

PLUS: MICHELLE WIE PROFILE | CLUB CHAMPS | MINA'S MOMENT

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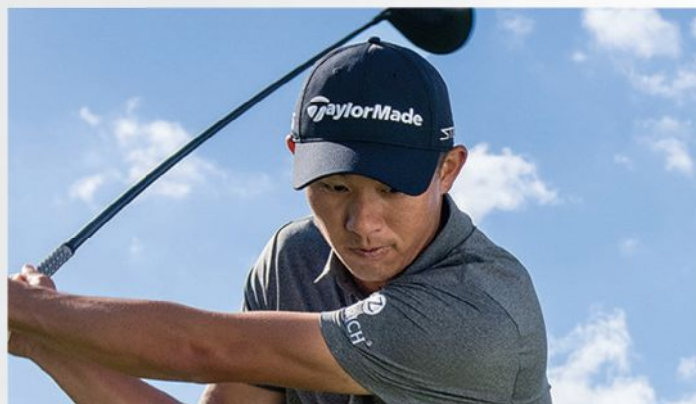
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Be Curious, **Not Judgmental**

BY JOE HUSTON



The pandemic has changed all of us, and its influence on how people spend their time has been significant since the beginning. Two of these trends come to mind: the renewed interest in the game of golf and binge-watching TV. I'll explain the connection shortly.

Our NCGA vision is to “ensure the game is vibrant, inclusive and accessible.” We provide a wide range of programs and services for our clubs and members, and in the end, we want more people to enjoy the game of golf even more.

So where does the boom in binge TV watching and golf intersect? For me, it came from watching the “Ted Lasso” series over the last holiday. Ted is an affable American football coach that moves to the UK to coach their version of “football” and encounters several challenging situations. The very likeable, and somewhat goofy, main character has an infectious positive attitude and many enlightening observations on life.

Ted's story has nothing to do specifically with golf, but his advice and approach to life certainly does. In one episode, when he was looked down upon and seriously underestimated by a local in a pub, his adversary ended up looking quite foolish after he had made some false assumptions about him. That is when Ted Lasso said, “be curious, not judgmental.”

This struck me in many ways, but particularly regarding some of the hurdles we encounter trying to make the game more “vibrant, inclusive, and accessible,” retaining golfers and making the game more enjoyable.

When we show more “curiosity” before we pass “judgement,” we can go a long way to welcome people into the game, help them enjoy the game more and promote a sense of belonging.

Two relevant experiences come to mind. The first was when I was playing a new course and I was paired with a regular player of that facility. After several holes without seeing the group ahead, we rounded the corner of a sharp dogleg and we could see a cart parked on the fringe of the elevated green. The golfer in my group was quick to pass judgement and rudely shouted, “Get your cart off the edge of the green...” As the golfer ahead of us approached the cart, it was clear that he had only one leg and was walking with the assistance of a cane. He not only had every right to be parked next to the green, but he was an inspiration to all golfers, and thankfully we all got to know each other after the round. This very embarrassing situation led to a good lesson to be “curious” before being “judgmental.”

The second experience is about one of our very best NCGA tournament officials who teaches other officials and course marshals to approach all players in a friendly manner by asking “How can I help?” For me, my heart rate spikes a bit when I am approached by a marshal, but the “How can I help?” approach goes a long way to alleviate anxiety. Also, this approach makes it easier to collect the right information to help a player with a ruling or any other assistance before passing judgement. In one of our NCGA championships, I witnessed one of our tournament officials approach a group who was out of position, asking “How can I help?” It turned out that one player needed medical assistance, and not a slow play penalty, due to the heat. This official did the right thing and the player later fully recovered.

Ted Lasso's advice to “be curious, not judgmental” is something that I think we can all put into practice to help make this game even more vibrant, inclusive, and accessible... and we will certainly make more friends in the process. 🌿

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Anchoring at PEBBLE BEACH



KIP EVANS

Future events at Pebble Beach Golf Links

- 2023 U.S. Women's Open
- 2027 U.S. Open
- 2030 U.S. Senior Women's Open (Spyglass Hill)
- 2030 U.S. Senior Open (Spyglass Hill)
- 2032 U.S. Open
- 2035 U.S. Women's Open
- 2037 U.S. Open
- 2040 U.S. Women's Open
- 2044 U.S. Open
- 2048 U.S. Women's Open

Could the winner of the 2048 U.S. Women's Open be a yet-to-be-born Youth on Course member? Will Tiger Woods hoist a U.S. Senior Open trophy at Spyglass Hill?

We'll get to find out the answers – in time.

Back in April, the **USGA** and **Pebble Beach Company** announced the forging of a landmark partnership that seeks to benefit the game of golf for generations to come.

As a result, Pebble Beach Golf Links will now host four future U.S. Opens (2027, 2032, 2037 and 2044) as well as

four future U.S. Women's Opens Presented by ProMedica, including its first one next year (2023, 2035, 2040 and 2048). These additional championships fulfill a common goal to ensure that both men and women have the opportunity to compete at the highest level on the iconic course.

Pebble Beach Resorts joins Pinehurst Resort & Country Club and Oakmont Country Club as U.S. Open anchor sites.

In addition, for the first time ever, the U.S. Senior Open and U.S. Senior Women's Open will be staged back-to-back in 2030 at Pebble's sister course, Spyglass Hill.

Once the headquarters site of the NCGA, Spyglass Hill still hosts NCGA championships including the NCGA Men's and Women's Amateur Championships.

"This relationship with Pebble Beach, long considered a national treasure, is a historic step forward for golf," said USGA CEO Mike Whan. "In addition to elevating our Open championships, the USGA and Pebble Beach are committed to working together to ensure a more diverse, welcoming and accessible game. We couldn't be more thankful for their collaboration and like-minded vision." 🌻

Bonus Digital Content

In response to requests from many of our members and continuing our efforts to be environmentally friendly, the NCGA is moving to more digital communications – including the award-winning *NCGA Golf* magazine.

One of the bonuses for our members in moving to a digital version of *NCGA Golf* is that it allows us to offer more content.

We hope you enjoy the bonus content for this issue, and please remember to let us know your preference (print or digital) by *updating your member profile*.



DAYtrip

Look Out for the Yosemite Park Bears on Highway 41

BY ALEX HULANICKI

Above the super-fast highways and the almond groves of the Central Valley, State Route 41 winds through the Sierra Nevada foothills, making drivers slow down as they head toward the south gate of **Yosemite National Park**.

After paying the \$35 toll at the South Gate (you currently must have reservations – yosemite-southgate.com/yosemite-entry-reservations), cars (no RVs allowed) climb above 5,000 feet of altitude and the scenery demands side glances, but the showstoppers are the yellow signs above the picturesque valley made famous by photographer Ansel Adams and naturalist John Muir – “Speeding Kills Bears.” Bears, oh my, time for a U-turn to look for golf courses, the winery trail and casinos; better odds down there in the towns of Oakhurst and Coarsegold. And, don’t forget the melodrama of the **Golden Chain Theatre** on the **Yosemite Sugar Pine Railroad** and drama of **Yosemite Axe-Throwing**. Or, the educative **Coarsegold Tarantula Awareness Festival** at the end of October.

Not a bear was to be seen on the roadside, golf course or the grounds of the historic and rustic **Wawona Hotel**, a waystation for wagon drivers in the late 19th Century. Nor were there any greens and golfers as the nine holes, first laid out by Walter Favarque in 1918, were in the latter stages of renovation after a two-year COVID-19 hiatus and installation of a reclaimed-water irrigation system. Unfortunately, the dormancy period has turned hydroseeded fairways into a meadow that require further attention and a targeted mid-June opening, said Wawona Hotel manager Tom Goodreau.

A seasonal course, Wawona is usually open from May to October, and has picturesque redwoods and sugar pines ringing the compact property. The sixth hole is known as the “Nursery Hole,” where wildlife, including bears, have gathered to watch golfers. No golfers, no bears to be seen during a late-spring, pre-dinner walk.



Dinner? Save room for key lime pie from a menu ranging from fried chicken to huge hamburgers and fries. The dining room setting and service were excellent, and the lobby pianist who crooned like Harry Connick Jr. drew a large crowd of guests, but no bears.

A couple thousand feet of altitude below in the foothills leading to Yosemite’s south entrance, blue herons, deer and goslings cross the fairways of **Yosemite Lakes Park Golf Course** in Coarsegold, and down the road, the **Blue Heron** offers steaks and karaoke. In Oakhurst, **River Creek Golf Course** has tight fairways and fast, well-kept greens guarded by boulders and forboding rock formations. These nine-hole layouts are demanding yet provide golfers leisurely walks and true putts. The courses are open year-round as they have few snow days.

Golf isn’t the only attraction on Route 41 as tourists can ride the steam train at Sugar Pine RR, try wine at the eight sites of the **Madera Wine Trail** or their luck at the casinos of **Table Mountain** and **Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino**. Instead of cutting cards, tourists can learn how to throw axes, continuing the legacy of the region’s logging history, at Yosemite Axe-Throwing next to **Bear Paws Quilts and More**. Finally, bears. Just right. 🐻

Yosemite and all of its waterfalls and granite grandeur will never stop capturing our attention. But keep your eyes open for the bears.

To the MAX

Less than four years ago Cal alum **Max Homa** was four holes from losing full Korn Ferry Tour status and going back to Q-School. He'd birdie his last four holes to make the cut and went on to earn his PGA Tour card at the KFT Finals.

Flash forward and one would think that Homa, one of the Tour's most popular players on Twitter, isn't one to lack in self-confidence. But the now 31-year-old still at times does, albeit it hasn't stopped him from succeeding.

The SoCal native, who won the NCAA individual title in 2013, notched his fourth career PGA Tour win in May, capturing a cold and soggy Wells Fargo Championship by two shots over runner-up Keegan Bradley after a final-round 68. At the time, it was the third win in 15 months for Homa since capturing the Genesis Invitational in February 2021.

"All of a sudden last year I get in the top 50 in the world and you start looking around and it's a new crop of people and you start thinking to myself, 'Am I as good as these guys?'" said Homa, who has a tattoo on his arm that reads 'RELENTLESS.' "So I've always struggled with it, but I have great people around me who bash me over the head telling me that I am that guy."

Also champion at the season-opening Fortinet Championship in Napa, Homa is testament that the tough times don't have to last.

"I just tell myself positive affirmations. Like on certain shots, if I feel antsy I say three things I'm grateful for, it calms me down," Homa said. "I do it a lot. It's a good way to stay happy." 🌟



Legends Tee It Up at Haggin Oaks

by Frank LaRosa

With more than 1,500 hours of service to the PGA of America, 32 Northern California PGA Professionals recently teed it up in the Inaugural 2022 Legends Championship and Reunion. Restricted to players aged 70 and over, the roster included NorCal PGA Hall of Famers 93-year-old **Ken Towns**; **Rick Jetter** with his 64 years as a PGA Professional; and also **Dick Lotz**, a five-time winner on the PGA Tour. Seventy-year-old **Frank Panetta** remarked that this was the first time in a very long time that he was the youngest player in any tournament!



FRANK LAROSA

The day's first tee shot was middle-cut by Towns, who played 18-holes. Most of the field returned for the second round of the 36-hole contest. Tournament honors went to **Chris Bitticks** who shot 71-74 and was among nine who shot their ages. Each of the players went away with a sense of community and respect for their fellow professionals and their days spent working and playing the game together.

NCPGA Senior Board of Directors Vice-President Bitticks welcomed participants with tongue-in-cheek, acknowledging that to some older players, snail mail or personal visits was the best form of communication.

Host professional **Ken Morton, Sr.** applauded the players and conveyed the honor the entire Haggin Oaks staff felt by their participation.

Len Dumas, PGA Executive Director of the Northern California PGA recognized the commitment to the game exhibited over the many years by the players and expressed deep appreciation to them for being the trusted mentors to today's PGA Professionals. 🌟

Mulligans:

- In the story 'Hospitality Bloodlines', we referenced The Preserve at Santa Lucia. The correct name is Santa Lucia Preserve.
- In the Rules column 'Penalty Areas' we stated that players could use any club in their bag to measure. The definition of a club-length according to the Rules of Golf is: The length of the longest club, other than a putter.
- In the vignette "Dalvin's Living His Retirement Dream at Pebble Beach" we misidentified the subject. It is Tom Galvin, not Dalvin. We regret these errors.

BELIEVE THE HYPE

The No.1 **Stanford women's golf team** lived up to its billing, capping a dominant season in May by winning the NCAA Division I title via a 3-and-2 win over No.2 Oregon at Grayhawk Golf Club.

It's the first Cardinal title since 2015. "It feels incredible," Director of Women's Golf **Anne Walker** said. "It takes really special people to (win with expectations), to be able to shut that noise out and be able to come out here and perform and allow yourself to swing free the way they did."

Cardinal phenom **Rose Zhang** also has yet another trophy to add to her rapidly filling collection.

Zhang capped a brilliant four-win freshman campaign by capturing the D-I Individual Championship with a 72-hole score of 6-under.

The No. 1 player in the nation, Zhang made it two in a row for the Cardinal following Rachel Heck's win last year.

"To be a national champion in my first NCAA (Championship), I just can't explain it," said Zhang, whose personal trophy case includes the 2020 U.S. Women's Amateur and 2021 U.S. Girls' Junior. "It's hard to describe in words, I feel like it hasn't really settled in yet."



No. 1 in the World Amateur Golf Ranking since September 2020, Zhang also earned the Annika Award as the most outstanding D-I Player of the Year.

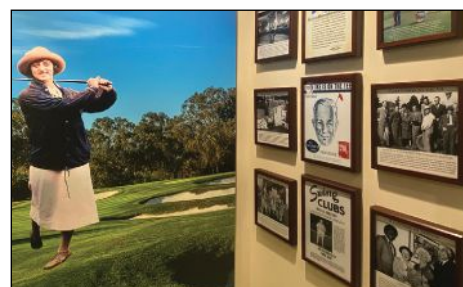
Also receiving an honor was Stanford University senior **Aline Krauter**, who was named the 2022 Dinah Shore Trophy award winner for her excellence on the course and in the classroom. 🌸

Thank You

Julie Gonzalez, program liaison for United Veterans Services-Swing Club for nearly a decade, retired from her post in May.

During her tenure, Gonzalez, who was profiled in the Spring 2016 issue of NCGA *Golf*, hosted 36 events for over 1,500 veterans. Originally founded by NCGA Hall of Famer Helen Lengfeld, UVS-Swing Club is a golf rehabilitation program for veterans.

As part of her duties, Gonzalez coordinated events, marked the course, managed volunteers and created scorecards. The smiles she brought came naturally. 🌸



Peninsula Golf & CC in San Mateo has installed a permanent display about legend Helen Lengfeld. The exhibit features over 40 photographs, trophies and memorabilia items of her life, including her 2018 NCGA Hall of Fame Award and a golf sweater she wore in competition knitted by her mother-in-law almost 100 years ago... The **Monterey Peninsula College** men's golf team won the NorCal Junior College title... Some may remember that U.S. Women's Open champ **Minjee Lee** won the 2012 U.S. Girls' Junior at Lake Merced GC. 🌸

Sharing the



LOVE OF THE GAME

NBA Finals MVP and golf aficionado **Stephen Curry** has scored yet again.

In April, Curry, who recently won his fourth NBA title with the Golden State Warriors, announced the expansion of his **UNDERRATED** brand, which seeks to empower underrated and underrepresented individuals, to include golf. **UNDERRATED** Golf will aim to increase the participation numbers of competitive golfers from diverse communities.

“I created **UNDERRATED** back in 2019 with the goal of celebrating the underdog,” Curry said. “**UNDERRATED** is a mindset, a motivation, a calling, a compliment. We’re trying

to build representation in golf, and we should have a cool opportunity to provide perspective and resources for these kids to hopefully set them up for success within golf, as an athlete, but also the business of golf and getting them workforce-ready.”

Similar to the **UNDERRATED** Basketball Tour and Championships, **UNDERRATED** Golf will also identify and recognize the best players at regional events. In its first year, the **UNDERRATED** Golf Tour will select each of the 24 best boys and girls who will compete for the Curry Cup at the season ending **UNDERRATED** Tour Championship at TPC Harding Park. 🌲



Pasatiempo Golf Club in Santa Cruz recently announced plans to restore the original push up greens complexes and bunkers to resemble architect Alister MacKenzie’s original 1929 design.

The greens and bunker restoration project is a continuation in a long line of successful projects to restore architectural features lost or modified over time. Since 1999, the course has undergone numerous successful restorations, from greens expansion and bunker restoration to restoring teeing areas to their original theme.

This latest project tackles Pasatiempo’s 100-year old greens infrastructure. The original greens were built using a completely different construction process than available today, and, coupled with nearly 100 years of consistent play and the lack of infrastructure, the greens are in need of a full restoration. In addition, the felt bunker liners are failing, allowing for soil intrusion and inconsistent playing conditions.

“The future of the golf course, in terms of sustainability, requires a full restoration of the greens with modern infrastructure and drainage,” said Superintendent Justin Mandon. “Over its nearly 100 years of play, and particularly the more recent increase in volume of rounds, coupled with the addition of alternative water sources and lack of infrastructure, has led to the rapid evolution of the greens.

The restoration will be led by architect Jim Urbina, Mandon and contractor Earth Sculptures.

Founded by Marion Hollins, Pasatiempo is set to host this year’s California Senior Amateur Championship in November. 🌿



SHARPENING UP ARROWCREEK

The Club at ArrowCreek, an NCGA member course in Reno, recently completed a \$60 million renovation and expansion of its clubhouse and non-golf amenities. The multi-phase project took nearly three years to complete and included re-imagining of existing facilities and the creation of new event areas. Business executive Ray Conrad and wife, Jeanne, purchased The Club at ArrowCreek in 2018 after becoming members in 2014.

“My first step was creating a plan to renovate and gut the entire 42,000-square-foot clubhouse and add an additional 40,000-square-foot extension,” said Mr. Conrad. “In order to make the business sustainable, we needed to create space for weddings, conventions and other functions.”

Previously featuring just a clubhouse with a small dining and bar area, the club now features five different areas where members can dine or enjoy a refreshment. 🌿



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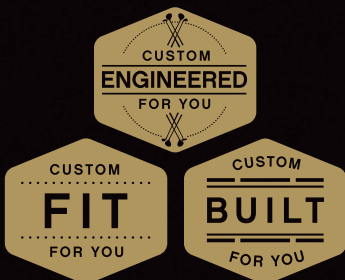


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Mina's Moment

BY ALAN SHIPNUCK



Northern California golf fans have long known that Mina Harigae is something special.

