

Bogeys, traps, hazards least of golfers' worries

BY CHRIS TRABER
Staff Writer

Golf courses, lush pastoral gardens populated by genteel players and nature's tranquil offerings, aren't normally associated with the types of physical hazards of other sports.

Therein lies the risk.

"You are out in the elements, clubs are swinging and balls are flying," Silver Lakes Golf Club head professional Ray Gasparet said. "Golf is not a dangerous game as long as you are aware of where you are."

That's not to say the grand old game can't sneak up on you and levy a handicap beyond your score.

'Golf is not a dangerous game as long as you are aware of where you are.'

Ray Gasparet
Silver Lakes Golf Club head professional

As the pro at the popular Newmarket club, Mr. Gasparet has seen it all and has experienced the darker side of golf.

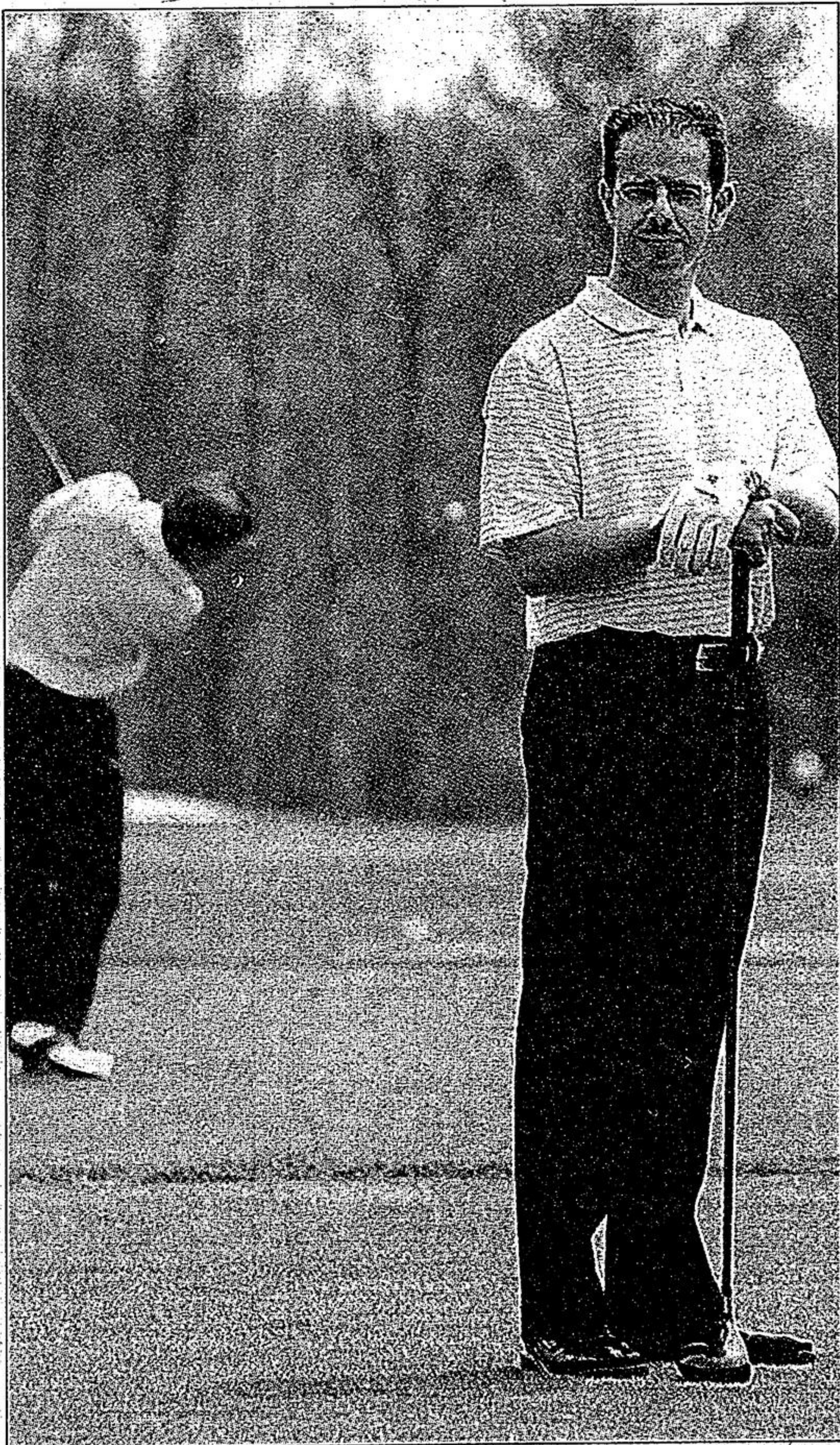
"I've been hit by a ball," he said. "My best advice to players is to clear the green when they're finished. Don't stand around carding your score. Do that when you get to the safety of the next tee box."

