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(F10)

Shootout at Whispering Ex-champ rallies to reclaim O&E title

By C.J. Rieak
staff writer

For 15 holes of Saturday's Observer & Eccentric Whispering Willows Women's Golf Classic, it appeared the old guard was going to suffer a second setback.

Earlier in the week, it was learned that two-time defending champion Geraldyn Repasky of Livonia would not — actually, could not — attempt to make it three in a row. Repasky surrendered her amateur status when she started teaching golf this summer.

That made Ann Lauer of Birmingham the pre-tournament favorite, since she was the last golfer to win before Repasky (in 1983) and was runner-up the last two years.

But as the two threesomes of championship flight players made the turn after nine holes, it seemed certain a newcomer would vault to the top of the pack.

ERICA ZONDER, a junior at North Farmington High, fired a blistering two-under-par 34 on the front nine to streak to a six-stroke lead over Lauer. Zonder struggled through the first six holes of the back nine with four bogeys and two pars, but with three holes to play she still had a four-stroke buffer over Lauer.

It wasn't enough. Zonder finished with three straight bogeys, and Lauer got hot with a birdie at 16, a par at 17 and another birdie at 18 to slip into the winner's circle with a 76 — a stroke ahead of Zonder.

Lauer's score was a single stroke off the tournament record, established last year by Repasky. That mark appeared certain to fall to Zonder after her hot start.

"I lipped out a putt for an eagle and missed two other birdies," Zonder said of her 34. "I didn't have a bogey until the ninth hole."

Unfortunately, seven more followed in the last nine holes. Zonder took her tumble from the top philosophically: "That's the way it goes," she said with a shrug.

LAUER WAS surprised and

pleased with her come-from-behind triumph. Referring to a 22-year-old as part of the "old guard" seems silly, but Lauer had played the O&E tournament three previous times, and she is familiar with Whispering Willows. Her experience showed.

"I think I was more relaxed on the back nine," she said. "I was swinging the club really well."

Which was fortunate, considering Zonder's start. Lauer did not play the front nine well; indeed, the opponent she was most concerned with was in her threesome — Kathy Herford of Farmington Hills.

Herford was even par and had a two-stroke lead over Lauer after six holes but then collapsed. She suffered double bogeys at seven, eight and nine to finish with a 42, two strokes behind Lauer.

But any confidence Lauer might have gained from Herford's mishaps was short-lived.

"Kathy was playing great on the front nine," Lauer said. "She was three up on me at one point. I was more concerned with Kathy at first."

THEN SHE heard what Zonder, playing behind her, shot. "It startled me," Lauer admitted. "Then I thought, 'I'm not playing with her, so forget about it.' I was playing like I was in a tunnel. I just wanted to make my putts."

Ironically, it was the putts that Lauer missed that seemingly got her going. She had a shot at a birdie at 14 but three-putted for a bogey. At the par-three 15th, her drive nearly bounced into the hole, instead rolling 35 feet past. She two-putted for a par.

At the par-five 16, Lauer finally caught fire. "I hit my best drive of the day at 16," she said. "I just missed an eagle."

She got her birdie, though. Zonder, meanwhile, left her drive short of the green at 15, clipped out of the rough 19 feet past the hole and two-putted for a bogey.

Zonder got into trouble again at 16. After two weak shots, she lofted her third into the deep rough. She got out with a fine wedge shot and saved

bogey with a strong putt.

LAUER PARRED the par-three 17th, where Zonder missed an important opportunity — a six-foot putt for par. "I clipped it right up there, then missed it," she said. "I never gave it a chance."

Lauer followed with another great drive at the par-four 18th. Her approach shot landed just 12 feet short of the hole, and her putt circled the cup before falling for a birdie.

Zonder played 18 like she had her previous three holes. Her second shot landed in the right bunker, and

her pitch skipped over the green and into the rough. Her fourth shot traveled just three feet, to the edge of the green, but she hit the right-foot putt for a bogey.

