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THE MOORESVILLE Tribune

Sports

Wednesday, August 8, 2001

Section B

Golf is a game helping bridge generation gap

Dad, bless his silver-topped, thinning-haired head, never saw golf's appeal. Give him baseball, tennis, basketball, or Ping-Pong, games where the intended target is constantly on the move, and he understands the goal. How in the world, was his way of thinking, can anyone be drawn to a sport where the idea is to hit a target that is at rest the majority of the time?

Son Timothy, his well-groomed and constantly-fussed over crew cut a steady reminder that one of these days he, too, will be hard-pressed to cover those spreading balding areas that run heavy through his bloodline, never saw golf's difficulty. Growing up using sticks to hit wadded up tin foil before progressing to specialize in making bat connection with a speeding baseball, he, too, is among the many who think how easy it is to make a stationary object go where you want it to when you want it to.

SPORT SIDE

with Larry Sullivan

Each, within their own worlds, found out just what it is about the game during a special get-together they enjoyed over the course of just nine holes recently. Though neither will admit it, they each found a new understanding of the game that the one who ties the pair together finds absolutely tantalizing if not, as the woman responsible for knotting the bow, insists is downright addicted to.

Golf is a game that is often used to strengthen bonds between friends who have aged out of more physically-demanding sports like, oh, say, just about every other sport there is. It is also a common way for business partners to complete deals. It's a common communication thread that knits throughout just about every working place, be it among the men or women folk. The game has developed such that it has followings among the very young as well as the very old. There are those among us in the middle who drain every bit of entertainment out of the game as well.

For a few holes anyway, it also served as a bridge between generation gaps. Dad, though he tries, finds himself a step slow when guarding his oldest grandson -- at 15 the recent owner of his own driver's permit -- in a game of one-on-one. It almost always turns into one of those spot-shooting games, be it H-O-R-S-E or P-I-G, depending on the time factor and the older participant's recovery period. As for Tim, the slow-paced games of eight-ball pool or horseshoes just don't seem to flow quite quick enough for his patience. They usually end up in nine-ball or walk-aways from the shoe pit. Give him a video-game control panel and he's in heaven.

But on the golf course, despite their differences, the two have found a common stomping ground, if not one to also match curses. Each has discovered just what it is that makes the game such a drawing card, and one to drive grown men to cry over missed gimme-putts at the same time. For all his athletic ability, dad can't for the life of him hit the standing-still target and make it go where he wants. Timothy, God bless him, figures if it works in baseball, it should at least be good for hitting a ball sitting still. Each has found out that none of that way of thinking prevails when it comes to striking the golf ball.

Still, it's fun to watch them try. Without their knowledge, I was able to spy in on their recent quest for a few holes. It was strange watching the one I grew up with playing a game I've grown to love with the one I'm helping grow up. I can only hope I do as good as job in the latter as the former did with me, though some would argue that point I'm sure. It was funny to watch their reactions over the many missed shots. And it was just as gratifying, though much less often, to watch those same expressions on the rare times when shots turned out as planned.

I'm sure more such ventures will be taken. Perhaps, when they get good enough, they'll ask me to join them. I can't imagine though, that would be any better than just watching.

Cyclists peddle into Mooresville, Park

Professional and amateur bicycle racing will hit the streets of Mooresville this week, during the Defeet Crossroads Cycling Classic for Hospice of Iredell County.

The overall event includes four days of criterium bicycle racing in Iredell and Catawba counties that will generate exposure and money for Hospice of Iredell County.

Presented by Charlotte Sports Cycling, the events will begin Thursday (tomorrow) with the Cool Breeze Cyclery Mooresville Criterium throughout downtown. Spectators will have the opportunity to witness some of the country's top pro cycling teams — such as Defeet/Lemond, Zaxbyis Cycling, NetZero and RealityBikes — as they battle during the four-day event.

The second day of racing will be in Statesville, for the Downtown Statesville Criterium on Friday evening. The third event will take place on Saturday around Lenior-Rhyne College in Hickory as the cyclists participate in the third Annual Hickory Criterium.

The racers return to Mooresville on Sunday for the Race City Criterium at Lakeside Business Park, which culminates the four days of cycling.

Proceeds from the competition will go to beneift Hospice of Iredell County.

A criterium is a bicycle race held on downtown streets or a business park, on a course usually up to one mile in length. The cyclists, based on category, may race between 20 to 60 laps around the twisting course.

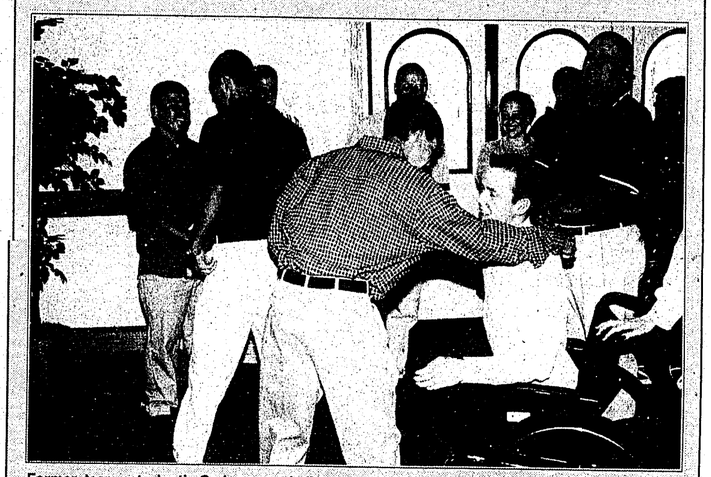
This allows the spectators to witness the strategies of the teams as they draft off each other, try to break away, and get their teammate to the finish line first. Speeds can reach 50 mph.

