

Flanagan 78 leads Met journey by 2

By JIM LAMBERT

After what happened yesterday, don't expect Gail Flanagan of Westchester, N.Y., to sneak a peak at the scoreboard during today's final round of the 18th Women's Metropolitan Golf Association 36-Hole Stroke-Play Championship at the Fairmount Country Club in Chatham.

During yesterday's first round, Flanagan fired a one-under-par 37 on the front nine before rain forced a 45-minute rain delay. During the halt, Flanagan couldn't resist the temptation to go over and take a glance at the scoreboard.

"It was a classic mistake," said the 33-year-old Flanagan, who won the tournament in 1991 and '92 and finished second last year. "Once I saw some of the other scores, I didn't play as aggressively."

Flanagan suffered a double-bogey on the 335-yard par-four 12th, but thanks to a four-foot birdie putt on the 173-yard, par-three 17th, she still managed a 41 on the back nine to finish with a 78 over Fairmount's 5,980-yard par-75 layout to grab a two-stroke lead.

Lisa Griffin of Greenwich, Conn., is second at 80 and Allison Wojnas Kucinski of Plainfield is third at 81. Mary Eichhorn of Spring Lake, Cynnle Rogers of Somerset Hills and Shirley Budden of Burning Tree, Conn., are four strokes back. Diana D'Alessio of Newton, the defending champion, is at 83.

"Looking at the scoreboard hurt me psychologically," said Flanagan, who played more cautiously on the back because the scores weren't as low as she expected. "If I didn't look at that scoreboard, I would have played just as aggressively on the back as I did on the front and I would have played under par."

The rain delay also affected Flanagan, who finished with three birdies.

"Usually rain doesn't bother me," she said. "But I did get a little stiff sitting inside in the air conditioning."

Flanagan woke up after the double-bogey.

"After that, I started playing aggressively again," said Flanagan, who works in institutional sales for a brokerage firm. "Tomorrow, I will go for the pins and I won't play cautiously. I won't let that happen again."

"Right now, my game is coming on. I didn't start playing until late May because I was studying for an exam. But I feel like I'm getting ready to peak. That's why I was disappointed with my back nine. I came here hoping to win and gain some more confidence."

The 35-year-old Griffin, the 1994 Metropolitan Open champion, thanked her short game for placing her in contention.

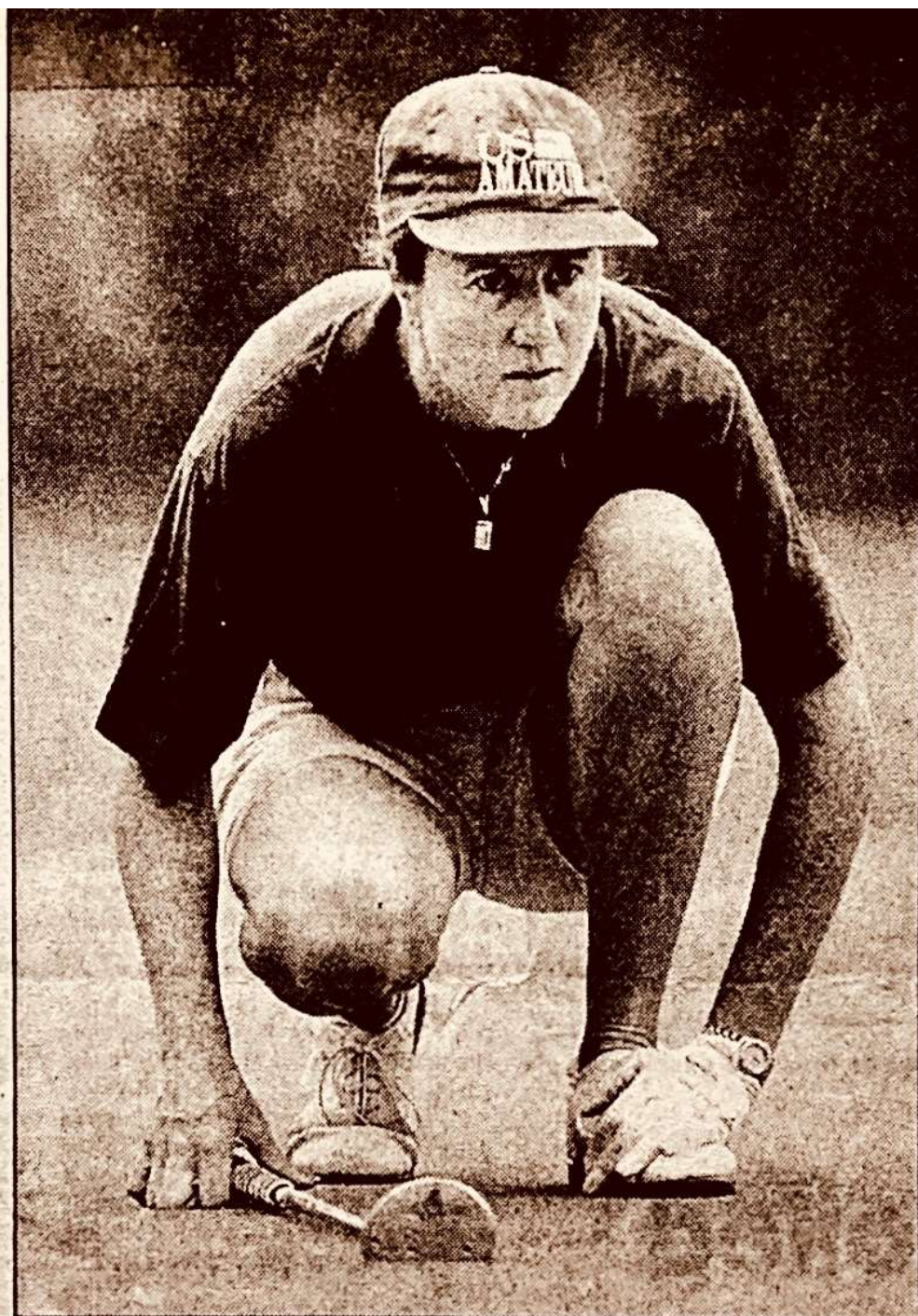
"My sand wedge was my best friend today," said Griffin, who survived a triple-bogey eight on the 433-yard 11th. "I was able to get up and down and my putting was good. I didn't have any three putts. I have to credit my short game for saving me."