But it wasn't enough. In first flight, Martha MacIntosh of Farmington Hills fired a 46/44-90 to take a three-stroke victory. Jo Anne McVicar of Livonia recorded the best low net score with a 69.

The second flight was captured by another Farmington Hills resident, Sally Hering, who posted a 51/44-95. Westland's Susan Lane finished with a best low net of 63.

O&E WOMEN'S GOLF TOURNAMENT RESULTS

Championship Flight

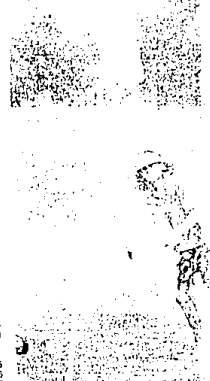
Ann Lauer	40/35-75
Erica Zonder	34/43-77
Kathy Herford	42/41-83
Lynne Thompson	44/41-85
Trish Waddock	45/42-87
Ken Rieak	47/44-91

First Flight

Martha MacIntosh	46/44-90
Pam Benaglio	43/53-93
Taney Sapp	50/44-94
Valerie Harben	47/46-95
Mason Lindstrom	46/49-95
Jean Blum	47/49-96
Jean Brandom	47/49-96
Jo Ann McVicar	47/49-96
Debra Horning	49/48-97
Carol Lauer	49/48-97
Murica Hall	49/49-98
Heven Damman	51/48-100
Shirley Miles	52/48-100
Mary Friedman	52/48-100
Nancy Rieak	52/49-101
Shirley Welch	54/47-101
Dorothy Huston	51/50-101
Nancy Rieak	50/51-101
Dore Lupton	52/51-103
Frank Lupton	55/50-105
Kimberly Flagg	50/50-108

Second Flight

Sally Hering	51/44-95
Dore Comfeld	50/46-95
Mary Ann Urbani	50/47-97
Joan Rector	48/52-100
Susan Lane	53/50-103
Roslyn Benham	50/50-108
Margaret Parnis	52/54-108
Debbie Mazurek	53/50-109
Lois Kaud	53/57-110
Kathleen Mondak	52/00-112



Erica Zonder, a North Farmington junior, held the lead Saturday until the final three holes.

Donnelly signs with Rangers

By Brad Emmons
staff writer

In just five years, Mike Donnelly has gone from playing prep hockey at Elmhurst College to the National Hockey League.

For the 22-year-old Donnelly, it seemed just yesterday that he was playing for the Franklin Patriots and the Waterford Junior B Lakers.

Last week, Donnelly's agent, Southfield attorney Bob Goodenow, negotiated a lucrative multi-year deal, somewhere in the neighborhood of \$400,000 to \$1 million, with the New York Rangers.

A free agent, Donnelly became college hockey's hottest commodity after leading Michigan State University to the NCAA championship this season. The lightning-quick left winger also led the country in scoring with 59 goals, his final collegiate goal being the game-winner in a 6-5 victory over Harvard for the title.

"When you play hockey you should always have goals," said Donnelly. "I always had it in the back of my mind to play college hockey."

"From college you want to take it another step and I've finally reached the highest level of competition. 'You shouldn't play if you don't have goals.'"

THE RANGERS entered the bidding war for Donnelly only last month when many believed the All-American was headed for either the Detroit Red Wings or the Chicago Blackhawks.

Donnelly met new Ranger coach Ted Sator at an MSU hockey school in early July. The two hit it off, and negotiations took off after Phil Esposito replaced Craig Patrick as the Rangers' general manager.

"I'm very pleased with the contract," Donnelly said. "The Rangers are a good organization and they are

a team on the rise.

"They have a lot of college players and I feel I fit in best with them."

"I'm just glad it's over because it was hard to answer where I was going when people called. I got input from my parents, but they fully trusted my opinion."

Donnelly said the offers from Detroit, Chicago and New York were basically all the same.

"I guess I always wanted to play in Detroit, but I had to think of what's best for me," he said, "and go for the best situation."

"I DIDN'T TRY to look at any negative things. I looked at the team that was best for me and the best situation for me."

