

## **Dr. George Pirie**

There are some athletes who are natural talents, who enjoy great success from the time they begin competing. Most, though, are like George Pirie they have to work hard for what they get. Few athletes have worked any harder, and with any more dedication than Pirie. The periodontist has reached the Hall of Fame in part by sheer force of will.

Anyone who looks at the numbers might find that hard to believe. Pirie, after all, is second only to Paul Quigley in the number of RIGA championships won. He has captured the State Amateur three times, the Mid-Amateur once, the Four-Ball three times with partner Scott Marshall, the Burke Memorial twice, the Father-Son three times with his son, Jon, the Senior Four-Ball and Senior Amateur once apiece. He also has been the RIGA Player of the Year three times and has qualified for the U.S. Senior Open, U.S. Amateur and U.S. Senior Amateur.

When he captured his third Amateur he did that three years ago at Alpine, at age 54 Pirie spoke about how he had to build his game. While he always has been a fine player, good enough to play at URI in an era that also included fellow Hall of Famers Dana and Paul Quigley, Pirie did not jump to the top level until he was in his mid 30s. He told the story about how he went to Mike Harbour for lessons.

I want to win a state championship. I've never won one, Pirie told Harbour. He looked at my swing and said, You don't have a chance. That's a true story. I turned to him and said, Don't you ever say that to me. I told him, You need to help me. If you help me, I'll win. " "

The two met for three months in the spring of 1989, before Pirie went to his dental office and before Harbour reported to his job at Potowomut. He had a loop in his swing, said Harbour. He came at everything from the inside. And his hands didn't hinge right. It made it hard for him to play the touch shots around the green. Pirie changed his swing so that it matched his fierce, now almost legendary competitiveness.

His mind, Harbour said, has always been this good. He's always been a great competitor who will try and beat you with his mind. " "