



Whenever there is a discussion of the top golfers from Kingston High School or Ulster County, there is one name that is mentioned more than any other. That name is Leon Randall. Leon is considered the “GOAT” (Greatest of All-Time) in the local golf circle. He was a three-year member and the number one player of the KHS Maroon’s golf team from 1948-1950. During Leon’s tenure, he led the team to two consecutive undefeated seasons, winning back-to-back DUSO League Titles (1949, 1950) and one Section Nine Crown (1949) for Coach Russ Cunningham’s linksmen. Leon lost only one point in DUSO League competition in his three years of playing.

During the summer of 1949, Leon captured the district qualifying round in Albany for the second annual junior championship of the United States Golf Association as a 16-year-old. He then chose to compete in the Junior Chamber of Commerce Nationals in Houston, Texas. After making the qualifying round, Leon lost to the eventual defending champion. Back home, Leon captured the 1949 Wiltwyck golf title and lost in a playoff to Alvin Boice in the City Golf championship. After graduating from Kingston High School, he went to work for the IBM Corporation.

Leon made his first of many appearances in the Father Herdegen Golf Tournament in 1951, representing the Wiltwyck Golf Club. George Hughes, who ran off eight birdies at the Woodstock Golf Club, captured the inaugural championship with a seven-stroke win over Leon. During that same year, Leon won the Wiltwyck Club and City Golf Championships, and scored a hole-in-one on Wiltwyck’s 182-yard eighth hole. In 1952, Leon was the City of Kingston Golf Champion and the Wiltwyck Golf Champion. At the Herdegen, he was tied for the lead after the first three rounds, but a poor last round ruined his chances of gaining his first Herdegen title as he slipped to sixth place, finishing 10 strokes behind titlist Clarence Raichle.

In 1952 Leon decided to serve his country and enlisted in the United States Navy where he served his country for four years. In 1953, Leon won the Naval Golf Tournament in Key West, Florida. Playing the 1956 Herdegen tournament on a couple of weekend leaves from the Navy, he was in contention until a disastrous ninth hole ruined his chances. He eventually had to settle for a second-place finish, 10 strokes behind George Hughes. It was Hughes’ third Herdegen win. After his discharge from the Navy in 1956, Leon continued his work at the IBM Corporation.

The Golf Gods were exceptionally good to Leon in 1957 when Leon picked up his first Herdegen win with an eleven-stroke win over Bill VanAken. Leon won Herdegen numbers two and three in 1959 and 1960. He won again in 1962 but lost in 1963 to Buzzy Costello on the fifth extra playoff hole. Leon was back in the Herdegen winners circle in 1966, 1967 and 1968. Leon cashed in on Herdegen win number eight in 1970 with a twelve-stroke win over Bill Odeneal and Harvey Bostic. The twelve-stroke difference was the second highest winning margin in tournament history. Going into the 1971 Herdegen, Leon had won eight titles, finished second five times, third three times and sixth once. He won ten Wiltwyck Country Club titles, five City Match Play crowns, and two Ulster County Round Robin events. He also won individual championships in the Eastern New York Golf Association and Hudson River Golf Association and a Wiltwyck Invitational. In 1969, Leon set the all-time Woodstock Open record with a

twenty-seven hole 31-32-33-96. The open is now played at 18 holes. His 277 in the 1957 Herdegen was the second best in the 72-hole classic up to that time.

In 1973, the Herdegen changed its name to the Ulster Country Amateur Championship. Leon promptly started a Herdegen Victory string of eight straight wins (1974-1981), with 1981 being his last. His lifetime career total of sixteen Herdegen crowns will likely never be matched.

But Leon's golf career story would not be complete without a description of one of the area's greatest rounds of golf ever played on September 4, 1961. The local golf fans who witnessed Leon's fantastic round on that Labor Day afternoon were treated to a Randall Birdie Barrage the likes of which Ulster County has never seen. Leon and George Hughes were playing in the City of Kingston Championship, a thirty-six-hole golf match. Leon had won the morning round at Twaalfskill and Leon closed out Hughes and the match on the twelfth hole at Wiltwyck in the afternoon. Leon was four under par with six holes to go.

But local Businessman John Provenzano asked Hughes if he would continue to play because Leon was playing great golf at four under par and the golf fans wanted to see how low Leon could go. An extremely hot and tired Hughes agreed to play on, and the rest is Ulster County golf history. Leon birdied the next three holes and missed a twenty-foot birdie putt on hole number sixteen. On the Par five number seventeen Leon missed and eagle three, settled for a birdie and then birdied number eighteen for a 63 and a Wiltwyck Golf record. On that day, the late Freeman Sports Editor Charlie Tiano said it was the greatest round of local golf ever on a very difficult golf course. In the round Leon had an eagle and eight birdies. The record still holds today at the Wiltwyck Golf Club.

Leon Randall died in 2012 leaving his wife Sylvia and sons Scott and Todd. "Leon was a true gentleman of the game, A Herdegen legend! A Great Champion, a champion in life and so deserving to be in the Kingston High School Athletics Hall of Fame.