

Oakland's Mengert shows rich background

The accompanying stories on Oakland Hills Country Club originally appeared with sprinkled printing mistakes in Monday's editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. The stories are reprinted fully in corrected form.

By ROBERT A. SKLAR
Al Mengert makes no pretenses

Junior golfers learn in summer program

By ROBERT A. SKLAR
"Chicken Winger," "Mr. Piccolo Player," "Miss Hula Hips" ... pilot names for new autumn cartoon shows on television?

Hardly. Rather, they're imaginary characters created by Al Mengert, new head golf professional at Oakland Hills Country Club (OHCC) in Birmingham. Mengert uses them repeatedly to graphically illustrate the theme of OHCC's fledgling junior golf program — "Good results come from good form."

"Concentrating on my form," says Mengert, a 30-year veteran in competitive golf circles, "has kept my swing together."

OHCC's JUNIOR golf program, frameworked around United States Golf Association standards, still is in its infant stages. That's why Tuesdays and Thursdays, the days when practically

about it. He confides flatly how he relishes working with people and finds it easy communicating with them.

"The ability to pass on your knowledge — that's where the key lies in teaching," says Mengert, new head golf professional at Oakland Hills Country Club (OHCC) in Birmingham.

Mengert, 44, is a Spokane,

Wash., native and graduate of Stanford University in Stanford, Calif. He lives with his wife, Donna, and four children in Bloomfield Hills.

His quick acceptance since arriving at OHCC last March stems partly from a warm personality ... and partly from impressive credentials.

MENGERT BROKE into the

"PRIOR TO THIS program, there was nothing really gung-ho for them," he said.

"Joan and I, after meeting on the tee one day, both decided they needed something more concrete, something more structured."

"So we went ahead and wrote the program."

The program's success is reflected in OHCC's sudden emergence as a tough contender in local inter-club junior golf play. OHCC's junior golf team is coordinated by Nancy Coughenour.

OHCC's representatives during Junior District Golf Association of Detroit action also are picked from among program participants. The program will culminate with OHCC's Junior Golf Championships Aug. 10-11.

Mrs. Wright says OHCC's older players back the program wholeheartedly.

"They're not so fearful anymore about the prospect of all these kids descending aimlessly onto two courses," she said, while breaking into a big grin.

150 junior players hit the imposing links for lessons, are quite special at OHCC.

The six-week summer program has broken into four age brackets: 10-12 mixed, 12-18 girls, 13-15 boys and 16-18 boys.

On Thursdays, participants get personalized instruction on golf's rudiments through demonstrations and rap sessions from Mengert and his assistant, Bruce Kellor.

ON TUESDAYS, participants, grouped by proficiency level, gather course experience under the supervision of volunteer parents.

The program's guiding lights are Anne Wright and Joan Ziegler. Mrs. Wright teaches sixth grade at Walnut Lake Elementary in Birmingham; Mrs. Ziegler belongs to the Bloomfield Hills School Board. They conceptualized the program last year. The program's implementation paralleled Mengert's arrival at OHCC last March.

Mrs. Wright says she pegs the program as a real boon for OHCC's younger linksters.

Chatlin throws shutout

The North Farmington/West Bloomfield NFWB Class E team in the Detroit Suburban Amateur Baseball Federation notched its eighth victory last weekend.

In a tight contest that saw only 24 patters from each side come to the plate, NFWB pitcher Paul Chatlin shut out St. Gertrude's of St. Clair Shores, 1-0.

NFWB scored its only run of the game in the second inning on a single, an error, a walk and a fielder's choice.

CENTERFIELDER Mike Cullen robbed St. Gertrude's of the possible tying run by flagging

down what appeared to be a hit in the fifth inning.

Catcher Paul Rogind turned the only two attempted stolen bases in the game into put-outs to insure Chatlin's victory on the mound.

Chatlin struck out seven, walked two and gave up only two hits in the shutout.

Rain forced postponement of the second game of the doubleheader Sunday, with the NFWB federation team ahead 2-1 in the bottom of the third inning.

No date has been set for the makeup game.

On Sunday, NFWB will travel to Utica Eisenhower High for a doubleheader against the Shelby-Utica Federation team.

professional golf ranks during the early 1950s, playing alongside golf greats like Arnold Palmer and Gene Littler.

He studied the sport's rudiments under such legends on the links as Ben Hogan, Sam Snead and Byron Nelson.

Mengert's roots in the world of putts and chips run deep. They stem back nearly 35 years.

Mengert first took an interest in golf after watching his father play at the Spokane country club to which the Mengerts belonged.

WITHIN A FEW years, Mengert proved a power to be reckoned with on the competitive amateur golf circuit.

In 1946 and 1947, he captured the national junior title. In 1951, he won the Northwest Armed Forces crown.

The next year, he emerged as runner-up during the U.S. Amateur; the same year, he paced the Mexican National Amateur.

Mengert turned professional in 1952. Since then, he has achieved a trophy-case full of golf accolades both as a player and as a teacher.

AS A PLAYER, he has qualified for 28 major tournaments on the professional golfers' tour, including nine masters and eight U.S. open tournaments.

Mengert also competed during the premiere Michigan Professional Golfers Association (PGA) Tournament conducted two weeks ago at Red Run Golf Club in Royal Oak.

He finished in a three-way tie for third place, five strokes off the pace, during the kickoff version of annual festivities sponsored by metropolitan Detroit's Chevy dealers.

What's more, Mengert already has carded a shimmering 67 on OHCC's "monster" South Course, which matches the course record set by Ben Hogan during the 1951 U.S. Open.

AS A TEACHER, Mengert has held the post of head golf profes-

sional at private clubs in Westfield, N.J., St. Louis, Mo., Sacramento, Calif., Tacoma, Wash., and, most recently, Cleveland.

Mengert launched his teaching career as assistant professional at famed Winged Foot Golf Club in Mamaroneck, N.Y.

Mengert's background also shows stints as a director of and as a consultant to numerous golf-advisory groups.

To help augment organized programs for golfers at every age proficiency level, Mengert meets regularly with OHCC's golf events chairman.

PRESENTLY, OHCC conducts annual tournaments for veteran, men, women and junior players.

For women, Mengert also has introduced the Al Mengert Invitational. This year's premiere invitational champion was Tinka Falconer.

Golf's lure? It's a perpetual challenge, according to Mengert. As he perceptibly put it:

"The sport keeps you thinking. It's a constant battle to better your game. You never really reach the point where you can say, 'I've got it.'"



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