

## Off The Fringe

### 102 And Still ... *Golfing*

THE GOLF INDUSTRY SHOULD USE ELSIE MCLEAN'S HOLE-IN-ONE FEAT TO HELP GROW THE GAME

By Larry Aylward, Editor in Chief

**W**e should put her I-just-got-a-hole-in-one-smiling face on the cover of our magazine. Heck, all of the golf magazines — business and consumer alike — should have her beaming face gracing their covers. The golf industry needs her like Nike needs Tiger.

She should be the featured speaker at the Golf Industry Show next year. TaylorMade Golf should offer her an endorsement contract now. And if Augusta National is ever to bend its rules and let a woman play its hallowed grounds ... well, boys, this is the woman.

I'm talking about the energetic Elsie McLean, the 102-year-old Chico, Calif., lady who did the golf industry a gigantic gesture in April by making a hole-in-one. As if living past 100 isn't grand enough, McLean now has another claim to fame: She is the oldest golfer ever to earn an ace on a regulation course.

Most of us hackers have never even made a hole-in-one at the local miniature golf. Hence, we as an industry should revel in McLean's feat. And we should parade her around the country and celebrate her as an ambassador to help grow this flat-as-a-flounder game.

If you work in this industry, you know that golf rounds have been like "Groundhog Day" the past few years. They don't change. Oh, they might rise as high as Bluto Bluntarsky's grade-point average from time to time, but not much higher.

The player issue is even shakier — as many people who begin the game each year as new players leave the game as ex-players. But enter McLean, who scored her hole-in-one on a 100-yard par-3 at Bidwell Park in Chico. She can help us turn the tables on golf's stunted growth.

Why do people quit golf? For several reasons, one being that they think it's too dang hard. So they give up shortly after debuting their fledgling games.

McLean can teach us many things — patience for one. She's still playing the game at 102. God bless her. And prior to that hole-in-one, she was still looking for that great shot.

"Well everybody wants a hole-in-one, and I said, 'Why can't I have a hole-in-one?'" McLean told a television station.

Not to sound disrespectful, but McLean is ancient, and she's still out there having fun while beating around the ball. What's that say for the seniors who are 40 years her junior who claim they are too old to play the game anymore?

## Quotable

**"Oh, I didn't know the national conference was outdoors this year."**

— Dave Ertl, equipment technician for Traverse City Golf & Country Club, greeting the course's superintendent Steve Hammon, who was returning to his job after spending 12 days "working" in California at the Golf Industry Show.

**"If there's a dream team in basketball, there's a dream team in Congress as far as environmental activities go."**

— Allen James, president of Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment, on the threat that certain Congress members pose to the pesticide industry.

**"Even the fringe is rolling 11 on the Stimpmeter."**

— Bill Bryant, president of Bryant Marketing Communications, after watching a player's golf ball roll swiftly off the No. 15 green's fringe and into the water during a practice round of the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club.

**"I thought I'd see John Daly enter Harvard before I ever saw Tiger leave a big birdie putt short."**

— Sports Illustrated columnist Rick Reilly on Tiger Woods leaving a putt 5 feet short on the 12th hole of the last day of the Masters.

"For an old lady, I still hit the ball pretty good," she said. And that's another thing about McLean. She has obviously dismissed the stereotype that states that women and old people must be lousy golfers.

You go girl ... I mean, ma'am!

Incidentally, McLean appeared on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" on April 24. Hopefully, she'll soon appear at a "growing the game" seminar near you. ■