Beginning in 2001, when she was 12, she won four straight California Women's Amateur Championships, all at Quail Lodge. It was a charming, local-girl-makes-good story, as Harigae's parents ran a popular sushi restaurant in Pacific Grove called Takara, and she was often battling her girlhood friend Sydney Burlison.

Mina took her first lesson when she was six, as part of a community program run by the Salvation Army, but golf took her all the way to the tony Stevenson School, a co-educational private school in Pebble Beach, where her high school team's home course was Spyglass Hill (!). Harigae matriculated to Duke, where she enjoyed a stellar career, including earning a spot representing Team USA in the 2008 Curtis Cup at St. Andrews. She turned pro in 2009 and finished first on the Futures Tour season-ending money list, punching her ticket to the LPGA.

"To go from pretty much rock bottom to being in the final pairing of a major on the weekend...I appreciate how far I've come."

Harigae's future seemed unlimited, but professional golf can be cruel in the extreme. Harigae was not a long hitter in an era when the power game reshaped the LPGA. She often found herself battling to retain her playing privileges and balance her checkbook. Harigae missed seven cuts in a row to end the 2019 season and had to go back to LPGA Q school just to keep her card. She considered quitting. "I felt very helpless," Harigae told *Golfweek*. "It felt like I was racing against time ... the walls were closing in on me."

Then the pandemic hit. With nowhere else to play and stressing about how to pay the rent, Harigae competed on the Cactus Tour, the equivalent of Double-A baseball, based in Arizona. In these shootouts she got back in touch with the killer instinct of her youth. Harigae won four times, including a 16-stroke blowout fueled by a final-round 61. The \$2,500 winner's checks helped her keep the dream alive. She continued her reinvention by returning to an old

swing coach and they labored to make her iron game more precise. Harigae also went to a claw putting style, a change suggested by her fiancé and caddie, Travis Kreiter, a former mini-tour pro.

In 2021, Harigae reemerged as a player of note. At the Women's British Open, on fearsome Carnoustie, she held a piece of the 36-hole lead. After struggling to a third-round 76, Harigae endeared herself to golf fans with a raw, honest social media post. "To go from pretty much rock bottom to being in the final pairing of a major on the weekend, I wish I had appreciated where I was when I stepped up to the first tee today," Harigae wrote. "But I can see it now and my bad round doesn't feel so bad anymore. I appreciate how far I've come no matter the outcome."

Harigae, then 31, held her own in the final round, helping to solidify a captain's pick to the 2021 Solheim Cup, becoming the fourth-oldest U.S. rookie ever.

Harigae's mid-career renaissance has continued in 2022. At the U.S. Women's Open, at Pine Needles in Pinehurst, N.C., she was tied for the lead through 36 holes, and, despite some hiccups during the third round, she held on to second place.

"I'm proud of myself," Harigae says. "The main takeaways are I really am able to handle myself out there. I belong up there."

Minjee Lee, the reigning champ of the Evian Championship, was simply too good on Sunday, but Harigae earned a career-best \$1,080,000, ending a decade's worth of tight finances. "I'm not going to lie, my stomach hurt the last couple holes," she says. "I was really stressed out."

Reflecting on a breakthrough performance, Harigae sounded like a onetime-whiz kid who has learned through her trials and tribulations. "If I hit a bad shot or I make a bogey, I probably wouldn't have handled it very well," she says of her younger self. "I probably would have gotten really upset or it probably would have affected me the next one or even three holes. I think I'm doing a lot better with that."

Now that her persistence has paid off in such grand fashion, Harigae is poised to be the player we always knew she could be. Here's hoping. 🌸

For more of Carmel Valley resident **Alan Shipnuck's** storytelling, visit [The FirePitCollective.com](https://www.thefirepitcollective.com).



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JOHN MUMBERT/USGA



JONATHAN KOLBE

Wie West talks with Curtis Cup USA Team members Kristen Gillman, Jennifer Kupcho, Andrea Lee and Lucy Li during a practice round ahead of the 2018 Curtis Cup at Quaker Ridge Golf Club.

Northern California is not only where **Michelle Wie West** attended college and gave birth to her first child, but it's where she learned to be comfortable in her own skin.

BY RON KROICHICK

Photos Courtesy of USGA

Michelle Wie West's journey, from golf prodigy and U.S. Women's Open champion to proud mom and ambitious entrepreneur, included several stops along the way. She was born and raised in Hawaii. She spent seven years in Florida. Now she lives in the Los Angeles area.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

But, in some important ways, nothing shaped Wie West – who announced she was stepping away from playing full-time following the U.S. Women’s Open in June – more than her time in Northern California.

Start with her four-plus years at Stanford, a famous professional athlete savoring the chance to expand her mind, stroll unbothered across campus and attend football games with her friends. Then, after her 2012 graduation and the stint in Florida, she returned to the Bay Area and lived in San Francisco with her husband, Golden State Warriors executive Jonnie West.

Their daughter, Makenna, was born during their two years (2019-21) in the city. That’s an unconventional place for an LPGA pro to use as a home base, but Wie West relished the chance to reconnect with close college friends who also lived in San Francisco. She embraced the city’s vibrancy – attending Warriors games, often eating out (pre-pandemic), going for walks with her daughter and dog.

Wie West routinely hit shots on the range at Stanford, or carried her own bag and pushed Makenna in the stroller for abbreviated rounds at Lake Merced Golf Club. She also occasionally played friendly, informal games with West and one of his buddies from the office. You may have heard of Stephen Curry.

“I always wanted to come back to the Bay,” says Wie West, “and it was a dream come true to live in San Francisco for the time we did.”

But to truly measure Northern California’s impact on Wie West, consider the Stanford chapter. Her face lights up when she reflects on her college experience, partly for the friendships she forged but also for the refuge Stanford offered amid an upbringing in the spotlight.

Remember, at age 10, Wie West became the youngest player to qualify for the USGA Women’s Amateur Public Links Championship. She became the youngest to Monday qualify for an LPGA event (at 12) and the youngest USGA champion in an adult event when she won the Public Links at 13.

Then she made the Curtis Cup team at 14, posted five top-5 finishes in LPGA majors at age 15 and 16 and made eight PGA

Tour starts as a teenager, stirring overheated debate in the golf world.

So by the time Wie West enrolled at Stanford, she craved the chance to be a regular college kid – trying to navigate life in the dorms and survive final exams.

“Going to Stanford allowed me to be normal,” she says. “There are so many things in my life that aren’t normal, so it was really nice to go there and experience it. That’s carried on to the rest of my life. It allowed me to understand what’s real life and what’s important. ...

“I loved my time at Stanford. It was a monumental period in my life. I’m grateful for all the friends I made and my experience there.”

In a 2012 interview, just before she finished college, Wie West talked of how her time at Stanford made her realize she loves meeting new people, eating new foods and trying new things. Those discoveries didn’t help her win more tournaments, but they mattered to her.

As she put it in that long-ago interview, “I didn’t go into college thinking, ‘Is this going to help my game or not?’ It’s just something I needed as a person.”

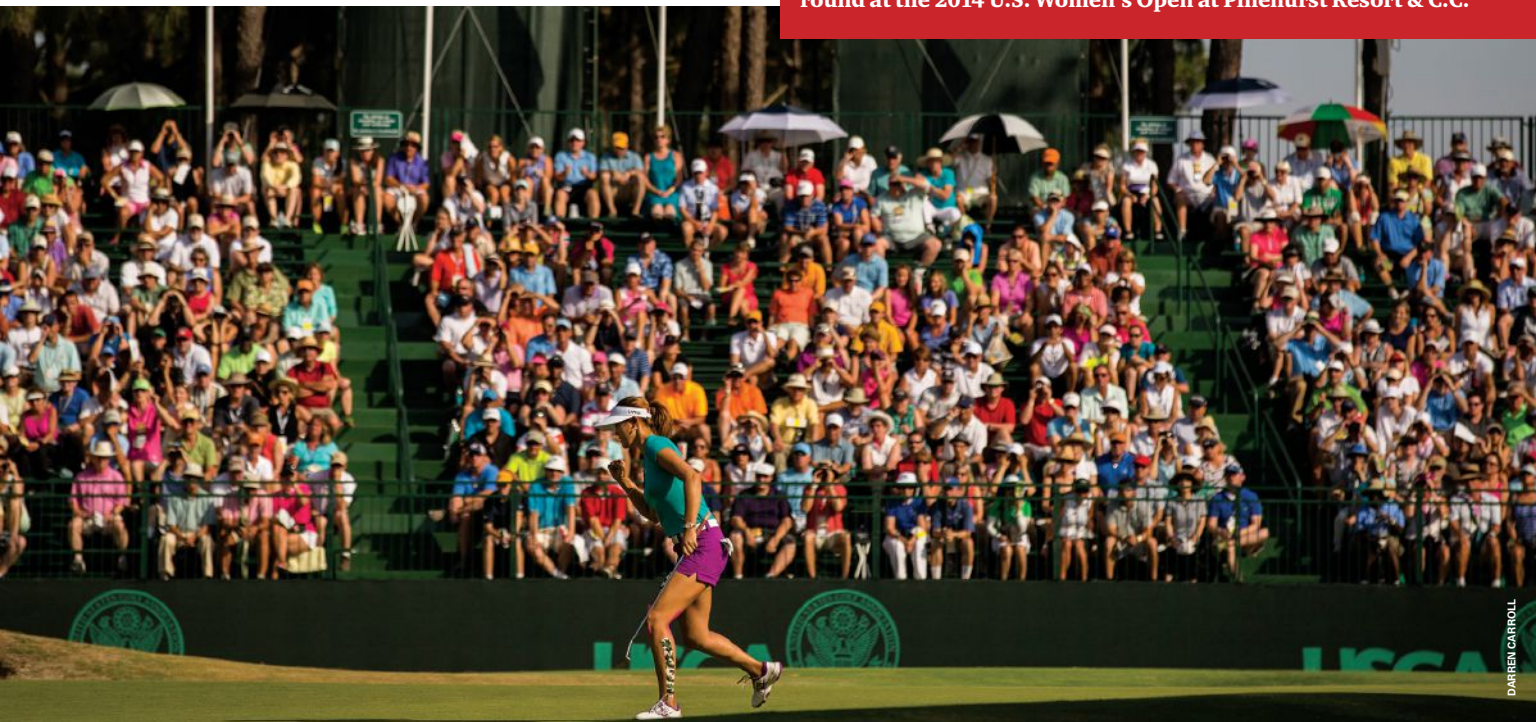
Fast forward to 2022, and her needs as a person – and a parent – still take priority. Wie West hasn’t entirely abandoned her career as tour pro, but it’s clearly not her consuming passion.

Wie West won five LPGA events from 2009-18, including the Women’s Open at Pinehurst in 2014. She once reached No. 6 in the world ranking. Those aren’t the splashy achievements widely expected, given her youthful rise to prominence, but they also aren’t easily dismissed.

Then real life got in the way. Wie West had wrist surgery in 2018 and took a 21-month hiatus from the tour, stretching from June 2019 to March 2021. She got married and delivered Makenna during that time, dramatically reshaping her life.

Wie West made six LPGA starts last year, with four missed cuts (including the U.S. Women’s Open at the Olympic Club)

Wie West reacts to her putt on the 17th hole during the final round at the 2014 U.S. Women’s Open at Pinehurst Resort & C.C.





Ten-year-old Wie West had her father, BJ Wie, on the bag as caddy during the 2000 Women's Amateur Public Links Championship. At the time, she was the youngest player to ever qualify.

JOHN MUMMERT

J.D. CUBAN

and a high finish of tie for 40th. She tied for 28th in her first event this year.

She insisted her love of the game remains strong, but Wie West also has a new life. It's a challenging mix, competing at golf's highest level while remaining an involved mom.

"Makenna is the No. 1 priority in her life," says Excel Sports vice president Kevin Hopkins, who represents Wie West. "Michelle has a lot of different interests in the game of golf. She loves playing and she loves the competition, but her family is always going to come first."

Wie West, now 32, also is pursuing passions such as designing a tie-dye LPGA hoodie, a 2021 campaign that raised \$400,000 for the Renee Powell Foundation, which provides need-based grants to girls golf programs, including those in Black communities. Her list of business partnerships include Nike, Omega, MGM Resorts, Laird Superfoods and Pitchbook.

She's also served as an ambassador for companies such as Tonal, Oxigen Water and Sportsbox, among others.

"This is where Stanford really helped shape her," Hopkins

says. "Michelle is an entrepreneur at heart. She's been way more involved on the business side of things than I probably expected. She has a vision for the types of companies she wants to invest in and be part of. It's not transactional for her."

These new elements in Wie West's life have put her in a good place, to hear others tell it. Tour pro Christina Kim (from San Jose), a longtime friend, talked last year of how marriage and motherhood "allowed Michelle to become a more complete person."

Golf Channel analyst Kay Cockerill similarly senses Wie West is really happy now. Cockerill always saw her trying to find balance, even if the public typically defined her solely through golf.

And though Wie West didn't win 20-something LPGA victories, a gaudy total that seemed realistic when she was a teenager, she still has had a profound impact on the game.

"Michelle brought so many young girls and boys into the game," Cockerill says. "She has a magnetic personality and a physicality on the course, much like Tiger. She really opened up a lot of people's eyes to the women's game."

These days, Wie West focuses less on her own game and more on wider-scope issues related to growing golf. She's talked of wanting to play for her daughter, and maybe that will motivate her to rejuvenate her career as Makenna (who turned 2 in June) gets older.

For now, she's content hanging with her "goofy, hilarious" daughter as much as possible. Wie West says she and her husband constantly laugh when they're with Makenna, the fun side of being a parent.

"She's the best thing to ever happen to me," Wie West says. "But it's hard. Your life changes overnight – you think you have nine months to prepare, but nothing prepares you for this." 🌸


Ron Kroidick covers golf for *The San Francisco Chronicle*.



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Golf is great and as the game grows and reaches an even larger audience, new opportunities are emerging for players to connect. It's refreshing to see new introductions to the game and old favorites to be explored anew. Among the countless tournaments played over our vast NorCal fairways, we've selected 18 that give a broad idea of the reach and scope of a tournament scene that has long been a source of pride and continues to blossom and bear new fruit.

It's our way of reminding you that there are infinite possibilities to compete, so get out there and find a tournament that's right for you. And have fun!

Family First

BY RON KROICHICK

Long before he became an acclaimed golf writer, and now a Golf Channel analyst, Jaime Diaz (*pictured, far right*) was a Bay Area teenager who loved to hit the links with his dad. So the event then known as the Father & Son, which morphed into the Northern California Family Tournament in 1995, offered an ideal platform.

Diaz and his dad, known in the tournament record book as Jim and Jimmy Jr., won the event in 1970 and again in '72. Young Jaime was 16 and 18 at the time. All these years later, this "tremendous memory" still resonates strongly.

"It was kind of a culmination of my relationship with my dad," Diaz says. "In many ways, it was a highlight of our lives together. We really cared about it and we shared it."

That's the point of this tournament, in many ways – sharing the golf experience with a loved one. The event, the brainchild of former *San Francisco Chronicle* sports columnist Art Rosenbaum, dates to 1951 and was part of the grand opening of Golden Gate Park Golf Course, a sneaky-challenging nine-hole layout in the heart of The City.

The tournament has been played annually ever since then, except for a three-year hiatus (2004-06) because of financial issues. U.S. Open champions and San Francisco natives Ken Venturi and Johnny Miller played in the Father & Son in their younger days; later, four-time LPGA winner Dorothy Delasin played, as did former mayor Art Agnos.

Golfers come from all over Northern California to participate – Santa Rosa to the north, Monterey to the south and Sacramento to the east. It's an 18-hole, alternate-shot format, with stroke-play qualifying to determine the 16-team field and match play to determine the winners. Tournament officials require a generation gap, so no brother/sister or husband/wife teams are permitted.

That leads to some wonderful matchups – one year, as tournament director George Ambrosio recalls, an 80-year-old mom and her approximately 60-year-old son faced a dad in his 30s and a son about 10. Good luck finding another sport where that can happen. 🌟



The African American Quest Tour, Opening Opportunity to Aspiring Young Golfers

BY TONY STARKS

Preston Pinkney has worked to elevate youth golf in Oakland for more than 20 years. Through Ace Kids Golf, he has introduced the game to more than 8,000 underserved juniors and opened their world to the far-reaching pathways golf can provide.

"It's all about providing opportunities," says Pinkney, 44. "That's it."

The next wave of opportunities comes from Pinkney's latest initiative, the African American Tour Quest (AATQ). Now that the junior program regularly produces high-level players, the goal becomes to keep those players engaged with the game and providing them with the resources to achieve their ambitions.

"We've developed a network that acts as their support system, the same way a Tour professional has a team around them," Pinkney says.

He's identified sports psychologists, nutritionists and PGA teaching professionals willing to contribute time and effort to nurture these budding golfers. That includes access to courses with well-conditioned practice facilities such as Sequoyah Country Club, where another of his disciples, Thomas Carlson, works as an assistant pro and is eyeing PGA membership. Pinkney is also in discussion with Troon Golf to provide additional access and employment opportunities.

Furthermore, he's sponsored players on professional tours such as Adrian Davis (*pictured, right*) on the APGA (Advocates Pro Tour, which is dedicated to advancing diversity in professional golf).

Of course, all of this comes at a cost. Pinkney (*pictured, far left*) became a certified re-seller of Srixon golf equipment to support the initiative and the players. His work caught the attention of no less than Stephen Curry. The four-time NBA champion's Eat Learn Play foundation has supported Pinkney's efforts in numerous ways.

Beyond playing, professional, personal and economic growth are vital facets of his work. He recalls years ago chaperoning a group of kids to the Pebble Beach Pro-Am to watch Tiger Woods play. What stood out the most? The homes that lined 17-Mile Drive. The level of opulence seemed alien. Now, he sits on the NCGA's Board and takes regular trips to Monterey.

"Those things that seemed so far away, somehow seem more achievable," he says. "That's the goal of AATQ and Ace, to allow kids to dream and then support them so those dreams can come true." 🌟





The 'Common Golfer' Championship

BY RON KROICHICK

Johnny Miller – Hall of Famer, two-time major champion, television analyst without peer – enjoys telling the story about once putting with his 7-iron in the San Francisco City Championship. That seemed like the only logical way to conquer perpetual puddles on the greens at TPC Harding Park.

