboard, I just looked down or looked the other direction to keep all the numbers out of my head,” she said. “I have just always done it. You are not supposed to think about numbers. When you take that away, it is another aspect you don’t have to worry about. It is hard enough to control your brain from what ifs, so I just try to eliminate both.”

That focus combined with the physical tools is a tough combination for anyone to beat.

“She hits the heck out of the ball,” said former Ferris State golfer Libby Berens, a Holland Christian graduate. “She gets it that much further on the fairway. She is super accurate and is a great putt. She gets it in the hole.”

Berens has a long history with Shipley.

“Senior year in high school (2011), she won state and I was fourth, and we have played so many tournaments together since. I definitely root for her, whether she is a competitor or not. I was so happy for her. We were keeping track of her all week. She deserved it. What a crazy way to end your career.”

The focus, however, started at the beginning of her career, as did her ability to hit with power off the tee.

“My dad always talked about it. He told me you can’t learn to hit it far. You are born hitting it far. That is something that I have always had. It has helped me become successful,” she said.

Golf is a passion Shipley has shared with her father and sister most of her life. Some of her earliest memories of her family involve golfing.

“When I was 5, my dad introduced me to the game,” she said. “I don’t think I loved it right away. We would get up early, go to the gas station and get a milk and doughnut and go to the course. It was super early. No kid wants to do that. But then it was a fun time to be outside with my dad and sister.

“I played more competitively at the age of 10 and that is when I knew that I wanted to become a golf pro.”

Shipley quickly became one of the top golfers in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference when she arrived at Grand Valley State.

After her junior season, Shipley had the chance to qualify for the Meijer LPGA Classic at Blythefield Country Club — the course where Shipley works in the offseason, but didn’t have her best round.

“I think I put way too much pressure on myself,” she said. “I was thinking if I got this, I could play in the LPGA and people would see you and it would be easier to turn pro. I know I could have qualified. The scores that they qualified with were nothing out of reach.”

Now, after a national championship, nothing is out of reach for Shipley.

“I had this personal goal for myself. I knew where I needed to be to get to the next level,” she said. “This is something that will help me in the long run. (My game) is moving in that direction. I am going to do all I can to be the best.”

— Follow this reporter on Twitter @DanDAddona and Facebook @HollandSentinelSports.