

FEATURE ARTICLE

Harry Lovero, Orchard Valley Golf Course

I Recently Joined N.A.G.A.



NAGA stands for the National Amputee Golf Association. For a brief week at the end of August, right after the heavy rains, we, at Orchard Valley, were honored to have had NAGA play their international tournament at our course. They came from as far away as China, Japan, Australia, Ireland, and as near as Canada and, of course, our own US of A. These incredible players are also known as Amputees. There were amputees with no legs, with two legs (prostheses), with one arm, with one arm and one leg, and with one leg. Solo Riders, Segway Riders, and Wheel Chairs are also included. There was one player from Tennessee – his name was Bob — and he had stumps. He was in a wheel chair. He had a short set of clubs that he made for himself. He would get out of his chair, take his shot, and then get back in the chair and move on. On the green he used a rod with a sleeve welded on the front of his chair, so that he could anchor himself while putting.

Yes, the Solo Riders did go onto the greens and tees and everywhere. I was asked the question, "doesn't it make you crazy to have them riding on your greens and tees like that?" At first it did, but after I saw how careful they were with positioning and everything else, I got past it. After a while you see beyond the disabilities, and you see only players.

These incredible players can strike a golf ball and score better than you or I, who have all of our extremities! For all of us, the week was a breath of fresh air. These players are genuine. They were so thankful that we would "put up with them for a week," as they put it. We were delighted to have put up with them, and we would gladly do it again and again. Their course etiquette is second to none. Their course management is far better than our own regular players. They were an inspiration to me, my crew, and everyone who came in contact with them here at Orchard Valley.



The players included women and teenagers. There was an 11-year-old who was born with no legs. He had two prosthetics. This was his first tournament, and he shot an even 100 the first day. There was a fourteen-year-old young man who was the talk of the tournament for his amazing courage. The players shot in the 70s, 80s, 90s, and 100s. Some have scratch handicaps. I was watching a player named Mac O'Grady from Ireland. He was playing in the one arm flight, which is only one arm and no prosthetic. He was on number ten, a par four, in the right rough below a pot bunker about 120 yards away. He stuck the shot ten feet in front of the pin swinging with one arm out of the rough. The rough was about five inches thick after all the rain.

We even had some news coverage! Howard Sudbury from Channel 2 news was there. Jeff Blanzky from ABC7 news was there. NBC5 also sent a crew out. It was good to see these folks get their due.

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Yeah, they take a while to play, but they love to play the game of golf, and they deserve to play golf. Many of them lost limbs in war, others in accidents at work, or in automobile accidents. I could go on and on about how inspirational these folks are, but you really need to meet and speak to them. Their example can have a tremendous positive impact on the life of an amputee who is not participating in life or socializing. So on those days when you feel that nothing is going your way, you are down in the dumper, and you think you have real problems, just think about these folks. If you ever get the chance to see them play....do it!!

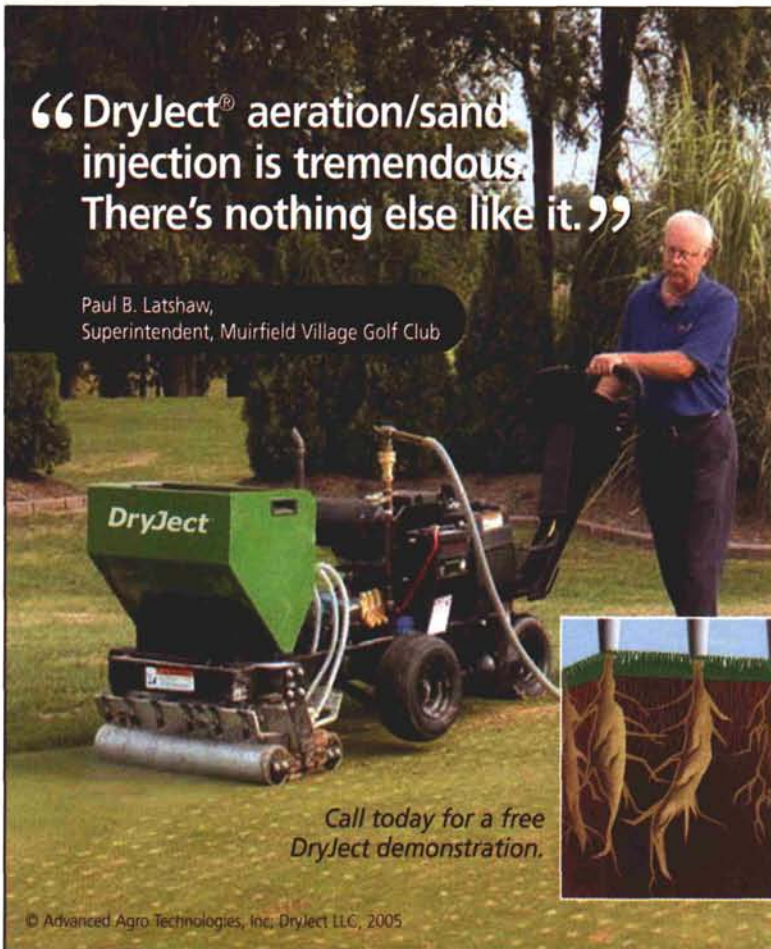
I would like to thank Mr. Dennis Ithal the Tournament Chairman, Mr. Robert C. Wilson the Executive Director of NAGA, and Mr. Dan Cox the Midwestern Trustee for their help, their gratitude, and their praise of Orchard Valley. **-OC**

For more information visit their website at www.nagagolf.org.



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