

It isn't just a man's game

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

THE TEMPERATURE outside has shriveled to the zero mark. Snow and ice frost the roads and sidewalks. Christmas is less than a week away.

Donna Greenbury shows up for an interview clothed in layers: shirt, sweater topped with her warm Detroit Country Day varsity jacket. In her hand is a golf club.

"I feel kind of stupid carrying this around," Greenbury says with a chuckle.

A photographer takes her outside, into the cold and frost, to get some pictures. The photographer asks her to take her jacket and gloves off so he can get some shots of her swinging the golf club. Greenbury is freezing, but she graciously obliges. The photo snaps five, six maybe seven shots. Greenbury, uncomplaining, takes practice swing after practice swing.

SHE'S BEEN in much more uncomfortable spots than that. Heck, posing for pictures for the newspaper was fun, even if she did almost freeze to death.

Greenbury, a lifelong resident of Farmington Hills, played varsity golf for three years at Detroit Country Day. What's so uncomfortable about that? Detroit Country Day does not have a girls golf team — Greenbury played on the boys team, and that's tough.

"I think Donna had something to prove," said Country Day golf coach Jerry Hansen. "And she worked harder as a result. She wasn't about to tee it up and have all the boys laughing at her and teasing her."

"No, sir. All Greenbury did was work

and work and work until she was one of the best golfers on the team.

HER MATCH average was 44 in her senior year last fall. She often played No. 4 on the team. She was the only girl to compete in the boys state Class C finals. She scored an outstanding 86 at the regional tourney.

Her accomplishments last fall earned her a berth on the girls All-State team, even though the girls' season isn't until the spring.

"Every year they leave three spots open on the girls All-State team for the girls who play in the fall," Greenbury explained. "I don't think I shot low enough to make the All-State boys team. Those guys are shooting in the low 70s."

Donna is an outstanding girls golfer, Hansen said. "Her statistics don't stand out like some other girls on girls teams, but that's because she's had to play at the men's tees at Oakland Hills."

The men's tees are several yards behind the women's and Oakland Hills is an extremely difficult course to play.

"She works very hard at her game," Hansen said. "She hits a long ball and has a good short game. She really has it all together."

IT HADN'T always been that way for Greenbury. Before last summer, Greenbury's game was struggling to break 90. She was hitting the ball well

at times, but consistency was lacking.

She first showed up on the Country Day links as a sophomore. It was a rough year for her. She had just transferred into Country Day from North Farmington High School. She was new and hadn't the time to meet many people.

"It was really hard to mix in with the team at first," Greenbury said. "I was the only girl on the team, and I was a young girl. It was real hard on my game. I mean, I had friends. But, like, the guys who were seniors and playing No. 1 and No. 2 on the team, well, we usually didn't talk much."

It wasn't too long before Greenbury earned the respect and friendship of her teammates.

"I had to try to prove that I wasn't only a girl, but also a golfer," she said.

AFTER A decent, but undistinguished junior year, Greenbury spent the better part of last summer on the course developing and fine tuning her game. Her hard work and dedication paid large dividends in her senior year. Along with the post-season honors and letters from interested college golf coaches, Greenbury earned the complete respect of her teammates.

"When they start seeing you really hitting the ball, they ease up. They compliment you and start talking," Greenbury said.

Greenbury said she would have liked to play on a girls team, but she will

leave Country Day with no regrets.

"Oh yeah, I would have preferred to play on a girls team. It would have made it a lot easier to compete. It was tough (playing against boys) to keep my attitude up. I knew they would be hitting farther and scoring better."

"But, I'm glad I decided to go to Country Day. I feel I've gotten a better education, and I had a better chance to get involved in the school. I've enjoyed it. I don't regret my decision at all," she said.

As for her golf game, Hansen said playing against the boys has been a benefit for her.

"HER STATS may have looked better if she played girls, but her playing tougher competition has improved her game. It made her work harder and practice more," he said.

The next step for Greenbury is college. She has a 3.8 grade point average and is eyeing a future in patent law — that is if her ultimate dream cannot be realized.

"After college, I'll see how my game is. It's kind of been my dream to turn pro. If I can play at a competitive level, and I think I have a chance to earn some money, then I'll give it a shot. If not, I'll go to law school," she said.

Three colleges top Greenbury's list at the present: Dartmouth, Princeton and Michigan.

"I think she would like to go to Dartmouth," said Hansen, though Greenbury has said she was still uncertain. "I think she could step in and play golf for Dartmouth right now."

So, in the midst of this December frigidity, it's nice to know that at least one thing is blooming: the career of Donna Greenbury.



JIM JAGGELD/staff photographer

Donna Greenbury, Farmington Hills resident and standout on the Country Day boys' golf team, takes a chilled practice swing Tuesday morning.

Hughes' TV

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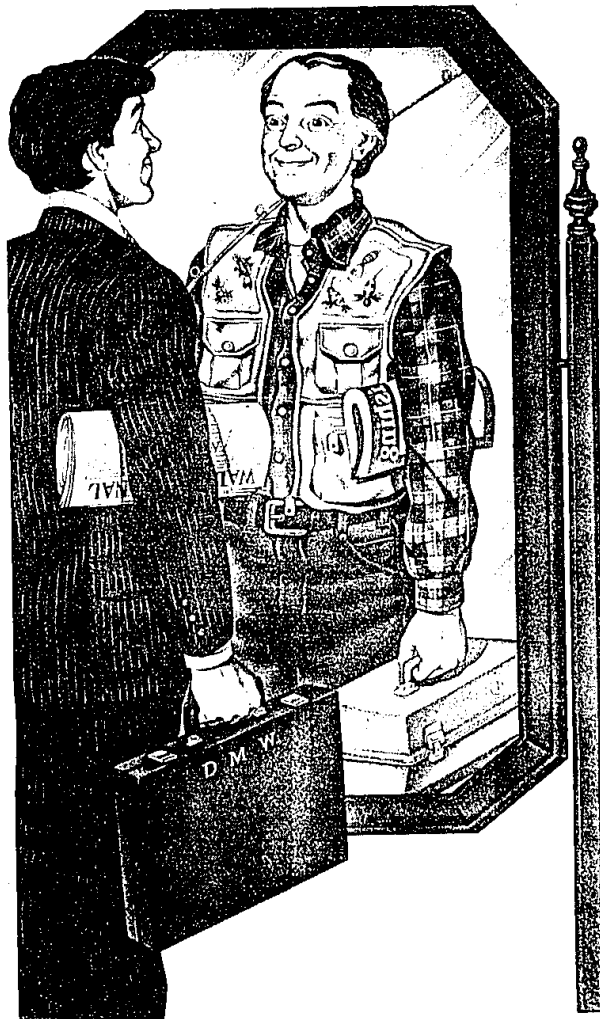
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