

G.R. Golfer Gilman Cherishes the Game

By Kelly Hill

Managing Editor

Rick Gilman is the kind of golfer we all wish we were.

Gilman, 56, who has been a member at Sunnybrook Country Club in Jenison for 36 years, is the kind of golfer who never gets in trouble. When he misses a green, which is rare, it's almost as if he designed it that way.

"He never hits it in trouble," said Bill Lane, who has played hundreds of rounds with Gilman over the years. "Rick has been one of my best friends for 35 years, and when we play golf together, he never hits it in trouble. If he misses a green, he always hits it in the right spot."

Gilman, who currently is a 1-handicap, has won the Sunnybrook club championship nine times, won the Grand Rapids City Match Play championship and as a member of the Sunnybrook team he has won the West Michigan District Championship twice. He also has finished second in the Kent County Amateur Championship four times. In early August, he finished second to Rick Grover in Sunnybrook's Senior Championship.

"Golf is a big part of his life," Lane said of Gilman. "Actually, it's a huge part."



Rick Gilman

Six-time Michigan Open champion Scott Hebert played a lot of golf with Gilman while Hebert was an assistant pro at Sunnybrook. "Gil's a great player, for his age," Hebert said. "He's a very straight hitter, a low hitter and a really nice guy."

"Rick is an old-school golfer," Hebert said. "You can tell that he played golf as a kid at a country club. He respects the game a lot. He played when it was more of a gentleman's game."

Gilman took up the game at the age of 12, because his childhood

home in Wyoming was situated across the street from what became L.E. Kaufman Golf Course. "I lived across the street from where they built L.E. Kaufman, and when they built the golf course, a kid that I was in the sixth grade with had parents who played golf."

Since 1974, which is the year he got married, Gilman has missed only one Kent County Amateur Championship. "I like the competition and the camaraderie," Gilman said. "We have a lot of competitive players at Sunnybrook and it is competitive every time I go out there."

Scott Dielman has known Gilman since 1972. "He plays golf the old-fashioned way," Dielman said. "He doesn't hit it real far, but he has a little draw and he never hits it in trouble. When he misses a green, he is a great chipper and putter, and that is what has made him the player he still is today."

Gilman does more than play golf, though. He has been on the board of the West Michigan Golf Association for approximately 15 years. The association organizes all of the major championships in the Grand Rapids and Kent County areas. "Our organization is all about helping youth golf," Gilman said. "We have established scholarships for young golfers and we donate a lot to junior golf." *MG*

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