In a charming if twisted way, this captures the distinctive flavor of the tournament widely known as “The City.” It bubbles with rich and unmatched history, dating to 1917, and counts illustrious players among its winners (Ken Venturi, George Archer, Juli Inkster) and non-winners (Miller, Tom Watson).

But peer past the big names and the City resonates with an everyman (and woman) vibe.

That’s the charm, really – doctors and lawyers tangling with firefighters and teachers, future PGA Tour pros grappling with jeans-wearing, blue-collar workers.

“It’s really a tournament for the common golfer,” Tom Culligan says.

Culligan understands. He won the men’s championship in 1974 and the Senior title in 1998. Now he’s part of the committee running The City, determined to extend its vibrant history. The committee, which includes Archer’s widow Donna and Venturi’s son Matt, has found a way to keep entry fees comparatively low, despite minimal financial support from San Francisco officials.

That history – as one of the longest, continuously held tournaments in the country – includes a wide range of competitions beyond the championship divisions. Those flights, named for landmark figures such as Inkster, Venturi and Archer, allow the City to routinely include 500-plus golfers, a sprawling field emblematic of the tournament’s mission – an event for the people, on public courses, at once prestigious and accessible.

The sheer volume requires Lincoln Park, a funky track in the shadow of the Golden Gate Bridge, to serve as co-host with TPC Harding Park. Lincoln has attracted a colorful cast of characters over the years, as Culligan recalls, from players who didn’t know basic golf rules to those who got in a scuffle or two along the way.

One other element of the City worth noting: It stretches over several winter weekends, often amid rain and sloppy conditions, demanding durability and perseverance.

“That makes it very difficult to win,” Culligan says. “It seems to go on forever.”

And so it does. 🌧️



Keg of Nails to the Winner

BY RON KROICHICK

Talk about history: The inaugural edition of the Alameda Commuters was held in July 1928, when the winner earned a keg of nails and the golfer finishing last took home a sack of manure. Some traditions fade away, thankfully.

The Commuters, so named because early participants included many businessmen who lived in Alameda and commuted to work in San Francisco on the ferry, has survived the Depression and two World Wars in its nearly 100 years. By 1936, the tournament grew to 21 flights and soon thereafter added a qualifying round before ultimately becoming a 72-hole, stroke-play event.

The tournament evolved from a fun diversion for those businessmen to a prestigious event drawing top amateurs from around the Bay Area. Alameda’s own Bob Blomberg won six times and noted local amateur Gary Vanier won three years in a row (1988-90). San Francisco native Bob Rosburg took the Commuters title in 1949, 10 years before he became a PGA Championship winner.

Forrest Fezler won the event in 1968 and ’69, during his San Jose City College days, and subsequently finished second to Hale Irwin in the 1974 U.S. Open at Winged Foot. Or consider Cal’s Michael Weaver, the 2012 champion. He finished second in

the U.S. Amateur four months later, earning a spot in the next year’s Masters – completing a whirlwind journey from Alameda to Augusta National.

The Commuters takes place at Corica Park, the venerable 45-hole layout formerly known as the Chuck Corica Golf Complex. More than 200 players typically enter the championship flight, playing 72 holes over two weekends, though the ongoing renovation of the North Course limited this year’s field to 124 golfers navigating 36 holes in one weekend.

The tournament also includes ever-competitive Senior and Super Senior flights, and it finally added a women’s competition this year. They tackle a cool links layout, remade in the style of Australia’s Sand Belt courses.

And the winner takes home a coveted trophy, not a keg of nails. 🏆

Juniors Enjoy Stableford Scoring at NorCal Junior Players

BY BRIAN HEWITT

The word “serendipity” comes immediately to mind when describing the marriage between the format and the landmark venue for the recently contested NorCal Junior Players Championship.

It’s the only regularly scheduled opportunity Junior Tour of Northern California and Junior Golf Association of Northern California players (in eight different divisions) get each year to play Stableford golf.

Add to that, this year’s challenge to display their talents at Monterey’s historic Del Monte, the oldest course in continuous operation west of the Mississippi.

“The players love this event because they can be aggressive,” says tournament director Shane Balfour.

Stableford scoring gives 12 points for double eagle, eight for an eagle, four for a birdie, two for a par and one for a bogey. More important: No minus points for a double bogey or dreaded “other.”

In short, risk is rewarded.

The Stableford trick at Del Monte was to avoid leaving putts short while respecting the speed of downhill putts, especially on the treacherously canted third, 11th and 18th greens.

The 90-player field offers six age groups – three boys and three girls – ranging from 12 to 18. Best total for the 36-hole event won your division. Best total across all divisions made you the overall champion.

For this year’s results go to jganc.bluegolf.com.

In 2015 Danville’s Joshua McCarthy, a former JTNC Player of the Year and a future standout at national power Pepperdine, racked up 90 points over 36 holes at Rancho Canada with rounds of 66 (no 5s on the card) and 69.

Maverick McNealy, Bryson DeChambeau, Samantha Hutchison, Kathleen Scavo and Kaleiya Romero (pictured), a two-time winner of this event, just to name an elite few, have all tested their games against the nuanced strategies of Stableford.

“It’s refreshing to them,” Balfour says. “And rather unique.”

Del Monte (measuring 6,342 yards from the blues, 6,105 whites, 5,806 and 5,379 greens) welcomed this year’s field with open arms and added to the event’s prestige thanks to the course’s special place under the umbrella of the Pebble Beach Company.



Ace Provides Entry Point to Tournament Golf for Juniors

BY MIKE MCCALLISTER

There are trophies awaiting the winners, and hearty congratulations for all players competing in the Ace Kids Golf Junior Championship presented by 2K Foundations. For these juniors in the Oakland area, it’s quite an achievement just to tee it up. When the inaugural event was held in 2021 at Lake Chabot, 75% of the 50-player field had never previously competed in a golf tournament.

Every competitive golfer needs a start, an opportunity to get those competitive juices flowing, and Ace Kids provides an important entry point for an underserved youth minority community.

After winning the 17-under boys’ division in October, Marlon Jones, who just finished 5th in the Oakland City Amateur and narrowly missed qualifying for the state open, told local TV station ABC 7 that he learned “how to deal with adversity on the golf course and to not give up.”

Another player, Janissa Salazar, who started with Ace Kids at age 7 and is now a 20-year-old sophomore at Holy Names University, where she plays on the golf team, learned patience. “Golf is a real slow game,” she says. “You have to take your time ... be careful with everything you do. I actually have taken that with anything I do in life.”

Daniel Weiland, winner of the 14-under division, has learned to look forward and not dwell on things in the past. “Golf, you can translate to a lot of life situations,” he says. “You can always focus on what’s ahead of you. If you hit a bad shot, you just have to worry about the next shot. Move forward and try your best next time.”

Another junior player, Micah Lenton, says, “the best part is I make long-term friends.”

While the Ace Kids Junior Championship is a competitive event, the real rewards for participation can’t be found in a trophy case or a handshake. It’s the life skills that come with playing golf, and the friendships formed during an organized event that stresses fair play and good sportsmanship for those just entering the sport.



Honoring a Teacher

BY NICK LOZITO

The cart barn at Lew Galbraith Golf Course in East Oakland served as Reola Freeman's classroom. On Saturday mornings, students ranging from ages 6-17 took 10-question golf tests before she'd let them swing a driver or tap in a putt.

The exam, administered with parents on hand, began with True or False statements. "1. Woods are used for fairway shots ... 2. Irons are used for putting on the greens." Then came written answers. "7. What is a stance? ... 10. What is a target?"

More than 30 years later, Howard Oliver (*pictured, far right watching*

students) still has one of his tests, marked in red ink by the woman who taught him and countless other golf and life skills after serving in the Marines as a microbiologist. Oliver now applies Freeman's family-oriented approach through tournaments named in honor of his late instructor, who died in 2011 at age 91. The Reola Cup, a three-event seasonal series that began last fall and rotates among the nine-hole courses at Monarch Bay Golf Club in San Leandro, Corica Park in Alameda and Lake Chabot Golf Course in Oakland – is organized by Oliver and Gene Bakkum, co-operators of Elevate Golf Academy.

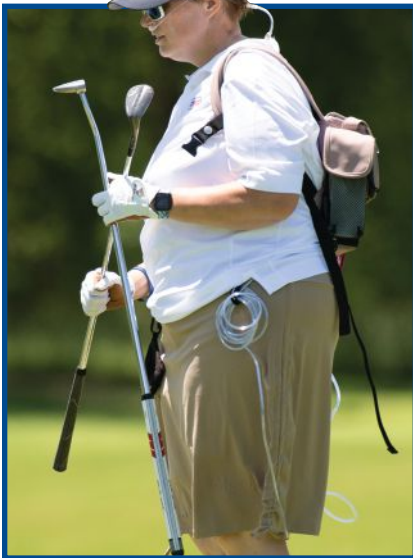
"It's a triangle that works – the player at the point, a parent or guardian and the coach," explains Oliver. "You need all those for success."

Oliver played collegiately at Cal-State and qualified for the 2015 U.S. Mid-Amateur. He serves as golf coach of boys and girls teams at Piedmont High, a public school in the affluent suburb of Oakland, while operating his academy, which was founded in 2018.

At a spring event of The Reola Cup, parents followed sons and daughters separated into junior varsity and varsity flights at the Marina Course in San Leandro. They raked bunkers, carried bags and provided encouragement. Oliver handled instruction.

"I won't say it's a requirement, but it's a heavy ask," Oliver says of parent involvement. "You can't just drop them off and go to Costco. That's straight from Reola. She had my mom in the (cart barn) classroom. She didn't want to be there. She said, 'My son loves it; I should know something about it.' "

After all, a triangle is not a triangle without its third side. 🌿



PGA HOPE of Northern California Lives Up to its Acronym – Helping Our Patriots Everywhere

BY ALEX HULANICKI

On the practice tee of Bayonet Black Horse Golf Course in Seaside, Navy veteran Mike Donnelan struggled to stay on his feet when he swung a club. More than 20 screws and plates held together his back and shoulder, and his service dog Sabbath, couldn't support him. But golf pro Bob Epperly calmly suggested that Donnelan try a shorter swing designed to reduce stress on the back. A couple of swings later, Donnelan felt more comfortable and the ball started to fly.

"It's a way to relax," says Donnelan, 54, of Aptos. "It's a way to be with friends, interact with people and get out of the house."

Epperly and Bayonet teaching pro Mike Spiller welcomed about 40 veterans at the start of the spring clinic at Bayonet. Before splitting up the veterans in "Alpha, Bravo, Charlie" groups for chipping, driving and putting, Epperly asked if any first-time golfers were in the room. Five raised their hands. "We'll try to develop your swing based on your need," Epperly

assures the group. Then, he smiles, and says, "We're here to have fun." Held in the spring and fall, the series of classes culminate in a scramble golf tournament. PGA HOPE graduates receive playing privileges at participating golf courses in Northern California. About 1,400 veterans have graduated from the program since it began in 2015, under a nonprofit foundation created by the Northern California PGA.

For Beth Henderson (*pictured*), 51, a retired public health nurse, the session at Bayonet was post-graduate study. She and her husband, retired Navy Lt. Cmdr. Scott Henderson, completed the program in 2019, and she was invited to represent the Northern California PGA Section at the PGA Championship's PGA Hope event at Southern Hills in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

"We live on a golf course," says Henderson, noting that the program helps her enjoy retirement. "PGA HOPE saved our lives, honestly." 🌿

A Novel Idea

BY BETH ANN NICHOLS

Las Margaritas Golf Club will celebrate its 35th anniversary this fall at its next outing. The NCGA Associate Club plays twice a year out of Poppy Hills Golf Course in Pebble Beach, its name inspired by the delicious drinks served there at Porter's Grill & Pub.

"For \$11 you can't even buy a margarita now," jokes Las Margaritas president Gini Auger (pictured).

It costs \$11 a year to join the club, plus the \$39 NCGA handicapping fee. Which is why so many of the club's members chip in a little extra when paying their dues to cover the customary free margaritas after each event.

There are currently 55 members of Las Margaritas. Two members must sponsor someone to join. Handicaps range from 3 to 28.

Auger, 87, has been overseeing Las Margaritas since founder Opal Maddox retired from the position in 1998. She enjoys coming up with unique formats for them to play. At their most recent event, Auger used a book theme, with four categories: mystery, biographical, romantic and adventure. The format was double best-ball, and each player was assigned to a genre. On each hole, the foursome had to use the tee ball of whichever genre was pictured on the tee box. Then they could use any player's ball, without using the same ball twice in a row.

Each member brought a book to use for prizes. Some brought extras. The low gross and low net winners got first pick, and then they went down the line. All leftover books were donated to a library at a 55-and-older community and to a local foundation.

The creative Auger met her husband, Bob, while teaching fifth grade in Germany. She took up golf in 1963 at the advice of her mother, who said she'd otherwise be a golf widow. When her husband, a dentist, went to serve in Vietnam, Gini joined a ladies golf group at El Toro Marine Base in Irvine.

After the war, Bob practiced in Carmel, and Gini did the bookkeeping. Gini lost Bob to Alzheimer's 10 years ago after 50 years of marriage. She calls her life in the game at Carmel Valley Ranch a lifesaver.

The Las Margaritas Golf Club, of course, adds a savory kick. 🍷



Pride and Joy

BY ADAM SCHUPAK

One of the best additions to the Northern California golf calendar has been the SF Pride Pro-Am, a friendly, hit-n-giggle scramble held at TPC Harding Park. Prizes are awarded, but the competition itself is secondary.

This tournament, which will be held for the fourth time on October 8, was the first-ever LGBTQ+ sporting event to be endorsed by the PGA of America and brings together a field of 125 – 25 foursomes of amateurs paying \$350 a person and paired with 25 members of the Northern California section of the PGA – to raise money for charity and just as importantly to raise awareness for a cause that is near and dear to the hearts of many of its participants.

"We're the last demographic to be addressed or included in any sport," says Greg Fitzgerald, an openly gay PGA professional who serves as director of golf at The Institute, a private club in Morgan Hill. "To be openly out as a whole group playing on the golf course is groundbreaking in itself."

An oversized rainbow tunnel of balloons typically welcomes attendees to the clubhouse. Inside, the bathrooms have been converted to gender neutral for the day, part of an effort aimed at celebrating golf as a game for everyone.

"This is a come-one, come-all facility," says Tom Smith, TPC Harding Park's general manager, who, along with his wife, Lyn, conceived the tournament. "Having everybody come together to play golf, it's about changing the course of society and using golf to do that."

"As a golf outsider, I've felt truly welcomed into this space each year, and I'm thrilled for our historic event to continue building inclusion in the sports world," says Nguyen Pham, Board Secretary of SF Pride and a member of the tournament's core planning team. In 2021, the event added a Pride Golf Award Reception on the eve of the tournament and organizers bestowed the inaugural SF Pride Leadership in Golf award to recipient Tadd Fujikawa of Hawaii, who in 2018 became the first male professional golfer to come out as gay. In all, the tournament has raised over \$200,000 for San Francisco Pride.

"I guarantee you nothing like this had been done," Fitzgerald says. "We're creating awareness and it's building more and more steam across the country." 🍷





Checking the Box for a Women's Net Championship

BY DAVE SEANOR

The days of women getting short shrift on the amateur circuit are long gone. The NCGA Women's Net Championship is proof.

When the NCGA Women's Amateur Championship debuted in 2005, it featured two divisions, gross and net. A Senior division was added in 2007. By that time, feedback to the NCGA was indicating that participants in the net division didn't enjoy playing second fiddle.

The NCGA was trying to accommodate a heightened interest in women's golf, but "a women's net competition was a box we hadn't checked," says Ryan Gregg, the NCGA's Chief Operations Officer.

That changed in 2008, when the net division was separated from the Women's Am and run as a free-standing competition at the NCGA's home course, Poppy Hills.

"It's a great championship venue," says Gregg, "and the Women's Net is run like a championship. The players are getting the same experience as they would if they were competing in any of the NCGA's championships."

The 36-hole Women's Net features three flights: Big Sur, for handicaps of 12.4 and below; Golden Gate (12.0 to 20.9); and Yosemite (21 and above). Gregg says participation in the Women's Net has been steadily growing; there were 77 entrants last year, on the heels of the event's cancellation in 2020 because of COVID, and he expects nearly 100 this year. The NCGA has devoted more resources toward serving its 35,000 women members, including the promotion of net tournaments, which put all contestants on equal footing. The average winning score across all flights in the last seven Women's Net Championships is 144.9 on the par 71 Poppy Hills layout that plays to 5,215 yards.

"Poppy Hills is a really tough golf course for a net women's event," says Gregg. "Especially if it happens to be cold and wet because of the fog. It's usually played in the summer, when it can be the foggiest and the coldest. So those who do win their flight feel like they've really accomplished something." 🌧️



Lengfeld's Legacy Lives on in CWAC

BY JULIE WILLIAMS

When Lynne Cowan, 59, entered the California Women's Amateur Championship for the first time in 1985, she paid \$50 to play five days at Pebble Beach Golf Links. For winning the Helen Lengfeld Flight that year (a consolation flight after losing her first match in the championship flight), she carted home a silver chafing dish from the personal collection of Lengfeld, tournament founder and NCGA Hall of Famer.

Lengfeld's distribution of pieces of her personal silver collection to CWAC champions through the years is an endearing detail of a tournament that was played for the 56th time in July. Cowan, a four-time CWAC champion, also remembers that Lengfeld, a mentor to many young female golfers, scattered lucky pennies on the starter's table – a tradition that continued even after her death in 1986.

"She really was a mentor to junior golf and women's golf," Cowan says of Lengfeld's influence in the Bay Area. What Lengfeld started at Pebble Beach in 1967 is still going strong, albeit with a few logistical changes.

The championship, a match-play event open to 156 amateurs with a handicap of 74 or better, began a 33-year stint at Quail Lodge Resort in Carmel in 1987. In 2019, the California Golf Association (made up jointly of the NCGA and Southern California Golf Association for the purpose of running state championships) took the CWAC under its umbrella and began rotating the championship between the north and south regions of the state. San Luis Obispo Country Club had the honors of hosting the latest edition.

For many years, says CWAC board member and past president Jennie Noonan, the championship was heavily populated by Northern California players. Alternating venues has attracted more Southern California talent to the player roster even though the field has always been exceptionally strong. Past champions include LPGA icons like Amy Alcott, Patty Sheehan and Juli Inkster. More recently, college stars Sabrina Iqbal, Ty Akabane and Amari Avery (pictured) have claimed the title.

