



Joe Louis autographed this 1947 photo (lower right) of him selecting a club during a practice round of the golf tournament that used his name. Don Nelson, a Bloomfield Hills resident, caddied for the former heavyweight champion at this time.

# Memories

## Louis on the links remembered

By M.B. Dillon  
staff writer

Deceased heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis wanted his caddy, Don Nelson, to accompany him on an out-of-state golf tour — and by George, he wasn't going to take no for an answer.

It was 1944, back when Louis was a fixture at Detroit's Rackham Golf Course in Royal Oak and blacks were persona non grata at private country clubs.

Nelson, then 15, had become Louis' golf confidante after hanging around near the first tee one day with 20 or 30 other hungry caddies.

"Louis yelled out, and I ran up and grabbed his bag," said Nelson, 52, a Bloomfield Hills resident and businessman. "I ended up caddying for him until I was a sophomore in college."

"In these days the black circuit went on a five or six-week Midwest tour," he said. "Joe wanted me to come with him. I went straight home and asked my parents — I was all excited."

"They said no. They didn't think it'd be the best environment for me — an

all-black tournament. They thought I was too young."

"So I went back to the golf course the next day and told Joe I couldn't go. 'I didn't know it, but he had his chauffeur drive him directly over to my folks' house. He explained the situation and asked them again."

"Joe talked them into it," said Nelson.

BUT LOUIS had just begun impressing his young pal.

"It really disappoints me to hear people say Louis used to shoot 85 or 90," Nelson said, "because golf was his real love. He shot anywhere between 87 and 82, but usually about 74 or 75. His handicap was normally three or four."

Louis' golf swing was the opposite of a handicap. In 1951 it earned him the National Negro Amateur title.

Louis and his money is another topic that disturbs Nelson.

"People say Louis lost all his money," said Nelson. "Not true. He gave his money away."

"He was the financier of the Joe Louis Open at Rackham."

"And on the black circuit, he'd foot the bill for two pros and the chauffeur that traveled with him. He had no concept of saving money."

"People he had never met would come up to him saying, 'Hey Joe, I can't pay my rent, and he'd give them money,'" said Nelson. "That's just the way he was."

"The first new pair of golf shoes I ever owned Joe Louis sent to me from New York when I was 15."

"He was one of the finest persons I ever met in my life."

AND ONE OF the heaviest gamblers.

"He'd make some pretty good-sized bets," said Nelson, who earned a marketing degree and played football at the University of Detroit College. "He played for thousands."

"As his caddy, we had a pretty close relationship, and I never heard the man swear or saw him do anything the least bit questionable on the golf course," said Nelson, an avid golfer. "He was such an honest golfer — he'd call

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With hundreds of people looking on, Joe Louis shows his form with a strong drive down the fairway.

# Hawks, Raiders win tennis titles

North Farmington continued its tennis prosperity under coach Norm Staniszewski.

North won the Northwest Suburban League tennis championship by scoring 20 points in the conference meet Thursday at Westland John Glenn. The title was the third in a row for North.

John Glenn placed second with 11 points, Garden City East had seven, Livonia Franklin three and Redford Thurston none.

North won six of the seven flight

titles. Glenn Glicker, North's No. 1 singles player, beat Milo Bradley of Glenn, 6-4, 6-2, in the final. In the No. 1 doubles final, North's Don VanCott and Dave Livon needed three sets to overcome Glenn's Kirk Sullivan and Keith Rochman, 6-0, 1-6, 6-4.

At No. 2 singles, North's Mike Gaskill outlasted Glenn's Paul Grazulis, 6-4, 2-6, 6-4, to gain the flight title. Tom Ferrer of North stopped Frank Gentile of East, 6-3, 3-6, 6-2, in the No. 3 singles final.

John Grisdale, North's No. 4, had an easy time with East's Randy Fernandez, 6-0, 6-2.