Donnelly got some encouragement from another Ranger, former MSU teammate Kelly Miller.

"Kelly didn't try to persuade me, but he had nothing but good things to say about the Rangers," Donnelly said. "I really look up to Kelly and he's a very smart individual. I guess I took some of his advice."

With the signing of Donnelly, the Rangers' Michigan connection continues to grow. He joins Detroit's John Vanbiesbroeck, a goaltender; former MSU goalie Ron Scott; and Kelly Miller and brother Kevin Miller, a Ranger property currently playing at MSU.

"I'm looking forward to training camp (Sept. 9)," Donnelly said. "I'm going to go out and work as hard as I can and try to make the team."

Donnelly recently made his first visit to New York City. It was an eye-opener.

"IT WAS VERY exciting, everything is so fast-paced, the traffic and everything," he said. "But most of the players live in Westchester County and we practice in Rye — both are outside the city, so I'm going to get both sides of the life."



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

MSU standout Mike Donnelly of Livonia ended several months of speculation Saturday by signing an NHL contract with the New York Rangers.

'I guess I always wanted to play in Detroit, but I had to think of what's best for me and go for the best situation.'

— Mike Donnelly

Misfortune hits Hull at MIS 400

By Chris McCosky
staff writer

You could say the Michigan International Speedway struck out Canton race driver Jim Hull last Sunday in the nationally televised Champion Spark Plug 400.

MIS fired the third strike on Sunday as Hull crashed with Kyle Petty in lap 159, forcing Petty out of the race and costing Hull several places in the final standings. He finished 23rd.

Two years ago, Hull's car never made it onto the MIS track because of 11th-hour engine trouble. Strike one.

Last year, Hull crashed with Harry Gant. Gant was leading the race at the time and was furious at Hull, whom he called an incompetent rookie at the time. Strike two.

This year, MIS took three two curves at Hull. Hull totaled his Duraliner-sponsored Chevy SS Monte Carlo during Saturday's practice laps. Foul tip.

"SOMEBODY BLEW an engine on the track, and we waited a good 20 minutes for them to clean the track. We wanted to run two hot laps to get into a good position for Sunday. The first lap we ran at 167 (mph), and we wanted to do the second at 168. We hit an oil slick and hit the wall hard. Totally destroyed the car," Hull said.

Benny Parsons suffered a similar fate on Sunday, hitting the wall in lap 185.

"Saturday was my fault," Hull said.

Hull wouldn't take the blame for Sunday's crash with Kyle Petty, although Petty let the media know what he thought of it.

"That idiot was in everybody's way all afternoon," Petty told the Detroit News. "And he finally put me into the wall."

Hull, who was driving his backup

Chevy, saw it this way: "I let him go outside me. He was about three-quarters of the way past me, and he must have miscalculated the distance because he came right down on me and hit my rear fender. He spun up into the wall."

Strike three.

HULL REFUSED to get into a name-calling match with Petty or any of the other veteran drivers. "You always take the heat when you're the rookie," Hull said. "Soon as I get my five races under my belt, and I'm running for the rookie-of-the-year, then I won't have to take the heat."

"Last year, Gant made a big deal about it, and the media blew it way up. A couple months later it came out that I didn't cause the accident. The same thing is going to happen this time. So, it's no problem."

"In my career, in everything I've tried to do, nothing has come easy. But I've proved that when I want something bad enough, nothing is going to stop me from getting it. This isn't going to stop me."

Hull plans on racing in two more races this season and has his sights on next year's Daytona 500. "We want to get five races under our belts, get oriented and get Duraliner's name shown as a major sponsor," he said.

WHAT ABOUT returning to MIS?

"Well, MIS hasn't been real nice to me. But it's given me an opportunity to everything that goes on. You know, I'm mad about what happened Sunday. Kyle Petty made a terrible mistake, and it cost about five or six notices in the standings. Instead of 23, could have been somewhere in the teens. I'm mad, but I'm not going to worry about it."

Strike three? Yep. But he has at least two more outs to go.