"We have ladies here who have been on Solheim Cups, they've won USGA championships, they're Hall of Famers now," Noonan says. "It's pretty impressive when you look and see who's on the roster of champions." 🌟

The Spirit of Golf Lives on with Hickory Players

BY ALEX HULANICKI

Each time Tim Bell swings a hickory-shafted golf club, he enjoys the spirit of the game, “really learning how to play shots, punch the ball, run stuff up, instead of launching tee shots and which gap wedge to take out.”

A furniture-maker in the Santa Cruz mountains near Boulder Creek, Bell, 56, says he was getting bored with today’s version of golf seven years ago. “The modern game has been about distance,” he says. “It’s literally the same swing for every club.”

“I personally only play hickory now,” says Bell, who also restores the vintage sticks. He’s one of about 30 people who get together a few times a year dressed in vintage garb (Argyle sweaters and socks and plus-fours), carrying slim bags stuffed with niblicks, brassies and mashies as part of the Northern California Hickory Golfers (northerncaliforniahickorygolfers.com). Callaway Super Soft is the ball of choice, and some even bake a mesh pattern on to them.

The venues are arranged by Mike Scott, a retired building contractor in Santa Cruz, for what he calls “the loosely organized” group. Gilded-age courses like Presidio of San Francisco, Lincoln, Harding and Sharp parks in San Francisco, Pacific Grove and Del Monte in Monterey head the list of tourney sites. Scott says the yardages for competition range from the white tees for “open” at 6,000 yards to 5,100 yards for the super-senior flight of golfers age 70 and over.

Scott says it’s not about the competition – which draws five or six scratch players – but more about the camaraderie, and the opportunity to see what clubs have been found on eBay and thrift shops or discovered at garage sales. However, Bell warns, “those old clubs need to be inspected and the heads re-glued” because the epoxy typically has disintegrated. “I played with a guy who broke three shafts in one round,” he says.

Mike Kosich, a retired investment fund manager and lifelong golf junkie, doesn’t shatter shafts. He shatters records, often shooting under his age. The 82-year-old Los Gatos resident posted an 80 at Haggin Oaks in Sacramento in April. “If I could have puttied,” he says, “I would have shot 74.”

Some things never change in golf. 🌿



This Women’s College Event is Fully-Baked to Perfection

BY JULIE WILLIAMS

At the Juli Inkster at Meadow Club Invitational, it’s wise to save room for dessert. “The food is amazing,” says San Jose State head coach Dana Dormann, who co-hosts the women’s college golf event with University of San Francisco head coach Sara Doell. “As a college golfer, they’re always constantly hungry, especially on 36-hole days.”

For Doell, the cookies are can’t-miss, but she acknowledges that Meadow Club chef Steve Potter pulls out all the stops on the menu. Coaches who played the event three years ago are still talking about the food, she says.

The tournament, which typically consists of a dozen teams, was renamed the Juli Inkster at Meadow Club Invitational in 2019. Before moving to Meadow Club in 2016, the tournament was held at Almaden Golf and Country Club in San Jose. Playing tournament host is one of Doell’s favorite parts of the job and she labors over the little details for the field.

“I have always felt that college players remember three things when they go to tournaments,” she says. “It’s the golf course, the food and the gift.”

The Juli Inkster excels at all three, from the bags of Trader Joe’s snacks provided to each team as part of a tournament sponsorship to the special gifts given to all the seniors in the field. Tournament namesake Inkster, a San Jose State alumna (*pictured, center in white jacket*), has been a presence the past few years, too. She participated in a panel discussion with fellow former San Jose State star Pat Hurst and Golf Channel commentator Kay Cockerell in 2020, and spoke to players during the tournament’s Sunday-night dinner this year.

The Alister MacKenzie-designed Meadow Club in Fairfax is as good as it gets and a place where Doell says teams always feel welcome.

This past March, Dormann’s Spartans enjoyed more than just the milk and cookies, topping Stanford, then the No. 1-ranked team in the nation, for the second time in three weeks in a full-field event. After all that press, the word on the Juli Inkster is out with an even stronger field taking shape for 2023. 🌿





Golf to Train Your Relationship

BY TED JOHNSON

It was often said in the 1970s—and not so jokingly—that the quickest way to a divorce was to play mixed-doubles tennis with your spouse. The NCGA has its own mixed-team event, now in its 10th year, and, yes, it's affectionately known as “the divorce tournament.” Yet the event, open to players ages 18 and over of all ability, is one of the NCGA's most popular, selling out its 120-person field within hours of opening.

It's a two-day, 36-hole event under the Mixed Chapman format: Two competitors (spouses or partners) play as a team based on their respective handicaps. Each player tees off from the appropriate tee, then Player A

plays Player B's drive. Players then select the better of the second shots, and from that point they play alternate shot until the ball is holed.

“It's a fun couples tournament,” says Jim Puchbauer, who teamed with wife Sasa (*pictured*) to win their third title earlier this year. “Early on we were terrible, and then we decided just to have fun. The second we changed our attitude, we started to win.”

Like all mixed-team events, one partner often has to overcome the other's mistake. In a competitive environment, the angst can get thick quickly.

Clem and Maureen Cooper, who won their flight this year, witnessed that often when they first started playing in the event. “Teams would finish their rounds and you'd see couples coming off and after a few drinks the men and women didn't know enough to keep their mouths shut,” Clem says.

Both couples said the format requires understanding of each partner's strengths. Sasa Puchbauer doesn't hit it very far but is dead straight. In contrast, Maureen Cooper from the women's tees often leaves Clem with short approach shots, and he happens to have a very good short game.

The Coopers started this year's tournament in the fog on Poppy Hills' 10th hole and overcame a triple-bogey.

“You just have to keep trusting each other,” Clem says.

As for how much forgiveness is needed, he adds: “I never had therapy, so I can't help you there.” 🌪

Ham 'n' Egging It for NCGA glory

BY BETH ANN NICHOLS

When the idea of a two-person scramble first came up, there was a little apprehension. Scrambles are fun, but shouldn't an organization more than 100 years old, steeped in tradition, stick to traditional formats?

Hogwash.

The WGANC Legacy Two-Person Scramble Championship fills up so fast, NCGA members practice how to log in so that when the clock strikes 8 a.m., they're ready to rock.

This spring's Two-Person event at Pasatiempo Golf Club filled up within three minutes, noted Eva Monisteri, NCGA Director of Tournaments and Women's Golf. “Some people have forgotten their passwords and have to retrieve it from their Inbox,” says Monisteri. “They're out.”

The field size for the Two-Person Scramble is 48 teams, and as a measure of its popularity there were 36 people on the waiting list for Pasatiempo, a semi-private club in Santa Cruz designed by world-renowned architect Alister MacKenzie.

The tournament, which was held May 16-17, began in 2017 and was so successful that in 2019, the NCGA added a Legacy Two-Person Scramble II. This year's second scramble tournament will be held Oct. 31-Nov. 1 at Catta Verdera Country Club in Lincoln and nearby Winchester Country Club in Meadow Vista.

The format includes three flights and awards are given to both gross and net winners. The dynamite team of Itsuko Moridaira and Mami Chang (*pictured*) have won Two-Person titles in 2018 (gross), 2020 (net) and 2021 (gross).

Handicaps in the field can range from scratch to 40. Monisteri says people might think that a scramble would take less time, but because teams often go to both balls to size up the angles and lies, they have to be careful with pace of play, which is why the field is capped at 96.

Organizers add a bit more strategy by requiring each partner to hit six drives apiece. Even so, for many, it's an ideal entry into the competitive golf landscape.

“It's an easier format if you've never played in a tournament,” says Monisteri, “a little less pressure.” 🌪



A Championship for the Mid-Am

BY ADAM SCHUPAK

By the time that Ryan Sloane of Campbell defended his title for the third of what would eventually be five consecutive victories at the California State Fair Mid-Amateur Championship, the field already was calling it “The Ryan Sloane Invitational.”

“The defending champion’s entry is free the next year so he paid once and got to play six times,” said Sean Wong, tournament director of the Mid-Am since its inception in 2003.

Run by the Sacramento Golf Council, a non-profit organization that oversees over 20 city and council tournaments, the championship is an offshoot of the California State Fair tournament. With college-aged and juniors dominating that event, Wong launched a 40-and-over Masters division. Three years ago, it was renamed as the Mid-Am, lowering the age to 30 and over and reducing the competition from a three-day tournament with a cut before the final round to a 36-hole competition.

Before the arrival of the Mid-Amateur, the post-college player could compete in the top tier of the State Fair, and several still do, but these older amateurs faced greater odds. While they fit their golf around their work and families, they were most often competing against younger golfers, for whom the game is close to a full-time activity.

Noticing that there was too much overlap between the Senior and Masters division, the competition now is open to all male amateur golfers age 30 or older who are members of an organized golf club with a GHIN Index of 6.8 or less. The entry fee for the event, which will be contested at Bing Maloney Golf Course for the 20th time on August 20-21, is \$139. It usually attracts a strong field, with 36 players under a 2.8 index in 2021, and the added incentive that the top two finishers qualify for the State Fair Championship at Haggin Oaks over Labor Day weekend.

Garett Wagner of Brentwood ended Sloane’s quest for a six-peat in 2019, Juan Gonzalez of Antelope hoisted the trophy in 2020 and last year was one for the underdog as Alvaro Estrada of Sacramento, who had played in the tournament for at least 10 straight years with little success, finally had his day in the sun, edging Brett Viboch of Sacramento for a one-stroke victory. 🌟



Senior Fun Days

BY DAVE SEANOR

How much fun is the NCGA Senior Series? It’s so much fun that Mario Perez, who lives in the town of Arnold, at the edge of Stanislaus National Forest, roughly 75 miles northeast of Stockton, will make every effort to play in all 20 Senior Series events this year – even if it means leaving home before dawn and driving three-and-a-half hours to Santa Cruz, or spending the night in Fairfield for back-to-back events.

“I’m infatuated with golf,” says Perez, 62, a retired executive with Save Mart grocery stores, who is gunning for his third consecutive Senior Series Player of the Year award.

The Senior Series – open to men 55 and older, and women 50-plus – was introduced in 2019 with the intent of providing affordable, casual, weekday tournaments using a variety of formats at venues throughout Northern California. Contestants vie for points at each event and the points leaders (Senior and Super Senior) at the end of the series earn Player of the Year honors.

“The Senior Series has really been a big success,” says Spencer Sorensen, NCGA Tournaments Manager, noting that the 84-player fields tend to fill quickly. “People like competing and they like doing the different formats. Earning points toward qualifying for the season finale Championship event is appealing, too. Everyone really pays attention to the points list, and where they stand among their peers.”

Formats include Individual Chicago (where players try to exceed an assigned “quota” number of points based on their course handicap); Individual Net; 4-Ball Net; Two-Person Scramble; 4-Ball Scramble; Individual Stableford; and Two-Person Aggregate. Each event offers an optional skins game. Players are assigned to tees based on gender and division. Men’s yardages measure between 5,800-6,200 for the Senior Division and 5,400-5,800 for Super Seniors; women play 4,700-5,400 yards for both divisions.

Perez’s Senior Series success isn’t the only thing that makes his time on the road worthwhile. “I enjoy the camaraderie,” he says. “You see a lot of the same players at every event, and you get to know them on a first-name basis. It’s interesting how far guys will travel, and how people from all walks of life come together, all for their love of golf.” 🌟



BONUS CONTENT



BROTHERLY LOVE AT





TILDEN PARK

BY RON KROICHICK

Tilden Park Golf Course long ago cast its captivating spell on Steve and Doug Harker. They grew up in Berkeley in the 1960s, amid challenging circumstances in a turbulent time. Their parents divorced and then their dad, Todd, died. Jane Harker, their mom, wasn't exactly sure how to keep her boys busy and out of trouble. She turned to her brother, Jim Downing, and he proposed introducing young Steve and Doug to golf.

Brothers Steve and Doug Harker, who grew up playing Tilden Park in the Berkeley hills, are now running the facility.

“Tilden always felt like a sanctuary, and it still feels that way today.”

—Doug Harker



Says Doug Harker of he and his brother now operating Tilden: “There were definitely some tears, and just thanks we’d get the opportunity to do it. I felt like it was a completion of the whole circle.”

Talk about a full-circle story. Those same energetic kids who found refuge at Tilden Park now find themselves in charge of its future, directing ambitious renovations expected to total about \$1.6 million.

But this runs deeper than numbers, given the personal history. So when the Harker brothers’ company, Touchstone Golf, landed the long-term lease to operate Tilden – they officially took over in December – the emotions flowed.

“There were definitely some tears, and just thanks we’d get the opportunity to do it,” Doug, 64, says. “I felt like it was a completion of the whole circle – the span of our lease is going to take us to the end of our working careers. I don’t even know the words to express it. I got chills up and down my spine.

“For me, what really mattered was knowing we had all the tools to fix it. If we had been selected because we were the emotional choice, but we didn’t have the tools, I would have been really nervous. But I have so much confidence we’re going to

And, specifically, golf at Tilden Park, a picturesque and public tree-lined course in the Berkeley hills.

Uncle Jim arranged lessons for Steve (then about 9 years old) and Doug (18 months younger). Doug still remembers his first shot off the No. 1 tee, a meek little dribbler. Steve recalls taking nearly 30 shots to navigate Tilden’s daunting first hole, a beastly uphill par-4.

Before long, the Harkers were hooked. They played at Tilden all the time, picked balls on the range, befriended the staff and performed all sorts of odd jobs. The course became their childhood home in many ways, their personal playground.

Here’s the cool twist: Fifty years later, they run the place.



make it as great as it's ever been, and that's a really good feeling."

Doug is Touchstone's executive vice president and works out of Austin, Texas. Steve, 66, is the company's chief executive officer, lives a few hundred yards from the No. 3 tee at Tilden Park and has fully immersed himself in refurbishing the course.

Namely, the upgrades will include a wholly redesigned restaurant and patio; pushing the bar toward the No. 10 tee to open up panoramic views of the trees and hills; a re-painted and renovated pro shop; fresh turf on the range; improved drainage on several holes on the course; and the removal of 68 dead trees throughout the property.

Steve Harker has even bigger visions, calling his wish list "endless." Most notably, he wants to build a sprawling chipping and practice area between the first two holes, earmarked for kids and families.

"We're going as fast as we can," Steve says of the work at Tilden. "I'm driving my staff crazy."

Touchstone manages more than 40 properties in nine states, including Lake Chabot in Oakland, Blue Rock Springs in Vallejo and The Reserve at Spanos Park in Stockton, among other

Northern California courses. But Tilden Park clearly leads the pack in nostalgia.

That's where the Harker brothers, as teenagers, sank into the muddy turf as they used hand mowers on the fairways for the princely wage of \$1.65 per hour. (Steve recalls complaining about ruining his high-top Converse tennis shoes.) They tried to dodge wayward shots, not always successfully, while picking balls on the range. They dove into a long-ago pond near No. 5 to retrieve balls.

Most of all, they fell in love with golf. Even using ragtag clubs stuffed into old golf bags, the Harkers were determined to make the most of the \$20 monthly pass their mom bought for them.

"We played like crazy, until our hands were numb and our feet were sore," Doug says. "... Tilden always felt like a sanctuary, and it still feels that way today. The course was not always in perfect condition, but I remember how symmetrical the trees were. They were just perfect."

Steve and Doug played competitively at Albany High, though neither of them made their college team at Arizona State. Doug had some success in junior tournaments, most memorably winning the East Bay Regional Championship at Tilden Park. (In a related note, the Harkers are resurrecting the long-dormant "Bay Regional" this summer at Tilden.)

Eventually, Steve carved out a career in golf management and Doug went into banking while occasionally keeping his hand in the golf world. They founded Touchstone in 2005, steadily grew the company and finally landed their sentimental prize.

They face challenges at Tilden Park, no question. The course always has carried a mixed reputation among Bay Area golfers – it's a funky layout, in many ways, with vexing sidehill lies and known for mushy turf in the winter as well as an often-glacial pace of play, especially on weekends.

It also can be a demanding test, even topping out at only 6,300 yards. Doug speaks fondly of Tilden's shot-making requirements, an element typically lost in conversation about the stimulating views and absence of flat lies.

(Personal aside: I first played Tilden during my college years at Cal, in the 1980s. Then, as now, it was hard to believe such a serene oasis exists five minutes from the bustling Berkeley campus and 20 minutes from San Francisco. A round at Tilden always has been good for the soul.)

Steve and Doug Harker can't change the topography, and they don't want to change the spectacular setting. But, in concert with Tilden Park general manager Rob Billings, they're hoping to make enough practical upgrades to keep golfers coming back for more.

Just like the Harker brothers did 50-plus years ago.

"We're going above and beyond what's required," Steve says. "I see it as an investment in trying to give back the experience and joy Doug and I had growing up. That's what we're trying to do." 🍌

Ron Kroichick covers golf for *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

REACHING THE PINNACLE

Winners of multiple NCGA Club Champion titles have inspirational stories to tell

BY ROGER GRAVES

To earn the title “Club Champion” is one of the loftiest accolades amateur golfers throughout the NCGA region can achieve each year. Virtually every facility in Northern California conducts annual club championships for golfers of all ages, genders and skill levels. Thousands of golfers compete in club championships each year, with only the crème de la crème earning the coveted title of “club champion.”

It is said winning a club championship is on par with a professional winning the U.S. Open or The Masters, which is to say it is extremely difficult. So imagine winning multiple club championships. That is what each of the NCGA members profiled below has accomplished. Each has discovered the secret sauce for performing under pressure and earning

the distinction of “Club Champion” time after time, year after year.

Each has a unique story and each has followed a unique path to the Club Champions’ Hall of Fame. Each can provide inspiration and motivation for you to one day reach the pinnacle of amateur golf and also be recognized as your facility’s Club Champion.

AFTER NEVER PLAYING GOLF IN HER NATIVE JAPAN FOR 34 YEARS, NAKAHIRA BECOMES MULTIPLE CLUB CHAMPION AT WHITNEY OAKS

When Junko Nakahira moved from her native Japan to the United States in September of 1999, she discovered a new world, new culture, new climate, new language and new customs.

She also discovered a new sport, a new pastime and a new love – golf.

Now 56, Nakahira met her husband, Michael, while working as a concierge at a luxury hotel in Kyoto, Japan. A few years after the couple moved to America, they visited Haggin Oaks Golf Complex in Sacramento to shop for golf clubs and take lessons. Nakahira had never played golf before.

“Golf was largely reserved for businessmen or elderly people,” reflects Nakahira, who took tennis classes for six years in junior high and high school. “Now, the younger generations are learning to play golf in Japan, but for me, it happened much later in life.”