North's only loss in the flight finals came in No. 2 doubles. The John Glenn team of Don Hunt and John Rowland trimmed Greg McLaughlin and Rich McDanel, 6-1, 6-4.

But North's No. 3 doubles team of brothers Greg and Russ Ikonen downed Joe Genslak and Jeff Thompson of Glenn, 6-2, 6-2.

**WESTERN SIX LEAGUE  
AT PLYMOUTH CANTON**  
While North Farmington's tennis players were savoring their third-

straight league championship, Farmington's basketball players were celebrating the school's first title ever.

Harrison won the Western Six League crown, scoring 18 points to win the league meet at Plymouth Canton Thursday. Canton finished second with 13 points. Perennial champion Northville finished way out this year.

Harrison was involved in five of the seven flight finals. In the top singles final, Harrison sophomore Adam Gordon injured his leg and had to withdraw from his match against Canton's Kregg Kinzel. Dave Brady gave Harrison the

No. 2 singles title with a 6-7, 6-2, 6-1 showing against Canton's Kevin Johnston.

The No. 4 singles title went to Harrison's Raffi Manoukian, who stopped Walled Lake Western's Chris Smith, 6-4, 6-4.

Andre Berk and Mike Corey, Harrison's top doubles team, beat Canton's Mark Sawyer and Rubin Rabillas, 6-0, 6-2, in the final. In the No. 3 doubles final, Harrison's John Iaconelli and Rob Shapiro caused Western's Dan Shell and John Cooper, 4-6, 7-5, 6-1.

Harrison was to have played in the Class B state meet over the weekend in Holland.



Norm Staniszewski guides another winner



MINDY SAUNDERS/staff photographer

Mike Gaskill won the No. 2 singles championship at North Farmington at the Northwest Suburban League meet.

## HHS earns 2nd

Ken Kopko finished first in two events, and Ed Mohr won another top spot to place Farmington Harrison's 93-point, second-place finish in the Western Six League boys' track meet Wednesday at Livonia Churchill.

For the 10th-straight year, Churchill won the league meet and championship. This season's Charger crew amassed 149 points. Walled Lake Western took third with 88 points, Waterford Mott had 59, Plymouth Canton 56 and Northville 48.

Kopko closed out an outstanding prep career by winning the 400-meter dash in 51.89 and the 200-meter dash in 23.00. He also placed second in the discus with a throw of 139 feet, 6 inches.

Mohr won the pole vault at 12 feet, 2 inches.

Mike Boyd gave Harrison a second place in the 110-meter high hurdles (15.73), and teammate Don Gully finished second in the 200 dash in 22.83. Steve Shanabrook finished second in the high jump (5-0) and took third in the long jump (20-2).

Churchill had an outstanding performer in Jeff Olweave, who had firsts in the high jump (6-4), the long jump (21-4), the 110 high hurdles (14.50) to go with a second in the 300 low hurdles (40.48).

Bob Davis of Churchill won the discus at 142-7.

## Raiders batter FHS

Kevin Shaw handled the pitching, and teammate John King bled the big bat Thursday as North Farmington completed its baseball season on a successful note with a 10-3 thumping of backyard-rival Farmington.

Shaw went the distance with an eight-inning. He struck out two and walked four. Losing pitcher Pat Vellucci worked the first 2 1/3 innings. Scott Zang and Jim Whitworth finished up on the mound.

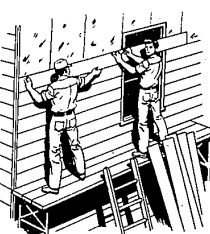
King, North's senior third baseman,

drove in four runs with a single, a double and a two-run homer. Teammate Greg Meggas had two hits and drove in a run. Chuck Kott had an RBI triple, and Jim Franchi knocked in another run with a single.

Mark Leonetti holds North's stolen-base record with three steals against Farmington. He's copped 28 this season.

Farmington's Joe Hamilton had two singles and drove in two runs.

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