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2007 was spectacular year for golfers

By Phil Roche

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Time to look back at a good golf year, one filled with wonderful stories of old-timers, of terrific young players, of successful teams with top coaches.

The story of Don Hershey, 90, continues to shine. An all-round sports star at Bonita High in the 1930s, Hershey, in amazingly good health, often shoots scores under his age at weekly rounds with other oldsters.

Added note: Hershey, of La Verne, served as a boyhood hero for the late Glenn Davis, the West Pointer who won the 1946 Heisman Trophy.

"I don't practice," Hershey said. "I just play."

Then there's Millard "Bud" Rice, 83, who shot an even-par 36 at Jurupa Hills' shortened front nine to win the "Octogenarian Open" in late April.

Rice, a legally blind La Verne resident, gave up golf for a decade to take care of his wife of 65 years, Bette. Bette died in June of Alzheimer's disease, two months after Rice's comeback victory. "The ball's a

blur," Rice said, "so I just swing at it."

On the other hand, young folks also were great in '07. Along came 20-year-old Mitch Fedorka, a sophomore at La Verne University out of Upland High, who won the Daily Bulletin's 23rd Inland Valley Championship in 100-degree heat.

Fedorka shot rounds of 8-under-par 68 at Los Serranos South and a 1-under 71 at Empire Lakes on the hottest Labor Day weekend on record. "I was confident, but very nervous," Fedorka said.

And at El Prado in October, battling 40 mph winds, Aaron Hobbs, 21, of Ontario and Cal State Northridge, won his second consecutive City of Chino Championship at Butterfield Stage and Chino Creek with rounds of 67 and 75 for a 2-under 142.

Earlier this month, another gifted young player, Brad Wyatt, 19, the club champ at Sierra La Verne Country Club, shot 1-under 71 at the Classic Club in Palm Desert to place fourth in the 33rd SCGA Tournament of Club Champions.

Wyatt thus competed successfully against 139 other club champs - mostly guys 20 years older - with lower than 2.5 indexes.

Jane Park, 20, of Rancho Cucamonga gained medalist honors in the LPGA Qualifying tournament at Daytona, Fla., earlier this month.

After leaving UCLA to turn pro in August, Jane, the 2004 U.S. Amateur champ, placed 13th and

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ted for eighth in two Futures Tour event.

Tim Cha of Chino Hills, also 20, shot 66 at Los Serranos South recently to win the first Birdie Click Tour amateur event held in the Valley.

"I know the course pretty well," said Cha, who grew up a mile up the road from Los Serranos.

Kevin Na, only 24 and now of Diamond Bar, who returned to the PGA Tour after his injured hand healed, finished 122nd on the 2007 money list and earned \$845,586. His total tour earnings are just short of \$3 million - \$2,999,129.

ESPN on Christmas Day featured Mike Dobbyn, 27, the 6-foot-8, 300-pounder who won the 2007 Re-Max World's Long Drive Championship in Mesquite, Nev., on Oct. 27 with a 385-yarder in the final shootout.

Dobbyn, raised in La Verne, attended Damien and Walnut high schools, where he played basketball - no varsity golf.

Fine Teams: Coach Rex Huigens and the University of La Verne Leopards finished second in the NCAA Division III last June, the best finish ever for Rex and his teams.

Coach John Mahan's Damien Spartans won the 2007 Regionals for the fifth time in school history. Other top teams included Upland, Diamond Bar and the women at both Mt. San Antonio College and Ayala High School.

Nationwide held its final tourney at Empire

Lakes in October.

Sponsor Mark Christopher and the Nationwide Tour at Empire Lakes in Rancho Cucamonga have concluded a successful eight-year run.

Everyone agrees Mark Christopher and tournament director Stephen Wagner did an excellent job of helping area charities.

Sorry to see the tourney go.

Golf Courses: Greg Norman's Vellano Country Club opened in Chino Hills. Paul Cushing, an Upland graduate who played baseball - no golf at the school - served as course superintendent for the beautiful scenic new course.

Jamie Duffin retained management of Marshall Canyon, and Whispering Lakes thrived in 2007. Diamond Bar Golf Course survived bulldozer plans and functions smoothly these days.

And finally, in 2007 FOLGA (Friends) continued to donate funds to the City of Hope Cancer Research with monthly get-togethers at various courses. Joe Toledo of Chino originated and directs all outings.

It was an excellent year for golf - and we'll all play great in '08. Happy New Year.

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