But not too late. Nakahira, who was 34 when she came to America, proved to be a fast learner and has become a four-time women’s club champion at Whitney Oaks Golf Club in Rocklin and also a former club champion at Mather Golf

Course in the northern Central Valley.

Nakahira didn’t venture onto a golf course to play during her first year of learning the nuances of the game from PGA Professional Ruben Samaniego. “I was worried about making people wait for me or doing something that wasn’t correct,” she says.

Today, Nakahira is not only an accomplished player, as evidenced by her club championships, but one who can’t get enough of the game. Her challenge has been finding time to play.

Nakahira is an only child, and as such, bears the responsibility of taking care of her 87-year-old parents, mother Kazuko and father Yasuji Taniguchi, back in Japan. She frequently flies to Tokyo for weeks at a time to care for them, doing her best to avoid conflicts with the biggest competitions at home.

“My mother has dementia and my father needs my help more and more,” Nakahira says. “It is very difficult now because the Japanese government has very strict pandemic rules. I had to be quarantined for six nights after I arrived at Narita, and I needed four negative PCR

tests before I was released to see my parents. It is crazy and stressful. Previously, it was 14 days quarantined. It takes me about one month to go there, take care of my parents and turn around and come back. I really feel that I have been losing my golf time and not improving at all recently.”

Golf provides a therapeutic respite from her concerns and care responsibilities in Japan, and Nakahira cherishes every round and every club championship she gets to experience these days.

“Golf is so much a mental game. Especially for my lifestyle, I can forget everything going on around me when I am on the course and I feel very happy that I have something I can really enjoy. Golf is a great stress reliever and helps me stay healthy. I am lucky that I have golf and feel very fortunate.” 🌸



WINNING 11 TITLES IS ELEMENTARY TO EUREKA TEACHER



As an exemplary educator for nearly two decades, Eureka resident Mike Richards knows all the tools and tricks for teaching even the toughest students. But when it came to advancing beyond the basic ABCs of golf, the 42-year-old encountered a highly challenging student – himself.

“I picked up a lot of bad habits from teaching myself and using the wrong equipment,” admits Richards, an elementary school teacher for the past 18 years who currently teaches second grade at Ridgewood Elementary School.”

Since patience, persistence and communication are three traits of

successful teachers, Richards was determined to turn himself into a proficient golfer. The fruits of his labors are reflected by his record at Eureka Golf Course, where he has won 11 of the past 16 men’s club championships.

Richards, who won seven consecutive club championships there during one stretch, taught himself how to hit every shot and how to handle pressure situations. He implemented many of the same teaching tools he used to play proficient golf in the classroom.

“Students may not use the phrase ‘I can’t.’ Instead, we say ‘I will.’ If a student does say ‘I can’t,’ I finish it off

with ‘Yet.’” Richards says. “I tell them that, yes, they need to learn the basics such as addition, subtraction, proficient reading and writing. But that their hard work and determination will be the key to their success.”

For 10 years, Richards and others have hosted 20-30 kindergarten through eighth-grade students at Eureka Golf Course twice a week during the summer to teach golf skills in a fun setting.

“We had three rotating stations where we would work with them on chipping, putting and driving,” says Richards, who has three children of his own in Autumn (4), Isaac (9), and Owen (15). “The funny thing is that I am now competing on the golf course with a lot of the players that I once taught when they were in

elementary school.”

Richards has many memories from his 16 years or so of competing in club championships and other NCGA events while winning 24 individual tournaments and emerging as medalist in two NCGA Amateur qualifiers—at Foxtail Golf Club in Rohnert Park and The Links at Bodega Harbour in Bodega Bay.

“One year, I shot a 71 in the first round of the club championship at Eureka and then shot a 61 on Sunday to tie the course record and win by seven shots,” recalls Richards. “Another memory I am proud of was when I was 3-under with two holes to go and I took a quadruple-bogey on my 17th hole of the day to finish Saturday at 1-over par. But I shot a 64 the next day and won by six. Another year, I took a 10

on the par-5 third hole on Saturday and it would have been easy to pack it in. My longtime caddie, friend and high school math teacher, Matt Muldoon, looked at me and said, ‘Don’t worry. They all know you’ll come back from it. You’re still the one they need to beat.’ That comment gave me a lot of confidence and I went 4-under over the finishing 15 holes to shoot one over par. I shot a 68 on Sunday and won my fifth club championship.”

Judging by his past 20 years in golf, it is apparent Richards, the student, has learned volumes about golf from Richards, the teacher. He has certainly learned how to succeed under all circumstances on the golf course.

“My determination is what got me to where I am as a golfer,” he says. 🌻

HANGING 10 AT PENINSULA FOR DWYER

Germaine Dwyer has overcome a shag bag of obstacles and challenges on her way to winning 10 of the 11 women’s club championships in which she has competed during the past 18 years at Peninsula Golf & Country Club in San Mateo.

First, there was her late start in the game and lack of experience that served as obstacles. Dwyer, a native of Greece, was 42 when she moved to the United States and took up golf. Her husband, Tim, introduced her to the game, encouraged her to take lessons, and watched in delight as she became a highly accomplished player.

“The game looked easy until I tried it,” Dwyer says with a laugh.

Like many NCGA members, once Dwyer put a club in her hand and began hitting balls, she developed a burning desire to master the game she’d never played back in Greece.

“I took lessons from (PGA Professional) Tom Toschi (now retired) at Peninsula Country Club, and from (PGA Professional) Eddie Lee at Wailea Golf Club in Maui, Hawaii, where I am also a member,” notes Dwyer, who also won a women’s club championship there. “Once I started playing, I always

wanted to improve. I have always really enjoyed competing, so I wanted to be as good as I possibly could.”

The indomitable Dwyer was forced to overcome another major hurdle on her way to multiple club championships at Peninsula G&CC, the only course designed by renowned golf-course architect Donald Ross on the West Coast. In 2013, Germaine had open-heart surgery, which made her future in golf questionable. But she came back as determined as ever the following year and won the women’s club championship again at Peninsula. Today, she continues to play golf, volleyball, swims almost daily and also enjoys sailing.

Her expectations were tempered when she signed up for the 2014 PG&CC Club Championship. “It required an unusual amount of mental and physical conditioning to bring myself to compete,” she recalls. “After winning, it gave me more confidence in myself to handle setbacks and personal challenges. That has to be considered one of my most memorable club championships, because I was coming back from open-heart surgery.”

Today, Dwyer uses golf, yoga and swimming to stay in tip-top shape. She



uses club championships to get her competitive juices flowing.

“I have a great practice routine I use to prepare for club championships, and the club championships seemed to always bring out the best in my game,” says Dwyer. “Golf has given me the opportunity to meet many new people that remain friends to this day. For me, it really is the game of a lifetime.”

Since moving to America from Greece and taking up golf at 42, Dwyer has also proved that no challenge in life is too large to overcome—not even open-heart surgery or an occasional bogey in the club championship. 🌻

It Pays to be a Member

- Benefits that Add Up -

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Even Advice for **UNEVEN LIES**

Don Leone of Cinnabar Hills shows how to address uneven lies.

BY JUDD SPICER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT KAUFMAN

When seeking tutelage for how to hit uneven lies, the best direction comes from a real straight-shooter.

Proprietor of his eponymous Golf Academy at Cinnabar Hills Golf Club in San Jose, Don Leone (donleonegolf.com) was named Northern California PGA Teacher of the Year in 2012, followed by a nomination for National PGA Teacher of the Year the season ensuing. Plying his trade across Cinnabar's rolling, undulated terrain, Leone's syllabus is well-balanced in the art of addressing all manner of uneven lies.

"Maintaining balance and not getting overly aggressive are big keys," Leone says. "I see people try to hit these shots like they would a flat lie—and they fall backwards, forwards, all over the place."

For players struggling with shots which belie the flat variety, Leone lends his expertise for four lies that trouble most players.

Don Leone has been a leading California golf instructor for over three decades. In addition to running the Leone Golf Academy at Cinnabar Hills in San Jose, he previously served as a lead instructor with ESPN Golf and the Nicklaus/Flick Golf Schools. He's worked with the men's golf teams at Santa Clara University and San Jose City College and his student roster includes junior, collegiate and pro players.



UPHILL LIES

For properly hitting an uphill lie – as with all shots referenced herein – pre-shot preparation is key.

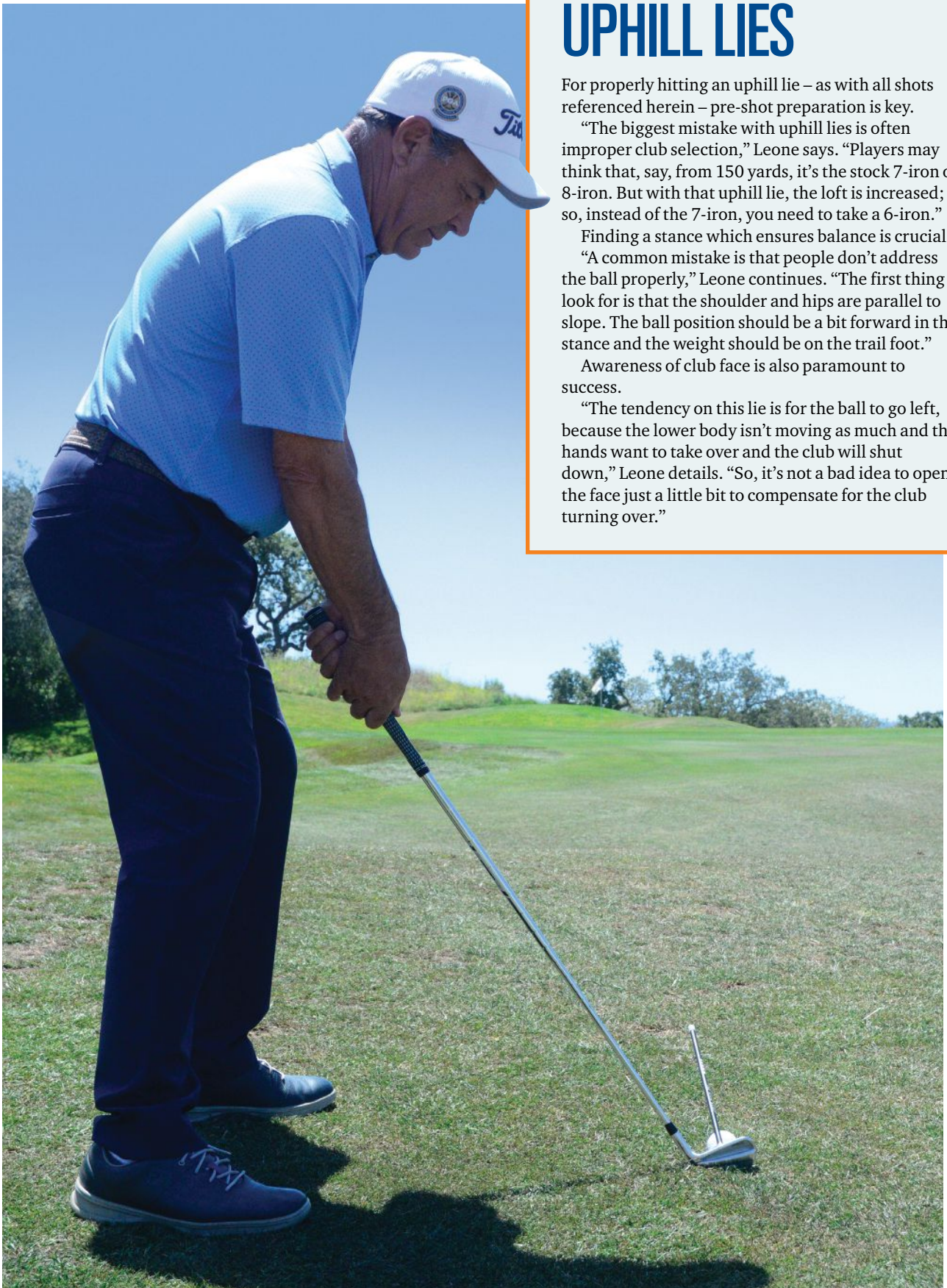
“The biggest mistake with uphill lies is often improper club selection,” Leone says. “Players may think that, say, from 150 yards, it’s the stock 7-iron or 8-iron. But with that uphill lie, the loft is increased; so, instead of the 7-iron, you need to take a 6-iron.”

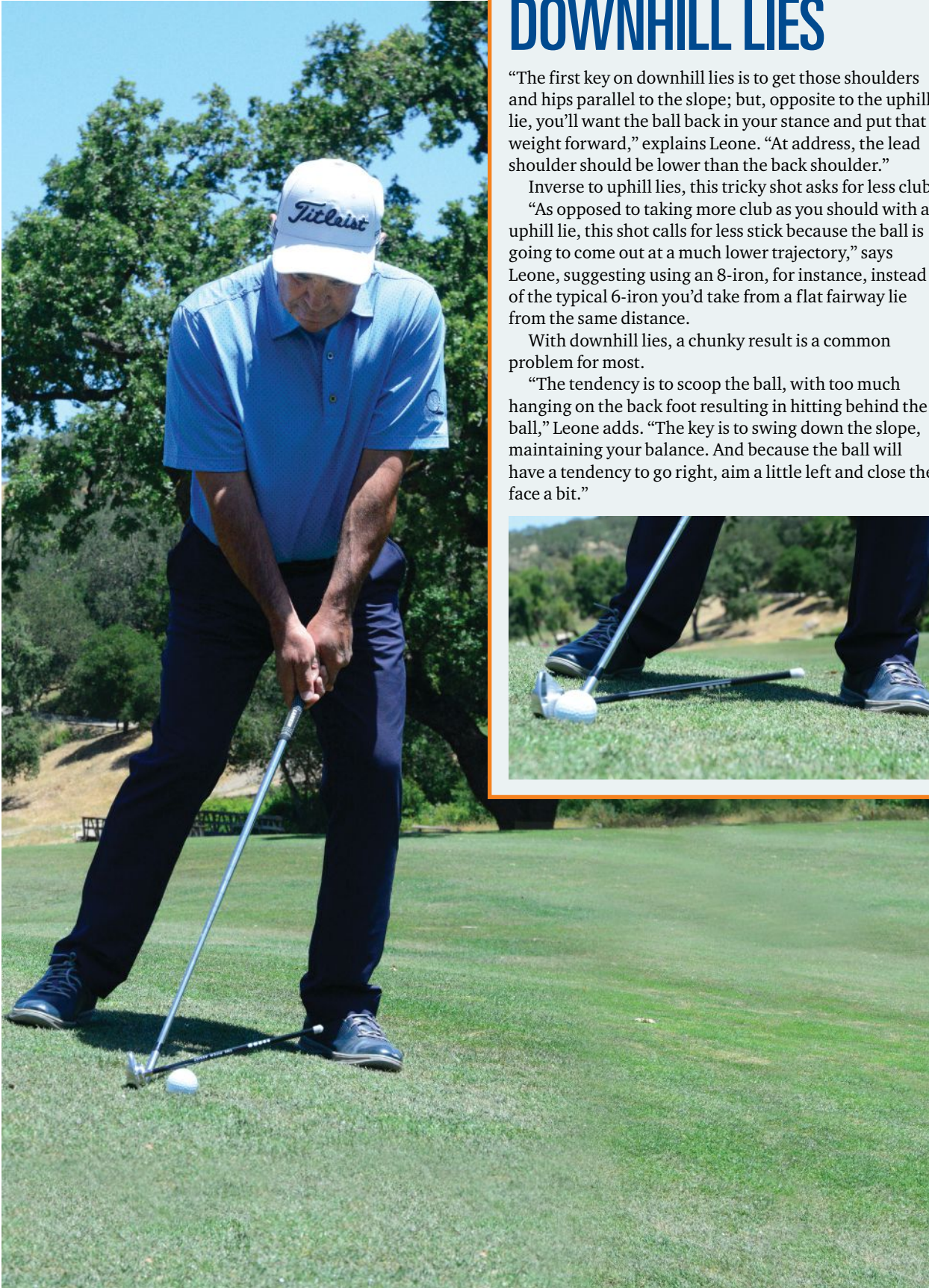
Finding a stance which ensures balance is crucial.

“A common mistake is that people don’t address the ball properly,” Leone continues. “The first thing I look for is that the shoulder and hips are parallel to slope. The ball position should be a bit forward in the stance and the weight should be on the trail foot.”

Awareness of club face is also paramount to success.

“The tendency on this lie is for the ball to go left, because the lower body isn’t moving as much and the hands want to take over and the club will shut down,” Leone details. “So, it’s not a bad idea to open the face just a little bit to compensate for the club turning over.”





DOWNHILL LIES

“The first key on downhill lies is to get those shoulders and hips parallel to the slope; but, opposite to the uphill lie, you’ll want the ball back in your stance and put that weight forward,” explains Leone. “At address, the lead shoulder should be lower than the back shoulder.”

Inverse to uphill lies, this tricky shot asks for less club. “As opposed to taking more club as you should with an uphill lie, this shot calls for less stick because the ball is going to come out at a much lower trajectory,” says Leone, suggesting using an 8-iron, for instance, instead of the typical 6-iron you’d take from a flat fairway lie from the same distance.

With downhill lies, a chunky result is a common problem for most.

“The tendency is to scoop the ball, with too much hanging on the back foot resulting in hitting behind the ball,” Leone adds. “The key is to swing down the slope, maintaining your balance. And because the ball will have a tendency to go right, aim a little left and close the face a bit.”





BALL ABOVE FEET

For this testy ball position, address begins with proper spine angle.

“I like to see a taller stance, and definitely some grip-down on the club – which should be a little more club – because with that choking-down you’re taking more shaft out of it,” Leone advises. “And when making a practice swing, be sure to feel that club properly bottoming-out where you want it to.”

Club face awareness in those practice swings should provide further feedback.

“This is also a time to open up the face a little bit,” adds the instructor, “because the club face wants to shut as the heel of the club tends to grab the slope a bit and turns the face over.”



BALL BENEATH FEET

This lie tends to be the toughest for golfers of all levels. “It’s the lie most golfers mishit. The tendency for most players is to sit back on their heels, because they don’t want to lose balance,” says Leone. “As soon as the club starts back, it wants to start on a really steep plane; the player tends to shift the weight toward the toes, which exposes the hosel.”

In practice swings, Leone suggests assessing weight shift of the body and focusing on finding balance.

“The key here is to bend and tilt more from the hips, and get the body in a position where you’re not rocking your weight from heel-to-toe. The body needs to be stabilized,” he says. “And though the legs will get into this swing a little bit, this is really an arm swing. Balance needs to be maintained as much as possible with this shot.”

