

A Brave Soul Teaches The Ladies

Golf Pro Gary Whitener Has Great Success

Gary Whitener, pro at Livonia's new Municipal Whispering Willow Golf Club, is a brave soul. One of the first tasks he took on was the supervision of a golf clinic for members of the distaff side, ranging in age from the middle teens to the ages where it isn't mentioned.

It is just one of the many programs Gary, an Evans scholar from Western Golf and

Country Club in Redford Township and a graduate of Michigan State University, introduced in his first year at the new course, which opened on Memorial Day.

Since then he has been busy arranging events for every type of golfer, novice or skilled, and has had unusual success considering that the play has built up to more than 250 players on Sundays and holidays.

That's quite a number for a nine-hole layout.

But then he dared to take the bull by the horns and decided to stage a clinic for women golfers who wanted to learn some of the fine points of the game.

The fine points they were primarily interested in were such items as how to hold a club, how to swing and how to hit the ball. Then there

were such other things as putting, and getting out of the sand and the high grass without using the hand mashie.

Did you ever stand on a platform with a "mike" in your hand and try to tell a group of 50 or more members of the feminine sex how to interlock fingers for the proper grip on a club and then demonstrate the proper swing?

That was just one of the

things Gary attempted—and from the comments of those in attendance he did quite well.

Most of the gals were more or less firmly convinced that now they knew how to swing right and hit the ball straight as a string 200 yards.

BUT OF COURSE that was far from the truth—as all learned when they finally got up enough nerve to try a round

over the nine holes with no instructor looking over their shoulders.

It probably will be some time before the course is back to the fine shape it has attained since the opening—but Gary isn't complaining. He now has a solid core of about 50 women golfers to work with.

Then, too, several have become pupils and are taking lessons from Gary and his assistant, Steve Kazmar, who also serves as starter.

"We started the clinic this year to determine how much interest could be created for a brand new course," said Gary. "We now know that this will become an annual event, and I'm sure that it will grow and grow to the point that we'll have to split it into sections in future years."

THE FORMAT WAS similar to that used in other Michigan communities. The word was spread around through the press—in this case The Observer Newspapers—and the gals were instructed to register personally or by phone.

Gary had anticipated that the first class would consist of about 20 to 25 and was much amazed when the total soared to more than 75, of whom more than 50 attended.

It started with instruction in the fundamentals of driving and holding the club.

"We had a few who had some knowledge of correct methods," smiles Gary. "But the majority were first timers—first time on a golf course but with an intense desire to learn."

"YOU'D BE AMAZED to see how the entire group settled down and practiced. I'll bet several had sore shoulders and muscles the next day, but there wasn't a single one ready to quit."

"The fact is that we started the class in the bright sunlight of the early evening and practically had to chase some of the girls when dusk settled down and it became too dark to see what kind of swings they were taking."

The clinic extended over two nights and the story was the same for each—working and taking instructions until dark.

Now Gary finds himself with some of the group coming back as players, trying out the lessons learned in such a quick time.

"THIS IS ONLY the beginning," he says. "Come another year and we'll have a series of classes for the young ones, starting around the age of 10 and including those in the early teens. This is a big part of our job, and we plan to make it bigger."

Gary has more than a bit of knowledge in handling such programs.

He served for eight years under Warren Orlick, at Tam O'Shafter, where he received the rudiments of the work of a pro. Then he was at Western for five years, part of the time while attending Michigan State, and ended his apprenticeship at Knollwood Country Club.

With a background like that, small wonder that he has been able to make such a success of Whispering Willows in the short time the course has been open.

After passing the initial test of a clinic for the gals, he feels he's ready to tackle most any kind of a program.



Hold The Club This Way, Take This Stance And Start Swinging



And The Gals Were Still Swinging Far Into The Dusk



Mrs. James Stoner is told how to use an iron, where to place the club and how to swing through by the class instructor.



Pro Gary Whitener stands back as Sandra Hall follows through after getting instructions from how to line up a putt.



Starter Steve Kazmar gives Mrs. Raymond Michaelson some tips in the proper way to hold the club and the correct swing to get the most power when hitting the ball.

STORY:
R.T. Thompson
PICTURES:
James Hubbard



Listening to words of the instructor as he explains the fine points of the game is Mrs. Robert Griffin. She was one of the more than 50 that took every word of advice and tried to follow it.

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KEEP MONDAY'S SECRET

Monday 29 LIVONIA PARKS AND RE-CREATION Annual Carnival in Mall FUN AND GAMES FOR ALL AGES 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. WIN PRIZES, MUSIC, DANCING, BATON TWIRLING

Tuesday 30 LADIES DAY — 9:30 a.m. coffee and donuts, 10 a.m. fun movie, gift prizes, special bargains. Cinema 1, Weight Watchers, Community Room, 12:15 p.m. Dance Williams Square Dancers, 8 p.m. Community Room

Wednesday 31 COLONIAL SENIOR CITIZENS, Community Room, 11 a.m.

Thursday 1 Livonia Parks and Recreation Arts and Crafts Show in Mall all day 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. HAROLD SHINICK, well-known artist will be painting in Mall August 1-10th. GINNIE'S ORGAN SOCIETY meeting in Community Room, 7:30 p.m.

Friday 2 Livonia Parks and Recreation Arts and Crafts Show in Mall from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Saturday 3 Livonia Parks and Recreation Arts and Crafts Show in Mall. COIN SHOW in Community Room, Baking and Selling 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Auction at 4 p.m.

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