

Tournament notebook

Ozeki hits a hole in one

By Andrew Dagle
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Deer Park member O.J. Ozeki has played his home course more times than he can remember during his 14-year tenure. But he's not likely to forget his round on Sunday anytime soon.

On the 15th green, Ozeki drew his 4-wood and hit the ball 211 yards off the tee, then watched it disappear.

A moment later he heard cheers.

Ozeki had hit a hole-in-one, the first in his golfing career.

"I doubted it went in," said Ozeki, who wasn't convinced of his feat until spectators informed him.



Ozeki
Hit a hole in one
on Hole No. 15 at
Deer Park

"That hole is pretty hard," he admitted. "I never come that close to the hole."

Playing partner Roger Essman, who witnessed the shot, didn't believe what he had seen at first, either.

"O.J. hit his shot, and it hit in front, rolled right up there and all of the sudden it disappeared. I thought I lost my eyesight for a second," Essman said. "I didn't see the ball, and he looked at me and he didn't see the ball either. Then the guys [near the green] started clapping, so we figured it must have gone in."

The hole-in-one was a first

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Ozeki

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for Ozeki, but not for his family.

"My wife has hit one, so now I'm just catching up to her," he said.

The last hole-in-one recorded at Deer Park came at the hands of Bob Marshall just over two weeks ago on July 18. Coincidentally, it occurred on the same hole as Ozeki's.

■ **A triumphant return:** Ron Malooley of Deer Park hadn't participated in the NewsTribune Tournament in over a decade before this year. He made his return a triumphant one, shooting a second-round 88 on Sunday to secure the Class C Championship.

Last weekend at Mendota Golf Club, Malooley turned in an 83.

"I haven't played [in a long time], and I thought I would try it again, just to try it," he said. "I shot a couple of the best scores I've shot all year in this tournament."

Earlier in the week, it didn't look like that would be the case. After performing so well at Mendota, Malooley took a practice spin around his home course on Tuesday and finished with a 100.

Maybe he needed to get that rough outing out of the way.

Playing on familiar territory was an advantage not only for Malooley but for the other golfers in his group as well. "I'm acquainted with the course, which is nice. I tried to help my foursome out too, telling them [where to hit the ball]."

Second-place finisher Ron Ellison of Earlville Country Club was in that foursome, and he may have benefited from those tips. He shot an 84 on Sunday to lead all

Class C golfers, helping him to finish just two strokes off the pace.

"All the fellas in my foursome...would outdrive me by — and I'm not exaggerating — 50 yards," said Malooley. "But I was chipping well, and I have a tendency to hit the ball straight."

"I can't let them intimidate me with their long shots. I just have to play my game."

For Malooley, who spent five years teaching golf at U.S. military bases in Japan and Germany, the key to the game is approaching it in the right state of mind, a strategy he learned from a former PGA star.

"Gary Player told me something," Malooley said. "I asked him what he thought of left-handed golfers, and he said, 'Left-handed, right-handed, it doesn't make any difference. As long as you're playing golf and relaxing and enjoying it.' And I've lived by that. I truly do not get upset on the golf course."

■ **Family fun for Fulmer:** Class B winner Mike Fulmer wasn't taking anything too seriously after shooting an 80 to clinch his first championship. The Oglesby golfer was laughing and joking with loved ones in the clubhouse upon receiving his plaque.

One family member received some of the credit for his success.

"I had a great time and a great caddy. My wife caddied for me," Fulmer said. "That was the whole key. Roz Fulmer."

"[I was] hitting the ball down the middle, straight. Sometimes short, sometimes long, but keeping it in play all day. Conditions were beautiful, course was in fantastic shape," he added.

Fulmer was in such good spirits, even some good-natured ribbing couldn't get to him.

"I would never play with Mike Fulmer, he's a disgrace to the golf world," chided friend Jeff Hochstatter of Mendota, who finished third after shooting an 84 on Sunday and 80 last week. "His swing [stinks]."

Fulmer laughed off the remarks.

■ **First-time winner:** Rounding out the early afternoon action, Wyaton Hills' Scott Hartman captured the Class A Championship, his first NewsTribune tournament win in five tries. He shot 80 on Sunday to go along with a 73 in the first round.

"I wasn't driving the ball very well, but I made quite a few putts," said Hartman. "[My short game] saved me."

■ **Senior success again:** Taking home a championship plaque is nothing new for Mendota's Jack Kilmartin. The 63-year-old Kilmartin received his third consecutive Seniors Championship honor, despite being generally dissatisfied with his performance.

Competing in the Championship Class flight as well, he shot an 84 on Sunday to go along with his 77 last week.

"It feels good, except I'm not real happy with the way I played," he said. "I struggled along well enough to win."

Nevertheless, Kilmartin had to be pleased with winning a third straight championship after returning to the tournament four years ago. And he's enthusiastic about the prospect of making it four in a row.

"Oh, I think I'll be back," he said.