Employing a quiet lower body will result in a loss of swing speed, which Leone counters with:

“Take one more club, hold the handle a little higher, toward the end of the grip,” he concludes. “And the ball will want to go right, so I suggest aiming a bit left of the intended target for the right-handed player.”

BANDON

Bandon Dunes

Still Glowing in the Wind

BY BRIAN HEWITT

Bandon Dunes is the golf destination resort where the little things add up to a lot and the big things have made a quantum leap. It opened in 1999, the product of a gleam in the eye of wealthy Chicago greeting card anti-mogul Mike Keiser. It existed briefly as a secret among golf's cognoscenti before ascending, almost overnight, to bucket-list status.

The resort's creation has been told and re-told, in mostly glowing terms.

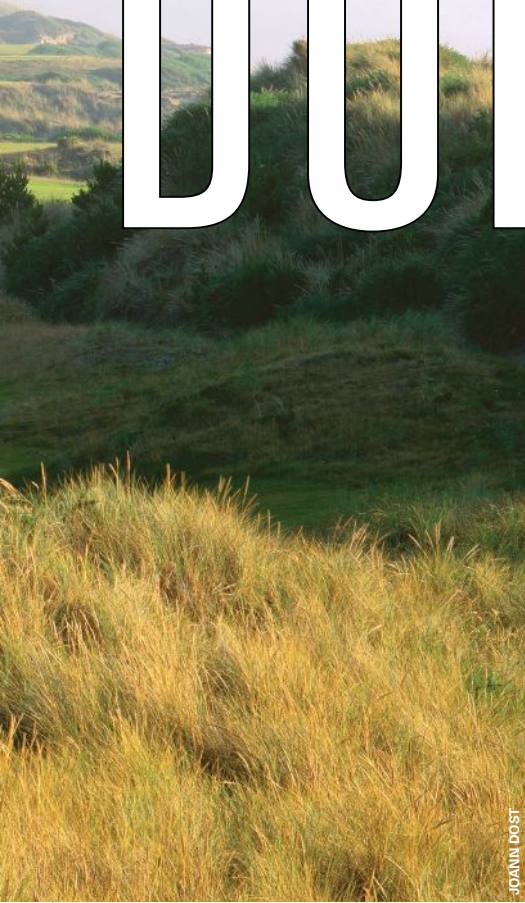
Author Stephen Goodwin, in his excellent book,

“Dream Golf: The Making of Bandon Dunes” described the initial public reaction to the first course as a “coup de foudre” which translates loosely from the French to “love at first sight.”

But Bandon Dunes' ongoing evolution is now, 22 years later, a careful work in progress. What follows is a review of its past, an on-site update of its present and an inside peek at its future.

The good news: This special golf place is still “mostly glowing” – and then some.

DUNES



JOANN DOST

The Sheep Ranch, the new kid on the block that opened in 2020, is already No. 1 on many Bandon regulars' lists. It is all about sweeping views, scale and scope and is defined by the exposure and elevation found on that stretch of Oregon's rugged south coast. It is the current "must play" in the rotation.

Moving on, you will find architect Tom Doak's minimalist idiosyncrasies on full display at **Pacific Dunes**. And you might be surprised, at round's end, that you didn't notice Doak's back nine routing includes four par-3s.

Old Macdonald, opened in 2010, is an homage to C. B. Macdonald, educated at St. Andrews University in Scotland and considered by many the father of American golf architecture.

Oh, and that haunting Ghost Tree that comes into play on the third hole and

dominates Old Macdonald's landscape? It's an indigenous Port Orford Cedar. And it just might be Keiser's unofficial answer to Pebble Beach's iconic Lone Cypress.

According to longtime Bandon Dunes greeter/factotum Bob "Shoe" Gaspar, the Ghost Tree's trunk and branches, if not its foliage, have survived multiple fires and lightning strikes.

Bandon Dunes, the first of Keiser's Fab Five, is the linksiest on property and one of the best match-play venues in the world with its risk/reward drivable par-4 16th, its chasmed 17th and its reachable but sneaky par-5 18th.

Scorecard distance is mostly beside the point. From the tips, Old Macdonald plays the longest of the five, measuring 6,944 yards; Pacific Dunes, with its total of six par-3s, the shortest at 6,633 yards.

The architects: Doak, Bill Coore, Ben Crenshaw, Jim Urbina and David McLay Kidd comprise an all-star team. Their five courses here all rank in the top 10 of *Golfweek's* most recent top 100 "Best Courses You Can Play in the U.S." Their common denominator: playability, even for higher handicappers.

Another must play on property is the 13-hole par-3 **Preserve**, a delightful Crenshaw-Coore routing with a Pacific Ocean backdrop on every hole. It costs \$100 and takes less than two hours.

First, the big things:

Bandon Trails, the most inland and the third built of the resort's five 18-holers, is ideally played through its forests, meadows and dunes on a quiet, late afternoon among lengthening shadows. When finished, drinks and dinner await in the **Gazebo**, a short pitch above the 18th green tucked at the back of the **Trails End Restaurant**.

Conversely, the **Sheep Ranch**, at the north end of the property, is best experienced in the morning before the prevailing winds assert.

If you are lucky enough to have played Ireland's Ballybunion Old, you will have remembered the view on the 11th tee there. Its distant, but unmistakably related cousin is now the southward facing ocean-side vista on Sheep Ranch's sixth tee.



Old Macdonald

JOANN DOST



Sheep Ranch

Tip: Schedule an early tee time if you prefer less traffic and less wind. Play later and you can pair golf with the cocktail hour.

By the way, it was no accident when Pebble Beach hired Tiger Woods to redesign its par-3 Peter Hay nine, replete now with adjoining bar and restaurant. Bandon Preserve showed the way nine years earlier and launched a national trend toward short, boutique designs that has become essentially a requirement at resort operations.

Doak also left his stamp on the 100,000 square foot “Punchbowl” putting area next to **Pacific Dunes**. Tip: Before tackling Doak’s large, undulating greens at Old Mac, spend an hour at the Punchbowl.

Green fees at Bandon Dunes resort are high but not exorbitant. Lodgings are comfortable but not luxurious. Dining options are appetizing and largely locally-produced, but not yet Michelin grade.

All of this is by design. Golf comes first. And there is a clear mandate to keep that commitment relevant.

The 2020 U.S. Amateur at Bandon Dunes was an unqualified success and led to a partnership with the USGA that will bring 13 championships through 2045.

“Our slogan is, ‘golf as it was meant to be,’” says Keiser. “We are dedicated to public golf, links-style golf and amateur golf.”

So, the answer is a pretty firm “No” to the question: Will there ever be PGA Tour golf here?

Jeff Simonds, director of resort operations, explains: “By the time it’s over and done with I think this will become the

home of amateur golf, and that’s something we’re aspiring to.”

What Bandon doesn’t aspire to is any infrastructure expansion – read: skyboxes, corporate chalets and mega-tents, etc. – altering what communications director Michael Chupka calls the “Bandon Experience.” That experience includes a “walking only” policy unless you have a



Pacific Dunes

doctor's note. Caddies are recommended but carrying is permitted.

Bandon Dunes holds a special place in the hearts of returnees, who are affectionately referred to as "Bandonistas."

"Some people we get here have come 20, 30, 50 times," Shoe says.

They know what they're getting. Necessary change at Bandon Dunes is OK. But not at the expense of the Bandonista vibe.

"I don't think I can say this place is ever really done," Simonds says. "There probably could be more development, but I don't know if it would ever happen because it's got to fit the recipe of success."

There was recent talk of adding an off-property 18-hole muni south of the town of Bandon. But, said one official, "it fizzled out" when red tape prompted Keiser to move on, for now, to out-of-state projects.

More important, in the present, is attention to detail—the little things that mean a lot.

The efficiency of the shuttle system that transports guests and clubs from course, to range, to room, and back would make a Swiss watchmaker blush.

The Guest Services hub will keep your clubs overnight and have them waiting the next morning at that day's first tee.

Guest Services will even dry your clothes in industrial-sized dryers, bag them and return them to your room if the not-infrequent rains have left them soaked.

Meanwhile, Bandon Dunes covets its NCGA visitors. In 2022, the NCGA had three trips scheduled to the destination. "Everyone talks about Bandon Dunes as this worldly destination, and certainly we see people from all over," Simonds says. But, he adds, Oregon, California and

Washington comprise Bandon's three largest-drawing states.

The resort is a 468-mile drive, much of it scenic, directly up Highway 101 from San Francisco. Or you can hop a flight from SFO to North Bend's regional airport, 23 miles north of the resort. Taking I-5 will be quicker from Sacramento and NCGA locales farther east.

Upon arrival, you will find no good reason to leave the property until your stay's sadly inevitable end.

So, if you take your golf seriously, but can check your ego at the winding entrance road...if you can resolve to strike a healthy balance between your scoring expectations and golf's whims...if you can open your eyes, your pores and your mind...you will best be prepared to find golf *as it was meant to be* at the Bandon Dunes resort.

The glow is alive and well. 🍷

Kidd's Play on Champ, Par-3 Layouts a Kid's Thrill

Gamble Sands Resort in Remote Washington Worth the Trek

By Alex Hulanicki

Remember designing your own golf course when you were a kid? In a vacant lot, or down the street at a park? Hitting a tennis ball with a rusty, beat-up nine iron? That's the kind of feeling golf architect David McLay Kidd wants you to relive at his par-three **Quick-Sands**, an extension of the Gamble Sands resort in Brewster, Washington.

Located in the northeast portion of the state, about 90 miles from the Canadian border, **Gamble Sands** overlooks the Columbia River near the Grand Coulee Dam. Since opening in 2014, it has become the top-rated public course in the state, according to Golfweek's Best. Couples, families, and golfing buddies make the four-hour drive from Seattle or Tacoma, or fly into Wenatchee, 90 minutes away by car.



Gamble Sands



QuickSands

And since May 2021, Gamble Sands has offered QuickSands, giving golfers another challenge. Kidd took the “vacant lot” adjacent to the championship course to create a virtual “Alice in KiddLand” featuring 14 par-3 holes. With apologies to Lewis Carroll, the rabbit hole at QuickSands is a sand box showcasing fast greens and faster fairways that rock and roll along with the music coming out of speakers placed on the perimeter. No time for tea, but **Danny Boy Bar and Grill** offers fine food and drink before or after the adventure.

Kidd penciled out a routing for superintendent Josh Truan and his crew to shape holes named with such suggestive themes as Crater (don’t be short), Half-pipe, Cut and Faith.

“The names were purely dreamed up to tell the crew what to do,” says Kidd, who has also masterminded links-type courses at Bandon Dunes and Sand Valley. “This is a layout for hits and giggles.”

It’s hard to say which is a better experience: venturing alone down the rabbit hole or playing with the superintendent. How else would a first-timer know to try a 360-degree putt around the Donut Hole trap on the 10th green (the day I

played it), or to waggle a putter on a 152-yard downhill hole called Faith. Yes, have faith in the flat stick.

QuickSands was envisioned to be 13 holes, but as the layout got shaped, it became apparent a 14th green could be placed at the bottom of the chasm between the last two holes. At first glance, a downhill sand wedge might be the shot, but then, surveying the slope, a crest midway and the swale below, the putter becomes a better weapon to roll the ball to the crest and let gravity do the rest. But don’t be short on the tee-putt!

“Fescue grass is the epitome of a hard-and-fast surface,” Kidd advises visitors. “It is to your advantage to let the ball roll.”

“Sometimes the fairways are faster than the greens,” says Tory Wulf, representative for the Gebbers Family Farms, owners of the 40,000 acres of apple and cherry orchards and cattle ranges that surround the golf resort.

An example of playing the speedy fairways to the hilt at the links-style Gamble Sands is ripping driver at the par-5 18th that stretches to 566 yards from the tips and if you hit the speed slot you can still get home in two if you play the appropriate tees. Or pull out a camera on the 2nd tee to capture the Columbia River in the back-

ground before trying to cut off fairway over a gaping wall of sand and wildflowers. Kidd has provided funnel areas on fairways to reward well-placed shots. Otherwise, the ball is likely to roll into waste areas. But, as the architect says, getting the ball to roll is well worth the gamble.

Off the course, **The Inn at Gamble Sands** offers spacious rooms and large windows from which to view the snow-capped Cascades. The golf course is open from April to October. Ski resorts are close by, and in addition to golf, Gamble Sands has farm and ranch tours, exquisite cuisine at the Danny Boy Bar and Grill – don’t pass up the Porterhouse steak and homemade apple pie featuring Gebbers’ trademark Sugarbee apples, accompanied by vanilla ice cream. Then sit in the Adirondack chairs next to the grill to enjoy the view of the Cascade Mountains or walk down to the 100,000 square-foot **Cascade Putting Green** for an evening of glow-ball competition.

Wulf says typical “golf buddy” tours can be arranged for groups of 8 to 32.

Gamble Sands plans to expand the inn and create a second 18-hole course.


There’s no doubt that Kidd’s next layout will feature fairways and greens that are fast and furious. 🌊



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DRESS For Success

What you wear on the course can help you look good and play even better **BY DON JOZWIAK**

Summer is finally here, and now's the time to make the most of the longest days of the year by hitting the golf course. In addition to looking and feeling good, what you wear – from apparel to sunscreen and hats – can help keep you healthy while enjoying the game. Keep these new products in mind as you head outside for fun in the sun throughout the season. 🌻



IBKUL Long Sleeve Zip Polo

MSRP: \$98 | ibkul.com

► Keeping cool and safe from the sun is a must, and this top offers UPF 50+ sun protection along with cooling technology that can lower skin temperature by up to five degrees, while adjustable ties help customize your fit.

Tifosi Seek FC Sunglasses

MSRP: \$49.95 | tifosioptics.com

► Offering strong performance at a value price point, these golf sunglasses have Enliven lenses that make greens, blues and reds “pop” with more definition in a shatterproof polycarbonate material.



Aloe Up Sunscreen

MSRP: \$16 | aloeup.com

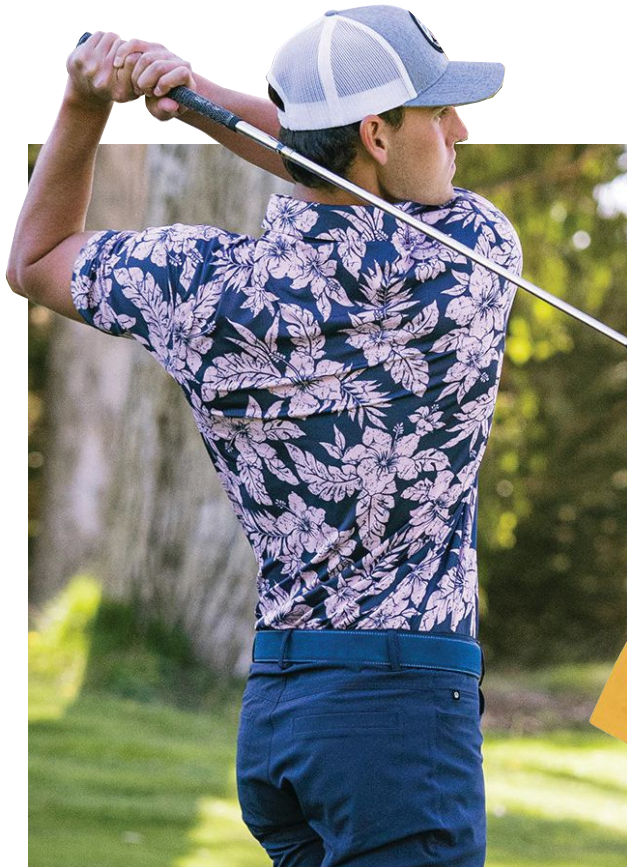
► Protect your skin without getting your hands greasy using this easy-to-apply spray, which absorbs quickly and is designed to provide paraben-free SPF 50 protection that can be easily reapplied throughout your round.

lululemon Short Sleeve Polo

MSRP: \$78 | lululemon.com

► The beloved yoga brand has a host of great options for outdoor apparel, like this quick-drying polo with No-Stink Zinc-treated material and a sleek slim fit for golf, tennis or any other active endeavor.





Straight Down Kahuna Polo

MSRP: \$98 | straightdown.com

► Big, bold and bright prints are the style golfers are sporting this summer, and this extra large floral pattern can help you feel a little of the Aloha spirit every time you tee it up.



Lyle & Scott Men's Polo

from \$75 | lyleandscott.com

► This iconic Scottish manufacturer is making waves coming west, with stylish silhouettes that are sure to become wardrobe staples.



Oakley Portal X Sunglasses

MSRP: \$178 | oakley.com

► This versatile frame works on and off the golf course, while the Prizm Dark Golf lenses are designed to increase contrast for better looks at subtleties on the greens.



adidas GolfTour360 22 Shoes

MSRP: \$210 laced, \$250 with BOA | adidas.com

► A wraparound design that secures your foot and has built-in cleats helps stabilize your swing, and the cushy Boost material puts a spring in your step from the first tee to the 19th hole.



Around **the** NCGA

Inside:

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- 54 Events
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Global Guardians

Members of the international **Handicap Operations Committee (HOC)** convened in May at NCGA headquarters for three days of meetings – their first such in-person meeting since the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020.

The HOC, which is responsible for the development of the World Handicap System, is composed of members from Argentina, Australia, Canada, England, Italy, Japan, South Africa, Sweden, The Netherlands and the United States (including the NCGA’s own Senior Director of Governance **Jim Cowan**), as well as various officials from the USGA and R&A. 🌱

Reach-ing Out

NCGA *Reach*, a new grant program from the NCGA, has launched and already three facilities are reaping the benefits. As part of its mission to ensure the game is vibrant, inclusive, and accessible to all, the NCGA is always looking for ways to boost diversity and inclusion at facilities in the Northern California region.

New this year, *Reach* provides qualifying public facilities and programs extra funding to test innovative programming with the goals of being more inclusive and diverse and further growing the game.

Already, two courses and one program are off and running.

- **Bayview Golf Club** – Based in Milpitas, a \$25,000 grant will go towards the development of a junior after-school ‘Bridge’ program that will make golf instruction more available in the communities of Fremont, East San Jose and Milpitas.

- **Tahoe City Golf Course** – Located in Tahoe City, a \$25,000 grant will go towards construction of a new on-site practice area specifically for juniors and women.

- **Golf for Health** – Based at Haggin Oaks, this Morton Golf program – currently featuring participants ranging in age from 50-80 from the Greater Sacramento region – focuses on rehabilitation through golf. A \$2,500 grant will help ensure that no one is turned away.

