

Michigan golf champ not spoiled by success

By Jim Hughes
staff writer

WINNING THE MICHIGAN Amateur Open brought instant fame and popularity to Rochester Golf Club member John Johnson, but the 30-year-old publicist will not let the plethora

of headlines and accolades go to his head. Nor will his playing partners. Johnson, after a five-year hiatus from the Charlevoix tournament, captured the title with a 1-up victory over Mark Chapleski in the match play format. But other than clipping out the newspaper articles and storing around the Staghorn Trophy, life will go on as

usual for Johnson, who works at a Dearborn refining company and manages to play golf twice a week in between countless rounds on the links.

"I've got a great group of friends who will not allow me to let it go to my head," Johnson said as he sat in the clubhouse of the Rochester Golf Club. "I'll cut me down to size real quick. Amateur golf is fun and it's nice to win, but you have to realize, winning the Michigan Amateur is not going to pay the rent or the bills. There's other responsibilities in my life that have to be cared for."

which outweighs a trophy, trinket or medal. If you win this tournament, you don't care if they give you a cup of coffee and say 'Hi the road! You've won, and that's all that matters.'"

Although Johnson is taking all the publicity in stride, there was a time when it all might have gone to his head. As a youngster, Johnson envisioned days when he would be a top dog on the pro tour.

Johnson was league medalist while participating on the Royal Oak Kimball golf team. After graduation in 1971, he went to Ohio State University to follow in the footsteps of Buckeye grad Jack Nicklaus, no doubt.

"I went there with visions of grandeur," he said with a grin. "I made the team, but I was out of their league."

BECAUSE HIS family could not afford the out-of-state tuition, Johnson came home and went to the Orchard Ridge campus of Oakland Community College where he golfed for two years. He finished his credits at Eastern Michigan University — where he cap-

tained the golf team in 1975 — and graduated in 1978.

"I always thought I was better than I really was," Johnson recalled of his early days. "The Ohio State thing was an eye-opener for me. I was a good, solid Mid-American Conference player — my score counted all the time — but I didn't shoot rounds that would win any tournament."

After Johnson came to the realization that maybe he wasn't in the class of the touring pros, he decided to relearn the game — especially after a hockey knee injury made him alter his style.

"I was forced to relearn the game, or I should say learn it more properly," he said. "I became more of a player rather than a slugger. Since then, each year I've gotten better. I'd say the last three or four years, I've played the way I'm playing now."

A big change came in March, when Johnson's four-month diet reduced his 260-pound frame to 202 pounds.

"AFTER I tore my knee, I became less active and I was gaining 8-10

pounds a year. Pretty soon I was 260, and I made a decision to get rid of it — for health reasons as much as anything else."

"It bothered my game," said the 207-pound champion. "My timing changed — I was swinging faster and I didn't have the same control I was used to."

Previous to the Michigan Amateur Open, he was not on top of his game. But he is now. He doesn't call it a "Cinderella Story," just a matter of everything falling into place at the right time.

"I hadn't played that good all year, and I was working to change things," he said. "There were good circumstances and the right combination of events. I mean, why didn't I play this good next week? I just played well the week of the tournament."

"I may have a stretch of incredibly great golf, and there aren't any tournaments around, but it just happened that I was on top of my game during this tournament. You can't put your finger on it. You're happy with it, and you just try to keep it going as long as you can."

Beechview swim club continues win streak

Farmington Hills Beechview Swim Club continued its winning ways in the Northwest Suburban Swim League last week by dunking Beverly Hills Swim Club 317-243. Beechview is 3-0 in dual meet competition.

The Tucker sisters, Elizabeth and Catherine, along with teammate Janine Whittemore established new team records for Beechview.

Double-event winners for Beechview were: Joe Abunassar, Scott Farabee, Angie Tomlie, Todd Farabee, Wendy Leland, Lisa Tomlie, Wendell Tucker, Maureen Kelly and Kirk Taylor.

Other first-place finishers for Beechview were: Roxanne Bennett, Greg Gentner, Mary Quinn, Dennis Sayles, Vince Enright, Sandy Schwed, Mike Valvona, Mike Wik, Lisa Kelly and Tom Sayles.

Four Beechview combined-age relay teams also took firsts: 40-year girls, Roxanne Bennett, Julie Farabee, Angie Tomlie and Elizabeth Tucker; 52-year girls, Catherine Tucker, Janine Whittemore, Mary Wik and Mary Quinn; the 40-year boys, Greg Gentner, Wendell Tucker, Mike Hoffman and Matt Gessler; and the 52-year boys, Kirk Taylor, Tom Sayles, Joe Abunassar and Chris Hart.

WOODBROOKE HILLS

Several outstanding performances by Woodbrooke swimmers could not prevent the team's third straight dual-meet loss, 305-266, to Forest Hills.

Mike Tumeay set two new records, in the 50-meter freestyle and the 100-meter IM.

Woodbrooke got double victories from Cindy and Marge Cramer, Karrie Kranz, Scott Mayotte, David Beck, Jill Andries and Liz Worthen.

The team also got first-place finishes from Colleen Carey, Carrie Worthen, Jennifer Rowe, Kristin Kranz, Kathy Pierog, Chris Leslie and Tumeay.

Three combined-age relay teams swam to victory for Woodbrooke: 52-year girls, (Kranz, Sills, Morton and Cramer); 64-year girls, (Cramer, Pierog, Andries and Carey); 84-year boys, (Simsen, Anderson, Hampe and Leslie).

VILLAGE — WOODSIDE

Southfield's Village Vikings lost their first dual meet of the season, 319-253, to the Woodside Athletic Club.

Double winners for Village were Tracey Kley, Laura VanBaukirk, Chris MacMillan and Mike Vetter.

Other first-place finishers were Brian Winsahl, Jeff Rotberg, Jennifer Roberts, Becky Wiquist, Adam Harrison, Keith Cox, Marilee Konezal, Bill Cox, Tom Grubba and Mike Schuler.

The combined-year relay teams of Marilee Konezal, Lisa VanHaren, Pam Saunders and Nancy MacMillan, and Bill Cox, Jim Hogan, Doug Johnston and Mike Schuler came in first for Village.

Village is now 2-1 on the year.

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