Griffin's lone birdie came when she reached the 410-yard par-five third with a four-wood from 190 yards and two-putted.

"Tomorrow, I just have to play against par," said Griffin. "It should be fun. Anything can happen. I just have to bear down and go for broke."

Michelle Stelben of the Country Club of Darien, Conn., who plays to a 16 handicap, leads the Net Division at 71. Rogers, who plays to a 10, is second at 72.

Gail Flanagan, Westchester (N.Y.)	37-41-78
Lisa Griffin, Greenwich (Conn.)	39-41-80
Allison Kucinski, Plainfield	40-41-81
Mary Eichhorn, Spring Lake	41-41-82



(Photo by Jim Wright)

Lisa Griffin of the Greenwich (Conn.) Country Club lines up putt on the 18th hole during first round yesterday in the Women's Met Golf Association Stroke Play Tournament at the Fairmont Country Club, Chatham

Shirley Budden, Burning Tree (Conn.)	39-43-82	Roberta Bauer, Bellport (N.Y.)	44-44-88
Cynnle Rogers, Somerset Hills	39-43-82	Catherine Fancher, Greenwich (Conn.)	42-46-88
Diana D'Alessio, Newton	40-43-83	Kile Keever, Woodway	43-45-88
Caroline Salas, Piping Rock (N.Y.)	38-45-83	Lyn McCarthy, Baltusrol	43-45-88
Valerie DePiro, Montclair	40-44-84	Sandy Rose, Echo Lake	44-44-88
Sherry Herman, Shore Oaks	43-41-84	Bonnie Tyler, Silver Spring	43-45-88
Marcia Podvey, Green Brook	45-40-85	Helen Bernstein, Alpine	45-44-89
Robin Rombough, Montclair	42-43-85	Debbie Brucker, Roxilicus	43-46-89
Ann Enstine, Shinnecock (N.Y.)	43-43-86	Gina DeKorte, Arcola	44-45-89
Lee Ann Vogel, Southward Ho (N.Y.)	41-45-86	Jo Friebely, Bamm Hollow	42-47-89
Valerie Flora, St. George's (N.Y.)	42-45-87	Mary Holle, Essex County	43-46-89
Michelle Steiben, Darien (Conn.)	46-41-87	Barbara Hulke, Roxilicus	42-47-89
Donna Young, Springdale	42-45-87	Maddie Levy, Burning Tree (Conn.)	44-45-89
Helen Aitken, Montclair	43-45-88	Sandy Mascla, Manasquan River	43-46-89
Kathy Baker, Fenway (N.Y.)	44-44-88	Isa Von Hessert, Knickerbocker	44-45-89