“We’re thrilled with the grant and with the *Reach* program the NCGA came up with,” said Bayview GM Abe Roof. “Growing youth golf is a big part of what we’re trying to do. And this grant will help make that possible in our region.”

We at the NCGA feel exactly the same way.

To learn more about NCGA *Reach*, please email Bryan Rodriguez at brodriguez@ncga.org. 🌱

Into the Swing of Things



PWGA Legacy Senior/Super Senior Championship (Stableford)

May 3-4 | Eagle Vines/Chardonnay

Green Valley Country Club member **Itsuko Moridaira (1)** came up clutch when she needed to.

Moridaira, the 2020 NCGA Senior Women's Player of Year, made par on the 18th hole for a final-round stableford score of 25 and two-day total of 59. That was enough to notch a one-point win over runner-up **Tomi Marcus** in the Senior Championship.

The big difference for Moridaira was an opening-day score of 34. Her par on the 18th snapped a streak of three straight bogeys. Marcus, who had a final-round 31 to come in at 58, also slipped on the 18th, carding double-bogey. Third place went to **Deborah Robertson** at 54.

In the Super Senior Championship, **Patty Mitchell (2)** won, defeating **Pat Prather** in a playoff after both finished regulation tied at 47. Third place went to **Kay Robinson** at 46.

The Net Senior title went to **Nanette Prolo (3)** at 78. The Net Super Senior title was won by **Bonnie Rookh (4)** with a score of 73. 🌸

WGANC Legacy Hers N' His (Stableford)

April 26-27 | Tierra Oaks/Riverview



Flight A Gross: Itsuko Moridaira and Takeshi Usuzaka, 40-35—75



Flight B Gross: Becky and Ray Romero, 27-18—45



Flight A Net: Susan Schutz and Mark Hawley, 44-43—87

Flight B Net: Kathryn Jaeger and Paul Mason, 38-36—74



55th NCGA Four-Ball Championship

May 6-8 | Spyglass Hill

Not long after the final group came in to make things official, **Alex Chin (pictured, left)** shared a celebratory moment with his mom and grandmother. **Jalen Griffin (pictured)**, meanwhile stepped away to call his mom.

The pair, teammates at University of San Francisco the last few years, delivered a special Mother's Day gift, posting a sensational final-round 9-under 63 to win by four shots over the runner-up tandem of brothers **Jimmy** and **Johnny Castles**. The 63 was the low round of the 54-hole event and was just two shy of the championship record, a 61 posted by 2021 winners Ethan Farnham and Ethan Ashbrook.

Chin, the 2020 NCGA Player of the Year, is a 23-year-old graduate student playing at USF. Griffin, 26, is an assistant for the Dons. The two, who finished at 18-under 198, spent a season together for the Dons when Griffin was a senior and Chin was a freshman.

"It was a pretty electric weekend," Griffin said. "The first day we were ham-and-egging it. The second day we had no bogeys and today was solid. Spyglass can eat you up real quick."

Having entered the final round three shots behind the Castles and the team of **Lewis Simon** and **Keith Okasaki**, Chin and Griffin played a seven-hole stretch starting at No. 6 in 6-under to assume the lead and never looked back.

"We play off of each other well," Chin said. "Keep the ball in play. If the first player is in the middle of the green, the second person can play aggressively."

The Castles, who both formerly played at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo, finished second at 202 after a final-round 70. Third place went to the team of **Griffin Long** and **Matthew Sutherland** at 203. Sutherland is the nephew of PGA Champions Tour member Kevin Sutherland. 🌸

WGANC Legacy Two-Person Scramble I

May 16-17 | Pasatiempo GC



Flight A Gross: Kristen Mulenburg and Eden Anderson, 65-69—134

Flight B Gross: Cindy Renshaw and Catherine Houston, 77-70—147

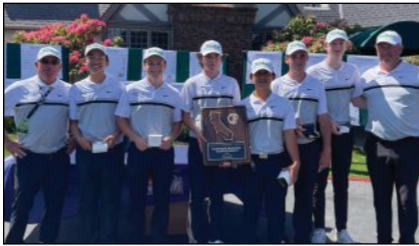
Flight C Gross: Tiffany Sparks and Song Gigot, 80-77—157



Flight A Net: Lynda Donahue and Lesley Stewart, 64-64—128

Flight B Net: Claudia Little and Terese Thomas, 68-67—135

Flight C Net: Julie Wong and Tracy Lee, 71-67—138



CIF/NCGA Boys' NorCal Championships

May 23 | Berkeley CC



De La Salle High of Concord picked up its record sixth NorCal title, while Dougherty Valley's **Jacob Ponce** (left) claimed the Individual crown.

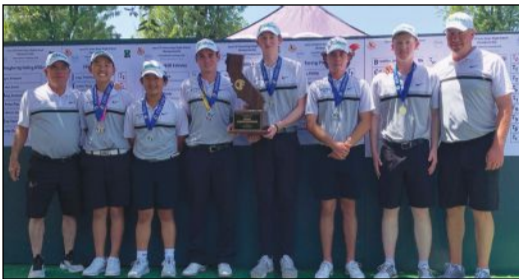
De La Salle shot a team score of 3-under 357 (best-five-out-of-six) to defeat runner-up Foothill High of Pleasanton by 16 shots. Third place went to Dougherty Valley at 375.

De La Salle, Foothill and Dougherty Valley all earned automatic spots into the CIF State Boys' Championship. Leading the way for De La Salle were **Jaden Dum Dumaya** (66), **Joshua Kim** (70) and **Colin Keith** (73). Other scores for the Spartans were **Jack Jerge**, **Joey Hayden** and **Ted Davenport** (74). Foothill was paced by

Brandon Knight (72) and **Chanhee Ryu** (73).

In the Individual Championship, Ponce came in with a 7-under 65 to knock off Dum Dumaya and **Zachary Mate** of Consummes Oak by a stroke. Ponce carded eight birdies and a bogey.

Overall, the top nine players not on teams advanced to the State Finals. Others moving on were Mate of Consummes Oak, **Ryan Firpo** of Davis Sr. (68), **Austin Wang** of Athenian (69), **William Walsh** of Junipero Serra (69), **Edan Cui** of Crystal Springs Uplands (69), **Seth Saffell** of Castro Valley (70), **Ethen Lien** of Monta Vista (71), **Sam Lyons** of Granite Bay (71) and **Luke Brandler** of Stevenson (72). The championship was canceled each of the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 🌸



CIF Boys' State Championship

June 1 | San Gabriel CC

De La Salle High of Concord and **Brandon Knight** of Foothill High of Pleasanton made it a clean sweep for NorCal.

De La Salle, winners of the CIF/NCGA Boys' NorCal title, was dominant yet again, finishing with a team score of 3-under 352 (best five-out-of-six) to defeat runner-up Torrey Pines High by 11 strokes. It marked the first State title for De La Salle since 2006.

Leading the Spartans were **Jaden Dum Dumaya** (70), **Joey Hayden** (68) and **Joshua Kim** (69). Other De La Salle scores were **Jack Jerge** (72), **Colin Keith** (73) and **Cameron Keith** (76). Foothill High finished fourth at 373. Dougherty Valley was sixth at 382.

In the Individual competition Knight shot a sizzling 5-under 66, edging **Edan Cui** of Crystal Springs Uplands and **Eric Lee** of Sunny Hills by one. Knight posted seven birdies and just two bogeys. 🌸

58th NCGA Senior Net Championship June 6-7 | Poppy Hills



Big Sur Flight: Mark Fishwick, 69-73—142



Golden Gate Flight: Nick Ranchetto, 70-72—142



Yosemite Flight: Reico Cruz, 69-73—142

WGANC Legacy Senior Tournament (Stableford)

June 6-7 | Rancho Murieta

50-59 Gross: Karen Garcia and Jennifer Douglas, 40-40—80

50-59 Net: Shelly Hanak and Sandy Inguez, 42-42—84



60-69 Gross: Miok Kim and Helen Kang, 31-32—63

60-69 Net: Beverly Poff and Lisa Ribeiro, 41-41—82



70 + Gross: Susan Hendrix and Heidi Caldwell, 29-25—54

70 + Net: Elaine Boggess and Heidi Matlock, 40-42—82



PWGA Legacy Spring Partners

June 7-8 | Tierra Oaks/Gold Hills

Low Gross: Linda Steiner and Marlene Ray, 82-77—159

Low Net: Kathy Schilperoot and Karen French, 66-70—136

Flight 1: Kay Robinson and Rebecca Kirkpatrick, 72-68—140

Flight 2: Marj Kelly and Donna Pock, 73-65—138

Flight 3: Paula Grose and Mary Klein, 64-74—138

Flight 4: Alicia Meiners and Kathy Ingram, 68-76—144

Flight 5: Susan Strahan and Joann French, 65-73—138

Flight 6: Lois Eriksen and Patricia Keys, 74-68—142



2nd NCGA Women's Mid-Amateur Championship

June 11-12 | Poppy Hills

Hayward resident **Katrina Camitoc** (pictured) won't forget her NCGA Women's Mid-Amateur debut anytime soon.

Camitoc, who played collegiately at San Jose State, shot a final-round 2-under 69 to come from behind and win the title by a shot over her former Spartans teammate **Jen Brumbaugh**. The 32-year-old Camitoc finished the event with a 36-hole total of 3-over 145.

"It's so awesome to get an NCGA win," said Camitoc, who last tasted victory in college. "I saw that there was a Mid-Am and thought I'd give it a go."

For Camitoc, who's married and has a 14-month-old son (Lukas) along with a marketing job at Mastercard, just getting out on the course can be a challenge. "I really don't get to play much," she said. "When we can bring Lukas to the course, we bring him. It's fun."

A day after shooting 76, Camitoc had a rough start, going 3 over through her first four holes. But she'd bounce back, carding birdies on Nos. 3 and 6 and an eagle on the par-5 9th to get back to even par. After making the turn, Camitoc made all pars, adding birdies on the 16th and 18th to seal the win.

Brumbaugh, who opened with a 38 on the front-nine, had a chance to catch her friend but was snakebit by a double-bogey on the par-4 12th.

Third place went to **Holly Bare** at 148 after a final-round 69. First round leader **Sally Krueger**, who was looking for her first NCGA win, fell back to sixth place after a 79. 🍀



30th NCGA Associate Club Four-Ball Net Championship

June 13-14 | Poppy Hills

Hassan Firzok and Ahmer Khan,
64-63—127



54th NCGA Four-Ball Net Championship

June 20-21 | Poppy Hills

Ed Zahariades and Rob Chaplain,
62-60—122

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40th NCGA Mid-Amateur Championship

June 11-12 | Poppy Hills

In 2019, Carmel resident **Ian Dahl** (pictured) made history by becoming the first NCGA employee to win an NCGA Championship.

The 33-year-old Cal-Berkeley alum, who works in Marketing for the NCGA, now has two.

Dahl sank a clutch 18-foot birdie putt on the first hole (par-4 1st) of a sudden-death playoff to defeat tough-luck runner-up **Matt Hansen** after both players finished regulation tied at 6-under 136.

"It was a good line. I just didn't know if it would get there," said Dahl of his winning stroke. "It feels really good to get a win."

Having entered the final round tied with **Matt Cohn** at 4 under, Dahl first made a push by carding four birdies in a row starting at No. 7 to improve to 8 under. All the while, Cohn, a four-time NCGA champ, hung right with him thanks to three birdies of his own through 10. Meanwhile, Hansen, a former standout at UC Davis who played on the Canadian Tour, also entered the fray by going 2 under through the first 10. On the par-3 11th, things got scrambled when Dahl made a double-bogey after his ball landed

in a footprint in the greenside bunker while Hansen and Cohn made pars. Unfortunately for Cohn, he'd play his final seven holes in 2 over to fall out of contention.

Hansen, meanwhile, caught Dahl with a birdie on the par-4 12th. On the hole, Dahl saved par after his drive ended up in the penalty area on the right. Later, on the par-3 17th, with Dahl and Hansen still tied, Hansen hit into the penalty area leading to a bogey. He'd get the stroke back on the 18th, however, when he made birdie and Dahl had to settle for a par.

For Hansen, the scenario was déjà vu. Last year, he also bogeyed the 17th and then made birdie on the 18th to get into a playoff. He'd lose in 2021 to Nick Moore on the first playoff hole when Moore drained a birdie putt.

"I need to just blow up the 17th," Hansen joked. "We all played well. It was a lot of back and forth. Ian made a great birdie to win it. A win would've been nice." 🍷



72nd California Junior Girls' State Championship

June 20-24 | Half Moon Bay

Prior to squaring off in the 18-hole final of the California Junior Girls State Championship, **Ellie Bushnell** (pictured) and **Sophie Thai** chatted away on the practice putting green.

Theirs is a friendship that blossomed while growing up competing on the Junior Tour of Northern California. In fact, they have discussed teaming up to play in the U.S. Women's Amateur Four-Ball Championship.

"It's something we want to do," Bushnell said.

But on this occasion, they were opponents in a final to join an impressive roll call of champions. Bushnell, the No. 1 seed, walked away as the champion following a 3-and-2 win in the fog at Half Moon Bay Golf Links.

The big difference was a pair of back-to-back wins for Bushnell on the 14th and 15th holes that stretched her lead to 3-up with three to play and she secured the victory one hole later with a halve at 16.

With the win, Bushnell joins the likes of past champions Yealimi Noh (2014 and 2018), Christina Kim (2000) and Dorothy Delasin (1996). In 2021, Bushnell was co-medalist with Kiara Romero, who went on to win the title.

"This is one of my biggest wins so far," said Bushnell, a 17-year-old senior at Granite Bay High who will begin playing at Oklahoma State in 2023. "I've wanted to win this for a while."

Thai, who is also 17, is headed to Dartmouth College this fall. She advanced to match play as the No. 14 seed and played beautifully until a balky putter let her down in the final. "It was a pretty good match until those last few holes," Thai said. "Ellie played well."

For Bushnell, the only thing missing was her coach, who happens to be her father, David.

"He couldn't make it here but it meant a lot to me to win it for him," said Bushnell, who was followed by her mom, Shelby. "It made my mom happy too." 🍷



18th NCGA Women's and Senior Women's Amateur Championships

June 27-29 | Poppy Hills

The summer has been a whirlwind for Rocklin resident **Kaylyn Noh** (left). Back in May, Noh won the Big West Conference Individual title and was named Big West Player

of the Year. Then, she decided to return closer to home, transferring to Cal-Berkeley. While she has yet to tee it up for the Bears, she's already left an impression on some of her new teammates. Noh carded a final-round 1-under 70 to win by three shots over four of her future Cal teammates. Altogether, five Cal players made the cut, including runner-up **Cristina Ochoa** and third-place-finisher **Annika Borrelli**.

"This is really my first tournament in about two months. I was just coming out, trying to remind myself to be relaxed and take what I could from the course," said Noh, who finished with a 54-hole total of 2-under 211.

The key moment came on the par-5 10th. Holding a tight one-shot lead over Ochoa, Noh knocked her second shot – a 6-iron from 165 yards – onto the green. She proceeded to sink her 24-foot eagle putt, while Ochoa made par, to take a two-shot lead.

Noh would open the door a bit later with a double-bogey on the par-4 14th, but bounced back by playing her final four holes at 1-under. Ochoa finished with 70 to come in at 214. Borrelli, who was the defending champion, had a final-round 72 to finish at 216.

In the Senior Championship, **Lynne Cowan** (right) extended her own record, winning the title for a fifth time by seven shots. The Sierra View CC member carded a final-round 1-over 73 to come in with a 54-hole total of 5-over 218. "I was pretty steady," said Cowan, who was playing with a new set of irons. "I didn't make many mistakes." Cowan was most proficient with her putter. She'd only three-putt once during the championship. "I was just seeing the lines," Cowan explained.

Prior to her win at Poppy Hills, Cowan showed that she was returning to form. Playing at Sierra View, she won the club championship by defeating friend Karen Garcia. Cowan's charge there included a run of four birdies over her final five holes to claim the win.

Defending champion **Tina Barker** finished second at 225 after a final-round 72. Fellow NCGA Hall of Famer **Sally Krueger** took third. 🌸

WGANC Legacy Team Match Play

June 22-23 | The Fountaingrove Club



Flight A Gross: Kelly Simpson and Juvy Timan



Flight A Net: Catherine Houston and Donna Ybarra

Flight B Gross: Dolly Coleman and Tina Barker



111th California Amateur Championship

June 27-July 2 | Big Canyon

Sweet redemption. Two years after losing in the finals, Palm Desert resident **Charlie Reiter** experienced the other side, capturing the 111th version of the prestigious event with a 5-and-4 victory over El Dorado Hills resident **Kevin Huff**.

With the win, the No.29-seeded Reiter joins the likes of past champions including Johnny Miller (1968), John Cook (1975) and Xander Schauffele (2014). The 5-and-4 margin is the largest since Shintaro Ban's win in 2016.

Reiter also became the first previous runner-up to return and win the title since Spencer Levin in 2003-04.

Fresh off an appearance at the U.S. Open in June, Reiter began his week with an upset win over No. 4 **Brett Viboch**. In the semifinals, he eliminated the No.1-seed, **Kuangyu Chen**. His last victim, Huff, was the No. 6 seed.

"Finishing second, that wasn't going to happen again," Reiter said. "We got off to a quick start and I kept it going. It was awesome."

A senior at the University of San Diego, Reiter was a buzzsaw in the morning portion of the scheduled 36-hole finale at Big Canyon Country Club in Newport Beach. He built a commanding 6-up lead thanks in part to five birdies on his back nine. While Reiter was rolling, Huff, a fifth-year senior at Fresno State, shot 1-over.

Not long after the resumption of the match, Reiter's lead ballooned to 9 up after par wins at the second and third holes and a birdie win on the par-4 5th. Huff, a member of Team NCGA earlier in the week during the North/South Challenge, tried to mount a comeback for the ages. With birdie wins on hole Nos. 9, 11, 12 and 13, Huff slashed into Reiter's lead. It wasn't enough though as a halve on the 14th clinched the title for Reiter.

In the North/South Challenge, the SCGA won the title, which pits six players from the NCGA against six from the SCGA (best-five-out-of-six scores count), by teaming to post the lower total score of 706 to 723 to earn the Roger Lapham Trophy.

Team NCGA (below) was represented by **Daniel Connolly, Ian Dahl, Brian Ma, Sam Sommerhauser, Viboch and Huff**. 🌸

Every time I officiate or even play, the question comes up. When do I have to find a Nearest Point of Complete Relief (NPCR)?

