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Tip On Grip Helped O'Neill

Dan O'Neill got more out of his participation in an exhibition match with Bob Goalby and Ken Venturi at Dunkirk last month than just the thrill of playing with two of the country's leading professionals.

The youngest ever and second local golfer to join the list of champions in the 45-year-old Buffalo District Golf Association tournament, O'Neill credits an improvement in his game to advice given him by the two pros.

"Venturi and Goalby gave him a couple of tips on his grip," a proud Bob O'Neill, Dan's father and golf "teacher" explains. "They told him he had too strong a grip with his left hand. They felt as he got bigger and stronger, he would duck-hook the ball a little, so they suggested he weaken his left hand on the grip."

"They told him to make the change slowly but he's already started the change," the senior O'Neill continued. "Dan feels this has helped. He credits it with his driving the ball as well as he has been."

The tips came during an exhibition featuring Goalby, Venturi and host pro Jack Shubert at Shorewood Country Club July 24 and they may have had a good deal with the Jamestown High senior's biggest thrill in golf.

One-Two-Three

Young O'Neill called it his "biggest win" and "biggest thrill" after shooting even-par 72 in the finals Saturday at Wanakah Country Club to clinch the Buffalo District championship in a tourney which likely set a precedent for Jamestown golfers. O'Neill, opening with rounds of 74 across the first 36 holes and closing with 72-72, finished with a 72-hole total of 292 while Bob Gunnell, playing out of Chautauqua Golf Club, placed second at 298 and Harold (Whitey) Carling, playing out of Moon Brook, as O'Neill was, took third place with 302, marking what probably is the first time three Jamestown entries finished one-two-three.

Joining another Moon Brook golfer, 1964 champion Karl Englert, as the only Jamestown-area winners in the BDGA's history, O'Neill was never behind. His first round 74 tied him with Wanakah's Karl Kluckholm. The stocky 5-7 youngster led Carling by two strokes after 36 holes and Gunnell, the only entry to break par in the tourney, by one after 54.

The two-time Chautauqua County Amateur kingpin, displaying excellent chipping and putting, along with good driving, required just 27 putts Saturday while carding nines of 35 and 37. He sank two birds, one a 10-footer on No. 4 and the other on the par-5 No. 13 where he just

missed an eagle as a 20-footer lipped the cup. He took two bogeys, hitting a trap on No. 15 and behind a tree on No. 16.

"I felt like I putted and chipped real well, " the new champ remarked when it had ended in rain with Englert caddying for him the final nine holes.

"I asked dan if he wanted me to caddy for him, but he didn't take me up on it until it started to rain," said the Lakewood dentist. "All I did was carry his bag, nothing else."

Gunnell Cards 70

"I was doing alright carrying my bag, but when it started raining and I also had to haul my umbrella, I was happy to have Dr. Englert caddy for me," said O'Neill who likes to tote his own bag unless scheduled to play 36 holes.

Gunnell started with a 76 and followed with a 75 and a two-under 70 before shooting 77 in the final round. The four-time winner of the Chautauqua club championship made two birds during his tournament record 36-34-70 round Friday. He sank a three-foot putt for a birdie-two on No. 12 and two-putted for a birdie-four on the 480-yard No. 13.

Carling skied to an 80 Saturday after posting 75, 75 and 72.

Dave Koch, a Wanakah southpaw, placed fourth via a sudden-death match of cards after tying Park Club's Bob Lawler Jr. at 305; Jerry Robinson of Country Club of Buffalo was next at 307, one better than Transit Valley's Jim Dray Jr.

O'Neill, who has drawn attention from Florida State and Penn State universities because of his abilities on the fairways, isn't resting on his laurels. He shot a round at Moon Brook yesterday and departed this morning for Garden City Country Club on Long Island where he'll form one-fourth of the BDGA team in the Williamson Cup matches, one of the top junior tournaments in the East.