Thursday's race will start/finish at Cool Breeze Cyclery. The course calls for right turns off Main St. onto East Iredell Ave., North Church St., and East Center Ave., before returning to Main.

Sunday, the race will start/finish on Knob

See RACE, page 2B

Back home



Former teammate Justin Graham next in line to receive hearty welcome from anxous, happy host

Hugs complete McClain's return scene

Handshakes and "How do you do's" just didn't cut it at Liberty Baptist Church Sunday morning.

Hugs were required to make the scene complete.

And there were plenty to go around. The one they were all there to see made sure of that.

Michael McClain, the rising South Iredell junior who suffered severe head injuries during an outfielder/infielder collision in the final regular-season game for Mooresville's American Legion baseball team in late June, made just his second appearance at his church since the terrible accident left him comatose and fighting for his life.

A week earlier, he was accompanied primarily by family and fellow congregation members in making his first long-anticipated return. This time, those joining him included current and former Mooresville Moors teammates, coaches, Gresham-Baker Post 66 baseball committee officials, extended family members and a number of friends.

Their arrival was not lost on the honored host.

After attending Sunday School, McClain was concerned after he didn't see any of the invited guests. He needed only to look in the gathering area in front of the church's sanctuary. There, crowded into a group, were a number of the invitees, among them several team members as well as head coach Whitey Meadows and team athletic administrator Frank Owens.

Making mere eye contact wasn't near enough for the still-recuperating McClain. With a wide smile covering his face, he made it a point to hug the neck of every single person in attendance.

"For Michael," quipped Tony Barker, who served as the team's official scorekeeper, "a handshake ain't enough. You have to get a hug. I didn't mind giving one back, either."

It's a feeling shared by those close to the situation as well as those who are only familiar with the accident.

Entering the season's final regular season game at Kannapolis June 19, McClain was the key clog in Post 66's surprising fight for a division championship. His .475 batting average was not only best on the team but tops within the SD-Area III. He was also the Moors leader in home runs, with four, doubles, with 10, a .500 on-base percentage and a stellar, .715 slugging percentage. His numbers ranked among the best in all offensive categories among all league members.

All of that came crashing down in one play as the leftfielder joined a pair of infielders in chasing down a foul fly along the third base line early in that final game. Giving it his all, as is his style, McClain appeared to lose his balance and crashed head-first into the knee of the oncoming shortstop. The impact immediately knocked him unconscious.

He remained motionless until being attended by medical personnel. He suffered a skull fracture, bleeding in the cranial area and developed a blood

See MCCLAIN, page 2B

Smith back on court, as a coach

The last time Amy Smith stepped foot on Mooresville Senior High's tennis courts, she had a different role under a different last name.

In fact, she personally accounts for the majority of those changes just four years removed as a former member of the Lady Devils program.

Smith, formerly Pardew and an all-conference performer while helping piece together an undefeated doubles team record on Mooresville's conference championship team of 1997, returns to her former stomping ground this time as head coach that accounts for her first-ever high school varsity level coaching assignment.

"I'm excited to be back," gleamed the fifth-grade teacher at Mooresville Intermediate School. "It hasn't been that long since I was here as a player. Not that much has changed."

Except for the coach herself.

Following her graduation from Appalachian State University, Smith filled the recent off-season with marriage to Tim Smith, also her former high school tennis coach who is also now her girls team assistant coach. The latter Smith is also continuing to serve as head coach of the school's boys tennis team that plays its season in the spring.

"He has to listen to what I tell him to do out here," smiled the new girls coach, who recently completed her first full week of practice with her team. "Tennis isn't all we talk about at home, though. We're both teachers, so we talk about school, too."

Though excited about her new position, Smith meets it with mixed feelings. In filling the vacancy left by former coach Tracy Viars, she is not only taking over the reigns from a close friend but also a regular jogging partner. Viars is now teaching in Texas after relocating following her husband's job transfer.

"I think she was more upset" over losing Tracy to run with,"

See AMY SMITH, page 4B

Pair helps team nail bid to Super Worlds

Kansas City-bound for play

Ten-year-old girls will do anything, it seems, to earn the right to miss a little school with their parents' permission.

Mooresville's Hannah Graham fits that bill perfectly after doing her share to help the Carolina Comets 10-and-under fastpitch softball team perform well enough during late last month's National Softball Association's Class B World Series to merit an invitation to early next month's NSA Super World Tournament.

Graham was not alone, of course.

In fact, she is one of a pair of Mooresville/South Iredell area players manning key roles on a team comprised of some of the top young fastpitch softball talent from a wide coverage area.

In addition to Graham, who attends Lakeshore Elementary School, the other team member with direct local ties includes Amy McCutcheon, a Mt. Mourne Elementary School student considered among the state's top pitchers within her age bracket.

Though not actually taking up a position on the field or in the batting line-up, bat girl Lizzie Graham, team member Hannah's younger sister, also handles a key team responsibility.

The collection of players racked up a 4-2 record during its appearance in the World Series held in Rock Hill, S.C. to finish as the fourth-ranked team from the East. The top six teams from both the East and West brackets earned berths in the Super Worlds.

See SUPER WORLD, page 4B

McCutcheon, left, Graham provide local flavor, talent for team