



tennis

Joe Taylor

O&E Golf Tournament coming up

Tee time is fast approaching. But instead of taking a midafternoon break English-style, with tea and crumpets, golfers from O&E land better head for the golf course to tee up some drives, practice a few putts and iron out their iron shots.

They'll need it, if they have hopes of capturing the Observer & Eccentric/Whispering Willows golf tournament.

Fifty golfers, all men, vied for top honors in the inaugural tournament some 13 years ago. The women's version was added a year later, with the number of contestants for each growing steadily every year.

LAST AUGUST, 74 women battled through the 18-hole, par-71, 5,772-yard Whispering Willow course, with Kathy Herford of Farmington Hills finishing first in the championship flight with an 84.

Zoe Alpern of Troy won the first flight with an 87. Second flight winner was Jan Stone of Livonia, who shot a 95.

John Hlohinec of Northville carded a 73-75, 148 total to win the championship flight in the men's 36-hole competition last September, which attracted 216 golfers.

Dave Provinie of Livonia fired a 77-76, 153 total to capture the first flight title, Mike Warren of Rochester won by

six strokes in the second flight and Vern Swindler of Bloomfield Hills took the third flight with a 183.

FEW CHANGES are contemplated for either tournament this year. Last year, the women's tournament was moved up from September to August. It will be an August tourney again this year, with play slated for Tuesday, Aug. 10.

Cost for the women's tourney (18 holes) is \$15, with a deadline set for 6 p.m. Aug. 4. Entry forms are available at Whispering Willows (located on Newburgh south of Eight Mile in Livonia) or in the O&E sport pages.

The men's tournament (36 holes) is set for Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 25-26. Entry fee is \$28, with a deadline of 6 p.m. Sept. 19.

The same entry blank available at Whispering Willows or in the O&E sport sections can be used for either tournament.

GARY WHITENER, the golf pro at Whispering Willows, will once again serve as tournament director.

Since the tourney is held each year in Livonia, Whitener gave some thought to dividing up the men's play, with half the tournament at Whispering Willows and half at Idyl Wyld golf course, also a city course. But Whitener ruled out the option.

As in the past, registration for the men's tournament will be limited to the first 225. Checks should be made payable to Gary Whitener, tournament director, and either dropped off or mailed with applications to: Whispering Willows Golf Course, 20500 Newburgh, Livonia, 48152.

All competitors must be amateur golfers who live within the O&E circulation area (see the coupon for areas included).

Men's, women's golf tournaments sponsored by O & E/Whispering Willows

Men's 36-hole medal play: Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 25-26. Entry fee is \$28.
Women's 18-hole medal play: Tuesday, Aug. 10. Entry fee is \$15.

Men's entries close at 6 p.m. Sept. 19. For starting times, call 476-4493 after noon Sept. 23.
Women's entries close at 6 p.m. Aug. 4. For starting times, call 476-4493 after 3 p.m. Aug. 8.

Name

Address

Phone Handicap

Send entry blank with check payable to tournament director Gary Whitener, Whispering Willows, 20500 Newburgh, Livonia 48152.

Open to all residents of Livonia, Plymouth, Canton, Garden City, Westland, Redford Township, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Southfield, Lathrup Village, Birmingham, Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Franklin, West Bloomfield, Bloomfield Township, Bloomfield Hills, Troy, Rochester and Avon Township.

Tennis advice: Practice hard and be patient

One remark I constantly hear from a new tennis player is: "Joe, when am I going to get better?"

The truth is that tennis is a much harder game than it looks. Watching Wimbledon on television makes the sport look like a breeze.

Novice players who watch pro tennis and then go out to imitate the pros usually get frustrated.

Advanced players make tennis look easy — very relaxed and fluid. However, they have logged in many years of practice to get where they are today.

Many new players give up the game because it's frustrating.

There are no instant formulas to turn you into a star player. You must go through your share of bruises before enjoying success.

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— Joe Taylor
tennis instructor

THE MOST effective way to improve is always try to find someone slightly better than you to hit with. Playing inferior competition does wonders for the ego, but will not improve your tennis game.

Don't worry about being "skunked" by your opponent. Just hang in there and do the best you can.

Your attitude has a lot to do with how well you will become. Keep a positive frame of mind, but don't expect too much of yourself.

One of the real keys to improving is to always give yourself a margin of error. Another words, don't smash the ball away for winners. Try to hit the ball four-to-five over the net, sending it fairly deep, but down the middle. Unless you have real good control of your shots, it does little good to aim for the sidelines. You will hit more shots out than away from your opponent.

As your game improves, placement becomes more of a factor.

Don't go out on the practice court and play games right away. You should hit and practice with your opponent.

TRY TO HIT the ball forehand-to-forehand with both players standing

near the baseline. Do the same for backhands and see how many balls in a row you can hit with your opponent. Then reverse it, alternating between the forehand and backhand. Each time out, try to hit five more shots than your previous exchange.

Save your old balls. Try to collect at least 30 so you can serve at least 150 a practice session. Repetition is the key to improving.

Avoid various "hot dog" shots. Doing the same thing over and over will make you a better player.

If you're unsure of the proper stroke technique, it would be wise to take a few lessons.

Lessons alone, however, will not make you a good player. You must practice many hours in between to achieve proper stroke technique.

If you cannot find anyone to hit with, play against the backboard. Let the ball bounce off the wall rushes your strokes and often results in a cramped elbow.

Practice may seem boring, but only through repetition can a player find steady, fluid and accurate ground strokes.

And who knows? Maybe someday you'll become an 'A' player too! Just keep playing.

Joe Taylor currently serves as the chief instructor and tennis director at Orchard Valley Swim Club in Westland.

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