

Green family right on par

By C.J. Rieak
staff writer

Every golfer knows the anguish of missing the green because of a poor shot. But in the last three weeks, the Greens have missed few shots, and not much has escaped them in the world of golf.

Pete Green of Franklin won his third Michigan Amateur title last month. Quite an accomplishment, but daughter Suzy, a Birmingham Groves graduate who just completed her freshman year at Ohio State, was not to be outdone.

Suzy Green surprised just about everyone — herself included — in earning medalist honors by firing a 71 at the Chicago-area sectional qualifier for the U.S. Women's Open at Briar Ridge Country Club in Dyer, Ind., July 1.

Which means the younger Green will be competing in the U.S. Women's Open beginning today at the National Cash Register course in Kettering, Ohio.

"It's kind of sinking in right now," said Suzy Tuesday evening. "I went to the qualifier hoping to make it, but I didn't really expect I would."

"It's just one of those things where you say, 'Here I am — now what?'"

NOW WHAT, indeed. Suzy is just 19 and already is playing in the biggest women's tournament of all. It's not without precedent, though — not even in the family.

Father Pete, a three-time qualifier, first played in the men's Open when he was 19.

That means he'll have some insight for his daughter when she begins the most difficult tournament of her young career today. "It's always on a difficult course," said Pete of the Open. "They'll have the rough up real thick and heavy, and the greens will be fast."

"The galleries don't bother you too much, but the atmosphere is certainly different."

After a practice round Tuesday, Suzy concurred with her father. "It's a tough course — long, and the greens are real hard and undulating. The balls don't hold the greens real well."

And the atmosphere?

"This is the biggest tournament in the world," said Green. "I was coming up the 18th fairway today and it hit me when I saw all these bleachers around the green. I've never played in a tournament with such a crowd."

NOT THAT Suzy hasn't competed in pressure situations before. She twice won the high school state individual championship (1983 and 1985) while at Groves, and she enjoyed an impressive freshman season at OSU.

And yet, she didn't expect to perform so ably at the Open qualifier last week. Of the 50 golfers in the field, only five advanced. Green hoped to be one of the five going to the tournament. By the time she finished the ninth hole, her confidence was soaring.

"My tempo — that's all it was," she explained. "I was real fluid. I wasn't rushing my swing or anything. And I didn't three-putt once. I made the putts that were crucial."

The biggest, according to Suzy, came after she hit her ball into the water at the ninth hole. She narrowly missed a long putt for par, tapping in for bogey on a hole that could have been disastrous.

"That's when I knew I was playing well," she said.

Pete Green pointed to his daughter's putting as the reason for her success. "It was an excellent score

people

for her," he said. "Her whole game revolves around her putting."

IS SUZY'S talent inherited? Partially, perhaps, according to Pete.

"She's got a beautiful touch with short shots around the green," he said. "I've always been pretty good at that. It's something most women golfers don't have. It's just a talent — how do you teach that?"

But physical similarities end there, he said. "I put better than she does, and she hits the ball straighter off the tee than I do."

Driving the ball straight off the tee will be essential in the Open. "You don't want to sacrifice accuracy for length, especially in the Open where there is a premium on accuracy," said the elder Green.

One quality Suzy possesses will be a definite boon this weekend: her competitive determination, which was evident at the qualifier. "She played a great round at the right time," said Pete, "which she's always been able to do."

"What I do," explained Suzy, "is play with tunnel-vision. I think about the shot I have and try to forget the one I just took."

THAT MAY BE an inherited trait. Making "the crucial shots" is what put her in the Open; Pete's win in the Michigan Amateur came via the same route.

"There was nothing in particular," he said of his victory. "I played well at the right times, and that's what counts in match play. I hit a lot of critical shots well."

"You need help from the other side, too. You have to have your opponent screw up at the right time. But I've got to take advantage of it."

So, for the first time since 1974 — when Pete played Winged Foot Country Club in New York — a Green will compete for the Open title. Suzy's goal is more realistic than idealistic: "I'm not looking to win the tournament. That's out of my reach. I'd like to finish among the low five amateurs."

To accomplish that, she figures she'll have to shoot 76, "which is a nice score for me." The course, which measures a long 6,300 yards, is not ideally suited to her. Although she drives accurately, she is not a long hitter.

"I'LL HAVE to hit woods for a second shot to the green, where others can hit irons, which allows the ball to grip (and stop) better," she said. "I don't want to get overzealous. I don't want to be intimidated. I just want to play my game and keep the ball in the fairways."

But first things first, and Suzy's first goal is to make the cut and play all four rounds. To do that would require a break in family precedent.

"That's a tall order, to make the cut in the U.S. Open," said Pete, who left for Kettering last night to witness his daughter's attempt. "I never did."

But who knows? It's been a good month for the Greens so far. As Pete said, "We'll just have to wait and see what happens."

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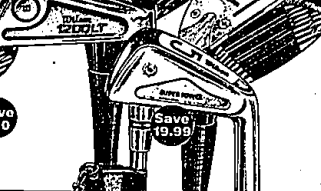
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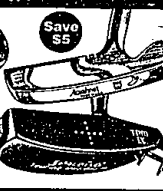
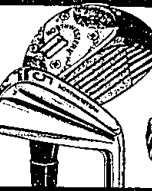
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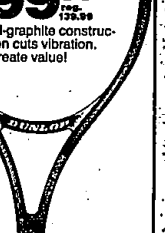
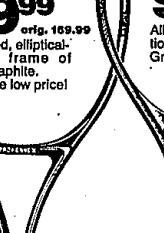
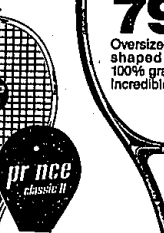
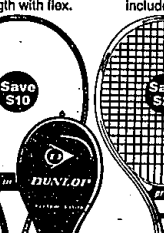
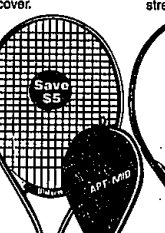
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- Girls basketball (junior varsity, middle school and freshman).
- Boys basketball (varsity).
- Football (freshman).
- Wrestling (varsity and assistant).

• Track (assistant and middle school).

Resumes should be sent to athletic director, Ross Holland, 3230 S. Shiloh, Farmington, 48024, or call 471-6337 weekdays between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

VOLLEYBALL CLINIC

Farmington Hills Mercy High School will host a girls volleyball clinic from 9 a.m. to noon July 14-17. The clinic is open to girls grades 8-12 regardless of skill level.

The camp is headed by Terrie Drake, considered one of the foremost volleyball specialists in the state.

The cost is \$55 and includes 15 hours of instruction and a camp t-shirt.

Registration will take place prior to the first day of the clinic.

ACE SHOOTER

Kevin Rutkowski of Farmington is the first to hit one at the Gaylord Country Club June 8. He used a 5-iron to ace the 138-yard par-3 hole.

GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY CAMP

The Brighton Recreation Area will be the site for a girls cross country camp Aug. 3-9.

The fee is \$75. For registration information, call Gary Servalis at 547-3372 weekdays after 3 p.m.

ROCKETS REGISTRATION

Registration for the Farmington Rockets Junior League Football Club will take place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays, July 19 and Aug. 2 at the Farmington High School football field.

MERCY NEEDS COACHES

Farmington Hills Mercy is seeking a volleyball coach and a diving coach. Those interested in these non-teaching positions should contact athletic director Ellen Secker at 561-9003.

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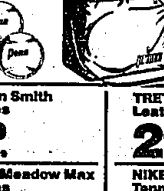
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