

# Confidence is key

## Tournament golf is a real strain on the brain

By C.J. Rieck  
staff writer

This is the second in a three-part series on how to prepare to play tournament golf. In the first installment last Monday, staff columnist C.J. Rieck and golf pro Gary Whitener discussed getting ready off the course by practicing at driving ranges and putting greens.

Getting physically ready to play in the Observer & Eccentric golf tournaments is essential (as discussed in part one of this series). But, as Gary Whitener, golf pro at Livonia's Whispering Willows Golf Course, where both Observer & Eccentric golf tournaments will be played, says:

"Tournament play is more mental than physical."

Which means that you have to prepare as much mentally as physically. That means building the right attitude toward your game. The best way

to accomplish that, according to Whitener — "Build your confidence."

WHICH TAKES us back to the driving range. Because there's no better way to build confidence than through consistent play, and that can only be done through practice.

"You have to work on your swing so that it's mechanical," Whitener said. Still, golfers with great swings and form don't always fare well on the golf course. As Whitener put it, "How many times have you heard people say, 'How can he be so bad with that swing?'"

"It's because he has nothing between the ears to tell him what to do with that swing."

Knowing how to play the course and "how to win" is important in readying for tournament play.

"YOU KNOW, I can place the cup in the corner of that green, one of the biggest we have," Whitener said, pointing to Whispering Willows par-three, 135-

yard seventh hole. "And you know what? Guys will step up to the tee and try like crazy to hit the corner of the green instead of just putting the ball on the green."

"What they do is end up not hitting the green at all. I always say it's easier to putt than chip."

Whitener said the same thing about holes that dog-leg, or bend in the fairway. Golfers in their driver off the tee and end up in the woods instead of hitting a shorter, but safer, iron shot.

Which means, basically, don't beat yourself. Don't try the impossible shot; if necessary, play for the bogey instead of gambling on a par that could result in a triple-bogey — or worse.

IT'S HOW a golfer handles himself when in trouble that proves his true mettle.

"A lot of golfers, including the pros, tense up," Whitener said. "If you watched the PGA, you could see that happening to (eventual winner Hal

Sutton. He didn't relax and just hit the ball."

It nearly cost Sutton, who saw a seven-stroke lead dissipate to one in the final round. Whitener's advice: Play your game and don't try to do too much.

Like Sutton, many players change their swing or mental approach when suddenly faced with a problem shot. "A troublesome course really shouldn't bother the straight hitter," Whitener remarked. "Maybe people would think differently if driving ranges had penalties for where your ball landed."

WHAT WILL HELP in staying out of trouble and playing "your game" is knowing the golf course. It's futile to expect a good round of tournament golf on a course you've never played.

"Jack Nicklaus is a classic example of that," Whitener said. "He goes to the Masters' golf course two weeks early. By the time the tournament starts he knows it like the back of his hand."

"That's why he's the best in the business. He's out there all the time practicing."

Whitener added that most of the O&E tournament players "practice at least a couple of times (at Whispering Willows) before the tournament."

Being prepared physically and mentally will make playing the tournament that much easier.

Next: A look at Whispering Willows Golf Course and what holes might provide big problems.

### Men's, Women's golf tournament sponsored by O & E/Whispering Willows

Women's: 18-hole medal play: Wednesday, Aug. 24. Entry fee is \$15. Handicap maximum is 40.  
Men's: 36-hole medal play: Saturday and Sunday, Oct. 1-2. Entry fee is \$30. Handicap maximum is 36.  
Women's entries close at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 17. For starting times, call 476-4493 after 10 a.m. Monday, Aug. 22.  
Men's entries close at 6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 24. For starting times, call 476-4493 after noon Thursday, Sept. 28.

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Send entry blank with check (not cash) payable to tournament director Gary Whitener, Whispering Willows, 20500 Newburgh, Livonia 48152.

Pairings will be made by the tournament committee. No requests for individual pairings will be taken. No changes will be made.  
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## NFWB Mantle team compiles a 28-5 mark

By Bob Kourtales  
special writer

"The best club I ever managed."

That's how coach Al Moran characterized his North Farmington-West Bloomfield (NFWB) Mickey Mantle baseball team after the team finished the season with a 28-5 record and placed third in the state tournament.

The team was knocked out of the state tournament in Coldwater earlier this month by Detroit West 7. West 7 beat NFWB in the final game, 2-1. It was the third year in a row Moran's team has been knocked out of the state tournament by West 7.

Despite that disappointment, NFWB had a successful season. At one point, the team reeled off 14 consecutive wins.

MORAN HAS a simple formula for his team's success: good pitching and solid defense.

"The pitching was the key because even when we were not hitting well, we were still in the game. Whenever you

have good pitching you're going to do well," Moran said.

NFWB had four pitchers with ERAs below 2.00. The team didn't yield an earned run until its seventh game of the season.

The ace of the staff was Catholic Central's Gary Zolinski. Zolinski compiled a 13-2 record while posting a 1.50 ERA. In one contest, he had pitched no-hit ball for 6½ innings only to give up a single to spoil the bid.

Other key hurlers were Rich Mueller, Catholic Central, who was 6-0 with

a 0.93 ERA; Scott Draper, North Farmington, 6-0 with a 1.40 ERA; and Larry Krahmer, Catholic Central, who had an ERA of just 0.46.

ADDING TO THE effectiveness of the NFWB pitching staff was a solid defense. "Our defense really helped us out. We had a very tight infield, especially the left side with Eric Eagle at short and Jon Sonbay at third, both play for North Farmington," Moran said.

But, a baseball team does not win

with pitching and defense alone. Someone has to knock in some runs and NFWB was not without hitters. Mueller hit .483, Draper hit .480 and Engle hit .423.

Draper, a centerfielder when not on the mound, produced a .920 slugging percentage, clubbing eight home runs and 13 triples.

Moran is very high on Draper. "He has a good chance to make it in college. He mixes power with amazing speed. He is the fastest kid I have seen on the basepaths."

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