

# The Open queen

## Neumann feels reign strain

By Marty Budner  
staff writer

**L**ISELOTTE NEUMANN is finding out that life at the top is not always easy.

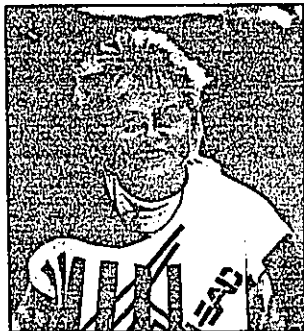
The 23-year-old Swede registered record rounds on her way to the 1988 U.S. Women's Open Championship at the Baltimore Country Club. She admits her year-long reign as queen of women's golf is more of a strain than she anticipated.

Indeed, there will be some pressure if she hopes to become the first woman to win consecutive Open championships since Hollis Stacy performed the arduous double in 1977 and 1978. There have been four back-to-back winners in the 43 prior Opens, and Neumann would like nothing better than to be the fifth in the 44th championship, slated for July 13-16 at the Indianwood Golf and Country Club in Lake Orion.

"I've been putting too much pressure on myself after having a great year last year," she recently confessed. "I probably put more pressure on myself than what others put on me."

That self-induced pressure may partly explain the inconsistency of her 1988 season.

Although she has won more than \$86,000 this year, Neumann has placed among the top 10 finishers in only five of her first 14 tour stops.



Liseotte Neumann  
1988 U.S. Open champ

NEUMANN'S BEST finish thus far was a tie for second two months ago at the Crestar Classic in Virginia. In her four June tour stops, she tied for 38th (McDonald's Championship), tied for third (Lady Keystone Open), tied for 28th (Rochester International) and missed the cut (LPGA Corning Classic).

It has been a struggle for the blonde-haired Swede who grew up dreaming about a British Open championship.

"When I was growing up it was always the British Open everyone talked about winning — not the U.S. Open,"

said Neumann. "I did get a lot of attention (in Sweden) for winning the U.S. Open."

"I spent a lot of time on the golf course when I was growing up. We had a nine-hole golf course — it's 12 holes now — right in our back yard and my father got us into golfing," she said. "Golf is really picking up in that country."

But instead of the British Open crown, that finely honed golfing background brought her the U.S. Open trophy she covets.

Last year's tournament at the Baltimore Country Club included a record 735 golfers hoping to land an Open berth. And Neumann managed to beat them all with her history-setting score of 277, which broke the old mark of 279 set by Pat Bradley in 1981.

NEUMANN NEVER trailed as she shot rounds of 67, 72, 69 and 69 — seven under par.

Neumann nervously opened her final round, scoring a double-bogey on the seventh hole. She gained her composure and tallied birdies on five of the final nine holes to muster her record 277.

It will take a lot of that same type of stamina and concentration to log similar scores at Indianwood — a par-71 course (35-36) some 6,123 yards long. Neumann is hoping to recapture some of last year's magic.

## Profile

### LISELOTTE NEUMANN

**AMATEUR:** Neumann established a notable amateur career in Europe. She was the Swedish Amateur champion in 1982 and 1983, Swedish Match Play champion in 1983 and represented Sweden in the European Team Championship in 1984 and the World Team Championship in 1982 and 1984.

**PROFESSIONAL:** Last year, Neumann, a native of Sweden, led an impressive group of rookies in earnings and claimed the prestigious 1988 Gatorade Rookie of the Year Award. Of her 22 tournament starts, Neumann earned \$188,729. The highlight of her rookie season was her victory at the U.S. Women's Open to become the 12th LPGA member to claim the U.S. Women's Open as her first LPGA victory. In addition, she became one of nine Rolex First-Time Winners in 1988. The following month, Neumann posted a 66 in the final round of the Nestle World Championship to win runner-up honors. Entering the final official event of the 1988 season, the Mazda Japan Classic, Neumann was \$7,846 behind Laura Davies in earnings for the rookie race.

Neumann lost on the third playoff hole to Patty Sheehan to finish second. Her strong showing carried her past Laura Davies in season earnings to capture the Gatorade Rookie of the Year Award.

# Women's golf on the upswing

By Bill Parker

staff writer

**W**OMEN'S GOLF has come a long way in recent years. Just ask Margie Masters, head pro at the Royal Oak Driving Range.

Masters competed on the women's tour for 20 years back in the 1960s and 70s. Her best year was 1969 when she won the Lake Waco Classic in Waco, Texas. She pocketed \$1,700 for winning the tournament.

"The money the ladies make today is tremendous, compared to what we used to play for," said Masters. "Now, it's entirely possible for someone to make a half-million dollars. Women's golf has really boomed. There are a lot of college girls coming up that are great golfers and they're playing for big purses now."

"I was on the tour for 20 years and we used to all play for \$400,000 on the entire tour," continued Masters. "Now \$400,000 is an average purse for just one tournament."

THE 1989 United States Golf Association (USGA) Women's Open, July 13-16 at Indianwood Country Club in



Lake Orion, is one of those big money tournaments. Participants will split a whopping \$450,000, with the champion alone claiming a cool \$80,000.

But the Open, celebrating its 44th birthday this year, hasn't always been such a big event.

The USGA became the sponsor of the Women's Open in 1953. There were 37 entries in that tournament and the total purse was a mere \$7,500.

By 1965, television had picked up on the tournament and aired the final round nationally. The TV exposure was a huge shot in the arm. The purse

for the 1965 tournament, held at the Atlantic City Country Club in New Jersey, had climbed to \$17,780 and the entry list had grown to 84.

The tournament continued to prosper at a steady rate. By 1976 better than 200 golfers participated in the Open, while in 1978 there were 297 entries and the tournament featured its first ever \$100,000 purse.

"Throughout the 60s the purses ranged from \$50,000 to \$75,000," explained Betty Richart, Chairman of the USGA Women's Committee. "In '78 we had our first ever \$100,000 purse for women and it has been steadily climbing ever since."

Last year, the Open drew 736 entries. First place paid \$70,000 while 60th place paid \$1,736, still more than Masters earned for her Women's tour victory in 1969.

SO WHAT'S the reason for this increase in the popularity of women's golf?

"The equipment is better, the balls are better, the golfers are better. Everything is just better," explained Masters. "Even the teaching is better. Everything is just a little more advanced."

"Another thing that attracts the

crowds is that there are some great golfers out there and some of them are very pretty girls," Masters added. "People want to come out and see if the pretty girls can play golf. And let me tell you, they can."

Richart had other thoughts on the advancement of the game. "I think the key to the whole thing is the development of the junior golf programs," she explained. "Girls start playing golf in the junior programs and enter high school with a pretty good background on the game. In high school, they can earn a college scholarship and by the time they get out of college they are very good golfers looking for a career in the game."

"The key is in the junior programs," Richart continued. "There is no other way women's golf could have grown like it has without the junior programs."

THE FUTURE also appears bright for women's golf as more and more women become involved in the game.

The Public Links Championship, held the last week in June in Spokane, Washington, drew 1,052 entries in each of the last two years while this year's Women's Amateur drew another 457 golfers.