For starters, it has nothing to do with relief from a penalty area. Here is the definition of NPCR, straight from the Rule Book – with my explanation in italics.

What is the Nearest Point of Complete Relief?

“The reference point for taking free relief from an abnormal course condition (Rule 16.1), dangerous animal condition (Rule 16.2), wrong green (Rule 13.1 f) or no play zone (Rules 16.1 f and 17.1 f), or in taking relief under local Rules. *These are the only five situations where NPCR has to be determined!*”

It is the estimated point where the ball would lie that is:

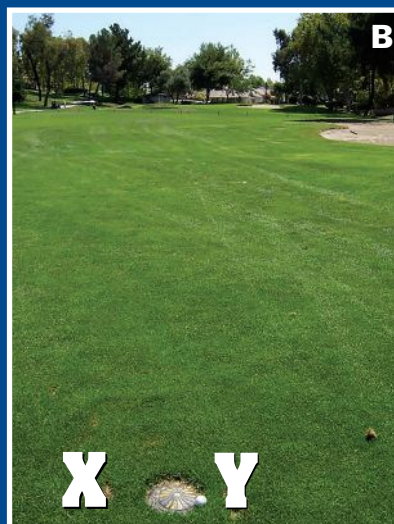
- Nearest to the ball’s original spot, but not nearer the hole than that spot
- In the required area of the course, and
- Where the condition does not interfere with the stroke the player would have made from the original spot if the condition was not there.” Note that “interference” refers to swing, stance and lie. Your ball may lie on a pristine fairway, but your feet are on a cart path. Your NPCR must give you complete relief for swing, stance AND lie. So, in this example, your feet must be completely off the cart path when you establish your NPCR.

Estimating this reference point requires the player to identify the choice of club, stance, swing and line of play he or she used for that stroke.

This is asking you to imagine that your ball is in such a position that there is no interference to your swing, stance or lie. What club would you use? That is the club you should use to determine your NPCR. Determine your NPCR by taking your stance and grounding your club as if you were going to strike a ball towards your intended direction. Where your

WHAT IS THE NEAREST POINT OF COMPLETE RELIEF?

BY SUZANNE OLSEN



club touches the ball is the NPCR, if it meets the criteria above. You then drop a ball within the one-club length dropping area. So, you may be in a situation where you’d use a pitching wedge to determine your NPCR, and then use your driver to measure the one-club length dropping area.

Take a look at the accompanying photos. The NPCR is almost always going to be different for a right-hander versus a left-hander. Where is the NPCR for a right-handed and left-handed player in Photo A? (The green is ahead in the photo).

In this example, Y (see Photo B) is the nearest point of relief for both a right-handed player and for a left-handed player. If you chose X as the point for a right-hander in the example, note that is not the point nearest to where the ball lays. It doesn’t meet the first criteria! As a right-hander with your ball positioned at Y, the Kirby (yardage) marker would not interfere with your swing, stance or lie. You may want to argue with me that it is a mental interference since it’s between

your feet and where the ball lies, and I would have to tell you that the Rules of Golf don’t give you any relief for that!

Finally, remember that you are entitled to free relief from an abnormal course condition, dangerous animal condition or wrong green. You can choose to take free relief or not! However, you must take free relief for a no play zone.

If a Local Rule is in effect, it will tell you if it’s a choice or mandatory. I mention this because when you determine your NPCR it may not be a nice place. It may be in the middle of a tree trunk, on the side of a steep hill, on a cart path or in an ugly lie, and the one club-length dropping area may not get you out of bad territory! So, before you pick up your ball, figure out where your NPCR is. Look at your dropping area and then make your decision about whether or not to take free relief.

Keep in mind, there is no relief under Rule 16.1, when the stroke you would make is clearly unreasonable. 🍄

Suzanne Olsen is a Rules certified official.

How Low Can You Go?

BY JIM COWAN, NCGA Senior Director of Governance

It's been quite some time since we last performed an inventory of handicaps within the NCGA. That is, a breakdown of the percentage of NCGA members that carry a Handicap Index at various levels.

In digging through the archive vault, it was the 2007 Winter edition of *NCGA Golf*, to be exact, where we last took a deep dive into the numbers ... and a lot has happened in that time.

Golf ball, club and shaft technology has advanced. If we are to believe the advertising, we should be hitting the ball farther and our mishits should be going straighter. That means lower scores, right? Not so fast, my friends.

What else has changed?

Well, the methodology for computing a Handicap Index has evolved, as has the maximum value that can be issued. This is especially noteworthy on the women's side of golf. As you will observe (see table at right), we are not quite comparing apples to apples in the higher handicap ranges.

So, what do the numbers reveal and, more importantly, how do you stack up?

The most remarkable thing about the numbers is that they are not remarkable at all.

Conclusions?

To borrow from the theme of my 2007 column, the most remarkable thing about the numbers is that they are not remarkable at all – no stunning decline in handicaps observed.

Makes sense to me. In theory, the better the golfer, the greater the benefit from the new and improved equipment. And a 2% and 1% increase in the number of NCGA single-digit handicappers on the men's and women's side, perhaps, bears this out.

Another observation: the increase in the max

Handicap Index limit to 50.0 has been good for women's golf. That's 13% of women golfers that now have a much more accurate handicap, can track their progress, etc. For years, they stared at nothing but a 40.4 (the previous max) each revision.

As for me, don't ask. My handicap and 401(k) are both trending in the wrong direction. 🍂

MEN				
Handicap Index Range	2007		2022	
	% of Total	Cumulative %	% of Total	Cumulative %
+0.1 & less	0.66%	1%	1.28%	1%
0.0 to 4.9	5.68%	6%	6.06%	7%
5.0 to 9.9	15.80%	22%	16.53%	24%
10.0 to 14.9	25.08%	47%	25.86%	50%
15.0 to 19.9	23.32%	71%	24.27%	74%
20.0 to 24.9	15.45%	86%	14.50%	89%
25.0 to 29.9	8.28%	94%	6.99%	95%
30.0 to 34.9	3.68%	98%	2.81%	98%
35.0 to 39.9	2.11%	100%	1.09%	99%
40.0 to 44.9			0.41%	100%
45.0 to 49.9			0.10%	100%
50.0 & up			0.11%	100%

WOMEN				
Handicap Index Range	2007		2022	
	% of Total	Cumulative %	% of Total	Cumulative %
+0.1 & less	0.35%	0%	0.98%	1%
0.0 to 4.9	1.30%	2%	1.86%	3%
5.0 to 9.9	2.70%	4%	2.62%	5%
10.0 to 14.9	6.15%	11%	5.56%	11%
15.0 to 19.9	11.95%	22%	10.83%	22%
20.0 to 24.9	18.10%	41%	16.53%	38%
25.0 to 29.9	19.45%	60%	19.99%	58%
30.0 to 34.9	16.60%	77%	17.13%	76%
35.0 to 39.9	23.00%	100%	11.33%	87%
40.0 to 44.9			7.17%	94%
45.0 to 49.9			2.50%	97%
50.0 & up			3.49%	100%



Special Member Event: The NCGA Visits Stanford For Some Golf and Football

Mark your calendars for Sept. 10 as the NCGA heads to Palo Alto for some pre-game golf skills clinics, food trucks and then some football as Stanford hosts USC.

Pre-game festivities will include skills contests, delicious eats, mini-clinics and prizes! Then head over to the stadium as the Cardinal takes on the Trojans.

There will be three sessions available (9:30–11 a.m., 11:15 a.m.–12:45 p.m. and 1–2:30 p.m.) before the scheduled 4:30 p.m. kickoff.

Tickets for the entire package are \$75 for the end-zone and \$100 for midfield and include a \$15 donation to Youth on Course.

Stay tuned, registration info coming soon! 🌐

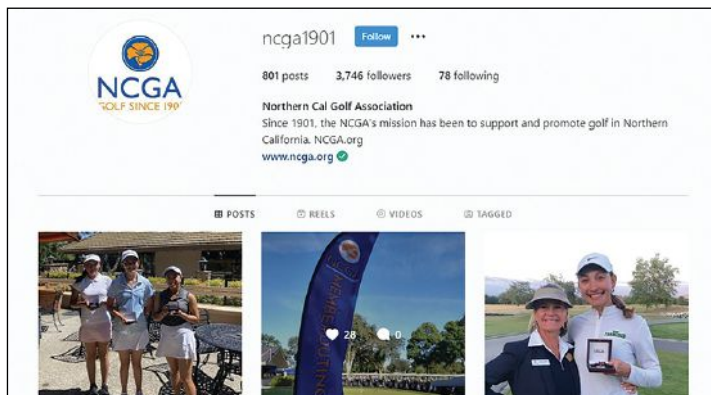
Let's Get Social



It's a new era in golf, and nothing makes that more apparent than the game's prominence in social media. Make sure you like and follow us on Facebook (ncgagolf), Twitter (@NCGA1901) and Instagram (@ncga1901).

It's so much more than tournament news – other topics include Benefits, Wellness, Rules, Handicapping, History and a surprise or two.

Stay connected to the game and engage with golfers like you from all around Northern California. 🍷



Updates: NCGA GO and my NCGA App

- The **NCGA GO** discount travel portal, powered by AffinityTravel, was discontinued as a member benefit as of June 1. Since its debut in 2017, numerous competitors and business model innovations have entered the marketplace which provide extensive consumer options. In the meantime, we have been steadily adding partners that offer exclusive member savings on hotel and golf stay & play packages – some of them being 'everyday' with others being promotional. We encourage you to check these out on in the Member Area on our website (ncga.org).
- The **myNCGA App** will be discontinued sometime this fall. In its place, we are recommending the USGA GHIN app, which can be found at the App Store or on Google Play. In addition to score posting, handicap lookups and stats tracking, the GHIN app continues to deliver on innovation. It already has golf course GPS and AppleWatch compatibility with more to come, such as advanced stat tracking and a games feature that will make it easier to keep track of friendly competitions.



Junior Tour
OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

On to **the Show**

Matthew Almajano and Cathy Zhang earned golden tickets to this year's PGA Junior Girls' and PGA Junior Championships, respectively, with victories at the Summer Series II Championship at Poppy Ridge.

Zhang earned her win by defeating Sarah Yeh in a sudden-death playoff after the two finished regulation tied at 3-over par 147. Almajano also advanced via a sudden-death playoff win, defeating Nathan Lee.

Both this year's PGA Junior Girls' and PGA Junior Championship will be held Aug. 2-5 at Cog Hill Golf and Country Club in Illinois. 🌸



On **Cloud Nine**

What has been an amazing season for Asterisk Talley got even more incredible at the Summer Series I Championship at The Reserve at Spanos Park in Stockton.

In winning the title, Talley notched her ninth win of the 2021-22 season, breaking Sabrina Iqbal's JTNC record for most wins in a season. Iqbal, who graduated from Texas Christian University in the spring, won eight events during the 2013-14 campaign.

As of the magazine deadline, Talley, whose first name means "little star" according to her mom, had two more chances (Summer Series III Championship – July 17-18 and JTNC Tour Championship – July 26-27) to get the record into double digits. She was also on her way to earning 2021-22 Girls' Player of the Year honors. 🌸

Alumni **Watch**

Former JTNC standout Ty Akabane, now a junior at UCLA, made some noise at the NCAA Division I Championships in late May.

Akabane, who won the 2018 California Women's Amateur, was tied for third after the first round of the championship before eventually finishing T-21. 🌸





Silverado Resort

Weekend Net Tour – Playoffs and Finals Looming

The NCGA's Weekend Net Tour has some important dates looming on the calendar.

For starters, the WNT Playoff will be held Nov. 19 on the North Course at Silverado Resort in Napa. Only the top 112 players in the WNT Player of the Year points standings will be invited to compete in the event.

On Dec. 10–11, meanwhile, the

Tour Finals will be held at a site yet to be determined. The Finals will be open to the top 40 in the POY standings following the Playoff at Silverado.

Open to both female and male members of all playing abilities, the WNT is perfect for those who can't tee it up on a weekday.

There is never a membership fee to join and entry fees are affordably priced.

To learn more about the Weekend Net Tour, please visit ncca.org/weekendtour.

NCGA WEEKEND NET TOUR

WNT Player of the Year Standings (as of June 10)

Points	Player	Club	
1	Naoto de Silva	Lincoln Park	3,292
2	Kenneth Harrington	Harding Park	2,639
3	Chris Ladd	EClub North Bay	2,462
4	Abraham Attouleh	EClub Central Valley	2,307
5	Joshua Eagle	EClub East Bay	2,033



There's a pair of upcoming NCGA Travel events you won't want to miss!

- Join the NCGA Nov. 13–17 for the fourth NCGA Women's-only golf trip to Palm Springs! Stay at the luxurious Renaissance Resort & Spa at Indian Wells and play three rounds at some of the area's best courses: Desert Willow Mountain View course, The Classic Club and Marriott's Shadow Ridge (pictured).

- Join the NCGA Dec. 9–14 for a holiday-season escape to Scottsdale, Arizona. Enjoy two rounds of golf at We-Ko-Pa Resort and two rounds at Troon North Resort. Choose between lodging at the Westin Kierland Resort or at the Hyatt House in North Scottsdale. Learn/register for both events at ncca.org/travel

Want the inside scoop on upcoming NCGA Travel trips? Sign up for our Travel Newsletter at ncca.org/travel.

Net Central

Don't forget to check out Net Central on the homepage of the NCGA website.

An online supplement to the *NCGA Golf Magazine's* Tournament Central section, Net Central is all about Net events all the time. You'll find results from some of the NCGA's most recent Net events and tournaments and some other fun things.

Whatever kind of tournament you're looking for, we're sure we'll have something that will pique the interest of not only you, but also your friends and family.

Youth on Course Welcomes Roger Steele as **Global Ambassador**

Roger, a social media influencer and founder of HIPE Media, will help advocate for the organization's mission of bringing life-changing opportunities to young golfers across the globe to create a more inclusive and diverse future for the sport. He joins LPGA stars Jennifer Kupcho and Lizette Salas, as well as PGA Tour player Harold Varner III, as their fourth ambassador. HIPE is a grassroots initiative working to diversify the sport.



“The ability to give kids access to the game is invaluable. Just going to the driving range is fun, but you can’t fall in love with the game there like you can out on the course. If you can get clubs in a kid’s hand, and a chance to play almost anywhere for \$5 [or less], then you’re giving them that chance to discover everything golf offers. Life skills, networking, family bonding and new friends.

More than that, YOC takes it a step further by providing scholarships and career opportunities for people who never thought that those doors would be opened for them.

If we can all be intentional about making golf more inclusive, more accessible, then we can empower these kids to shape the game in a way that benefits everyone. With everyone on board, the future of golf looks a lot better for all of us.”

Learn more about Roger and his commitment to growing the game at youthoncourse.org/blog. 🌟

Blue Jacket Special

BY BRIAN MURPHY



The Champion's Jacket is Blue, not Green. Instead of dogwood or azaleas, the eyes bask in the sight of California's classic mature cypress and oak trees. The occasional glimpses of water are not of Rae's Creek, but of the mighty Pacific Ocean.

The Western Intercollegiate, which celebrated its 75th playing in April at Santa Cruz's Pasatiempo Golf Course, is not the Masters. But there are enough similarities to sate your golf jones, particularly its vernal hues, Alister MacKenzie design and April calendaring.

"Pasatiempo is a mini-Augusta National," says Arron Oberholser, part of Golf Channel's broadcast team for the tournament.

Texas won the team title, while Pepperdine's Dylan Menante shot a final-round 67 to claim the individual title, joining a list that includes major champions Mark O'Meara, Johnny Miller and Ken Venturi.

You don't win at Pasatiempo unless you can golf your ball, says Oberholser.

Oberholser is about as good a voice as you can find to spin the yarn of "The Western." He grew up in San Mateo, just over the hill from Pasatiempo. "I'd hear whispers about Pasa," he says. He played at San Jose State, and even though he won nine times as a collegian—including the NCAA West Regionals, and the prestigious GolfWorld/Palmetto—he says nothing tops the feeling of winning The Western at Pasatiempo.

Maybe it's because he shot a final-round 64. Maybe it's because he holed out for eagle on No. 17. Maybe it's because he still remembers the driver off the deck to eight feet at the par-5 No. 6. Maybe it's because he surged past a kid named Tiger Woods—and his Stanford teammate Joel Kribel—in the final four holes.

Or maybe it's because of all that, and where it took place.

"There's not one victory I'd put above Pasatiempo," he says. "It's not just because of who was there. It's because of the golf course. It's a MacKenzie, and they're like Monets or Rembrandts. There aren't a lot of them in the world, and each one is so special."

Since 1947, San Jose State has hosted college golf's finest at Pasatiempo, a place Mackenzie crafted in 1929 with the help of Golf Hall of Famer Marion Hollins. The Western started as a match play event, and Venturi, the City kid who played at San Jose State, won it twice. By 1958, the Western morphed into a 72-hole event—and San Jose State's John Lotz won it three times, part of the SJSU dynasty that has won 12 Westerns through the decades.

By 1968, the move was made to reduce the competition to a tight 54 holes. Two decades of lore helped the reputation of the springtime classic attract not just the best of the West Coast, but the best of the NCAA.

In 2006, Duke became the first team east of the Mississippi to win it. Now, winning the Western as a team is quite the feather. Stanford won it in 2019, then won the national title. Pepperdine won it in 2021, then won the national title.

There's a reason why that link exists, says Oberholser. You don't win at Pasa unless you can golf your ball.

"This canvas these guys are playing on, a win becomes more historic because of the shot values and the way you have to think around the golf course," Oberholser says. "You know you're making history and you're a part of a real special history."

The Western has now become a rite of passage for college golfers. Half of the winning U.S. Ryder Cup team—Patrick Cantlay (UCLA), Bryson DeChambeau (SMU), Collin Morikawa (Cal), Xander Schauffele (San Diego State) and Scottie Scheffler and Jordan Spieth (Texas)—are Western alums.

Seventy-five years of brilliant college golf at a place like Pasatiempo is worth celebrating. As Oberholser says, nearby Pebble Beach and Cypress Point get their share of attention. That leaves Pasa as the hidden treasure, "with a little mystical aura," he says.

"The history is the most remarkable thing about it," says Oberholser.

The history extends off the course, where icons like Lawrence Fan, the San Jose State Sports Information Director since 1980, worked 41 consecutive Westerns. Fan died suddenly in February. The week before he passed, he emailed me to suggest writing about The Western, extolling all of its charms.

We did it, Lawrence. 🌿



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