

*The Post-Journal*  
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## ATHLETE OF MONTH

### O'Neill Story In Sport May 15

*(Editor's Note – Following is the story that will appear in Sport on Danny O'Neill, brilliant young local golfer. The magazine selected O'Neill as its "Teen Age Athlete of the Month." He was nominated by Pete Hubbell, sports director at station WJTN, who wrote the story. The magazine goes on sale locally May 15.)*

Former U.S. Open champion Ken Venturi stood on the green, along with 1968 Masters winner Bob Goalby. But the cheers were directed at a third golfer, 17-year-old Jamestown, New York, High School senior Danny O'Neill, who had just coolly dropped a 30-foot putt for a birdie on a hole considered difficult for even the pros. As the crowd roared its approval, Venturi walked over to the slender 5-7, 145 pound youngster, threw his arm around his shoulders and congratulated him.

"He's got a lot of good natural ability and a lot of potential," Venturi said a few minutes later in the clubhouse, after his young playing partner had completed the exhibition round with a 75. "He plays a real strong game, added Goalby, who had been particularly impressed by Danny's man-sized drives of between 260 and 275 yards.

Danny's talent may have surprised the two pros, who were just passing through Western New York State, but people in and around Jamestown had long since grown used to the idea of the O'Neill boy playing golf like a man. They've known what he can do since 1966, when, as a 15-year-old, Danny first competed against and defeated adults in a tournament.

The tournament was the Chautauqua County Men's Amateur Championship. Danny was going to play in the Junior Division until a friend advised him to "concentrate on winning the whole thing." Danny did, and shot a two-under-par 70 to easily take the title. It was a big day in his life, but perhaps even a bigger one to his father, Bob O'Neill, who viewed Danny's victory as a graduation of sorts. When Danny first became interested in sports, he had nursed ambitions to become a major-league baseball player. But the elder O'Neill, recognizing that his son's small frame would be a handicap in baseball, steered him toward golf and began to teach him the game when he was only ten years old. Being a four-handicap player himself, Bob O'Neill was well qualified to teach, but even in his fondest dreams he never thought Danny would progress so far, so fast. For one thing, the pupil now has a lower handicap than the teacher: Danny's is a one.

After his Chautauqua victory, Danny went on to finish high up in the 1967 East Aurora Junior Invitational, a tournament attracting some of the finest junior golfers in the East. Back home in Jamestown, he played the No. 1 position for the school golf team,

despite the fact that he was only a sophomore, and led it to a 14-2 record. But these achievements were only warm-ups to his banner 1968 season.

First, Danny led Jamestown High to a 16-0 record. Then he reached the finals of the Buffalo District Junior tournament, finished high in the New York State Junior tournament, qualified for the State Men's Amateur and won the Chautauqua Amateur for the second time. The latter two achievements momentarily placed him in a quandary. Among his prizes for winning the Chautauqua, was the opportunity to play in the exhibition with Venturi and Goalby. But the exhibition was scheduled for the same day as the State Men's Amateur tournament. On the assumption that he might not again get to play with golfers the caliber of Venturi and Goalby, Danny chose to participate in the exhibition. He never regretted it.

But as big a thrill as it was, the exhibition paled in excitement next to Danny's performance in the Buffalo District Golf Association's annual Tournament held at the end of August. Competing against some of the area's finest men golfers, Danny fired rounds of 74, 74, 72, and 72 to become the youngest champion in the 45-year history of the tournament.

Though he often defeats men on a golf course, in most other respects Danny is a typical high school boy. He is a two-time member of the student council, an above-average student and, like most seniors, has been spending a lot of time thinking about college. And a lot of colleges have been thinking about him, as evidenced by the large number of offers he has received. Penn State, Ohio State, and Maryland seem to have the inside track. Danny plans to study his father's specialty, physiotherapy.

After college? He doesn't know. Both Danny and his family feel it's too early to talk about the possibility of professional golf, but the thought, of course, can't completely be dismissed. After all, how many 17-year-old golfers can steal applause from such top professionals as Ken Venturi and Bob Goalby?