The most dangerous thing on the course is the power cart.

"It's an expensive piece of equipment and people forget they're driving a motorized vehicle. They can seriously hurt themselves. I've seen people drive right square into a tree," he said.

The game has other hazards.

Consider a heavy metal-headed club travels about 160 km-h to launch a very compact, hard ball at up to 250 km-h. A good golfer can drive a ball through a phone book.



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS

Silver Lakes Golf Club head professional Ray Gasparet has experienced the darker side of golf, which included being hit with a ball.

Getting hit by one of these dimpled missiles can be fatal.

Following the rules, observing etiquette and applying common sense will save golfers unnecessary grief, Mr. Gasparet suggested.

Among the plethora of potential perils is the golf course itself and what keeps it plush.

"There's no question, golf courses use certain pesticides," Mr. Gas-

paret said. "What you don't want to do is put anything that touches the ground in your mouth."

Mr. Gasparet referred to some golfers' questionable penchant for putting tees between their teeth, cleaning their ball with their tongue or reinserting a cigarette or cigar after placing it on the turf. After all, golf courses are laden with greening chemicals and, like it or not, they

are wildlife's toilet.

"The prolonged effect can't be good," he said. "A friend put it in perspective when he said hockey players don't lick the ice off their skate blades. You shouldn't do it with a golf ball."

Former Canadian Professional Golf Association player of the year Jelena Duncan agrees most amateurs are blissfully unaware of the possible hazards of golfing.

Besides the obvious, such as standing well behind a player about to hit, Ms. Duncan advises to be wary of the elements.

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"You're in the sun for five hours," the certified teaching professional at Angus Glen Golf Club in Unionville said. "Dermatologists recommend a 30SPF applied 30 minutes before golfing. Wear a hat and cover your arms and legs. Also, hydrate well with water. Avoid caffeine, alcohol and pop."

If the pro shop issues a lightning warning, evacuate the course. When storm clouds loom, ensure your umbrella has a fiberglass handle and your shoe spikes are plastic. Metal attracts lightning.

Bring insect repellent, Ms. Duncan advised.

For many duffers, risk of injury occurs in the parking lot.

Taking a heavy golf bag out of the car trunk can cause serious injury, Ms. Duncan said. A proponent of warming up with stretching exercises, she said golf requires

See **STRETCHING**, page 16.

Anne Brodie

On Movies

Sisterhood realistic, optimistic

*The Sisterhood
of the Traveling Pants*

Starring Amber Tamblyn, America Ferrera, Blake Lively and Alexis Bledel

Based on the novels
of Ann Brashares

Now playing

It's coming-of-age time in the world of four girlfriends whose mothers met in neo-natal classes some 17 years earlier.

Their bond is rock solid in this, fun film that looks honestly at the way girls interact and grow.

There is none of the negativity, "too cool for school" attitude and back-stabbing sometimes seen in films meant to appeal to this particular demographic. It's realistic and optimistic.

There is a keen following of Brashares' three novels about the sisterhood and, at a recent screening, teenagers came clutching their copies to see their fantasy world transformed to film. A quick exit poll found they really liked the result.

What's not to like? There are four distinct and appealing characters who love each other — all their differences and similarities appreciated — and stand by each other in times of need.

While treasure hunting in a thrift store, they discover a pair of beaten up blue jeans that weirdly fit each perfectly — and they look different from each other — so they dub them magic pants. They create a set of rules for the pants — each will wear them for a week and mail them on to the other over the summer as they go their separate ways.

One is participating in a summer soccer camp in Mexico, one

See **JEANS**, page 16.

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