

# ZIEHMS LIKE OLD TIMES, MY BOY

Sportswriter's 41-year career featured a little of everything — and a lot of golf



BY LEN ZIEHM

Here are my numbers:

Twenty-seven U.S. Open golf tournaments, the last one coming last month at Pebble Beach. Ten Masters, 16 PGA Championships and the last 34 Western Opens.

Five U.S. Open tennis tournaments. More than 20 Chicago Marathons. More than 800 Blackhawks games, including a good chunk of their run to the Stanley Cup, and four championship seasons with the Wolves. Plus, championship runs by three soccer teams — the Sting, Power and Fire.

And now this great run has come to an end. Though my byline still will pop up every now and then, Wednesday was the last day of my 41-year run as a member of the Sun-Times' sports staff. Indeed, I have been blessed.

When I started at The Bright One — May 11, 1969 — Chicago had four daily newspapers. Reporters dictated their stories over phone lines to copy-desk workers who got them into print. A bit later, it was a big breakthrough to have microfilm available for research work. The Internet wasn't even a consideration.

How times have changed.

While sportswriters today generally focus on one sport, I've had the opportunity to cover lots of them as regular beats.

I was up close and personal for Hale Irwin's victory in the first U.S. Open decided in sudden death, a world-record marathon run by Steve Jones, the last title match between Martina Navratilova and Chris Evert, the first battle between the McEnroe brothers — John and Patrick — in a tournament final, the unbelievable pageantry of the 1994 World Cup soccer tournament, the rise and

fall of the World Football League and the development of the Fire from ground zero to the franchise it is 13 years later.

Not all of "my" teams carrying that name survived, though. The Fire football team didn't, and neither did the Fyre of World Team Tennis (even though it won a championship with Billie Jean King in charge).

You also might remember the Owls and Lake County Rifles (football), the Cougars (hockey), the Rockers and Waukegan Wizards (basketball) and the Shoccers and Vultures (soccer). They were also my beats, and they didn't make it, either.

I also covered the last basketball game played by Northeastern Illinois and the last football game played by UIC. Those weren't the best of days. Neither was the demise of the Western Open, though the BMW Championship has become a worthy successor on the golf front.

Some events that I've covered stand out, of course, and I can't choose one of my top two over the other. How do you pick between Northwestern's unlikely run to the 1996 Rose Bowl and Jack Nicklaus' electrifying victory in the 1986 Masters? You don't get any more uplifting moments from sports.

In golf, there was a brilliant comeback victory that I won't forget — though many probably have. Martha Nause finished birdie-birdie-birdie-eagle — her last shot a hole-out from the fairway — to win a new LPGA tournament at Oak Brook. Somehow, all the great things Tom Watson, Irwin, Nick Price and Tiger Woods did in the Chicago PGA Tour stops don't quite match up to what Nause did that day many years ago.

The newspaper business has undergone tons of change during my years in it, and so has the wide world of sports. Though not all those changes were necessarily for the better, I'm just glad I was there to see them happen.

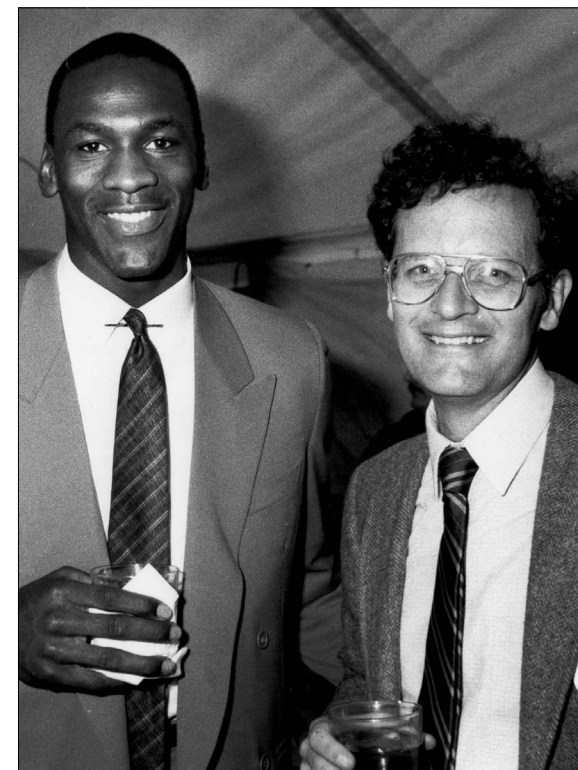
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Longtime Sun-Times golf writer Len Ziehm reacts to his long putt for birdie while playing in the pro-am before the BMW Championship in 2007 at Cog Hill in Lemont. | KEITH HALE~SUN-TIMES



Ziehm, who started at the Sun-Times in 1969, poses with Arnold Palmer in 1975. | COURTESY OF LEN ZIEHM



Ziehm and Michael Jordan share a photo — and a drink — during a tennis event in Chicago. | COURTESY OF LEN ZIEHM