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Summer 2019, Vol. 23 No. 4



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Cover: Phil Kосin Illinois Women's Open Trophy. Above: 2018 champion Hannah Kim poses on the trademark bridge with the Phil Kосin Trophy and the ninth hole in the background. (Tim Cronin)

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OPENING SHOT

DAVE
AND
TIM

Summer! Ideally, it will stay for a while and with sunshine rather than showers. A long spate of dry weather is overdue for the area, and the Midwest as a whole. It's not easy to play golf wearing scuba gear. And that grumbling guy with the bags under his eyes you see at your favorite course is your superintendent, who would really have liked to cut the rough more than a handful of times in May.

June and July means there's not only golf to play, but golf to watch, and plenty of it, near and not quite so near.

The Illinois Women's Open will celebrate its 25th playing. Started by *Chicagoland Golf* publisher Phil Kосin to fill a void in the calendar, it has



"I dove into a swamp after a golf ball. As it turned out, it was a lousy range ball. I've got to get cleaned up and go back to finish my game."

become a signature fixture at Mistwood Golf Club, which took over operation after Phil's passing a decade ago. This issue features an extensive look at the history of the IWO and what it means to those who have won it. Mistwood is in Romeoville and easily accessible to all via I-55 or I-355.

Down another interstate highway – the Indiana Toll Road – can be found the Warren Course at Notre

Dame, the first university-owned course to host a USGA open championship. In this case, it's the 40th U.S. Senior Open, which is the tournament on the calendar a 50-plus player wants to win.

The Warren Course is otherwise open to the public, and we're fortunate to have South Bend-based golf writer John Fineran, who knows Michiana like the back of his hand, as our tour guide for a look at where to play golf in the region, leavened with the rich history of the game in and around the area.

We also have news about the second Illinoisan to win a USGA title in as many months. Todd Mitchell of Bloomington – hey, close enough to Chicago for our purposes – teamed with pal Scott Harvey to win the U.S. Amateur Four-Ball Championship at Bandon Dunes, which is owned by Chicagoan Mike Keiser.

Our instruction this issue is provided by Connie DeMattia, ace teacher at Cantigny Golf in Wheaton, who comes at the game both physically – as in how to properly stand to the ball at address – and mentally.

Happy summer!

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Worn by Brooks, Brothers

This hat is best paired with the Wanamaker Trophy. The Nike AeroBill Classic99 Majors hat is best known for being worn by Brooks Koepka at the PGA Championship in May. AeroBill technology provides superior comfort, moisture-wicking, and breathability. No bowl of soup needed.

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A Buzz from Tinley Park

The 2019 version of the Queen B 5 from Bettinardi is downright sleek. A 362-gram head weight, trademark Micro Honeycomb face milling, blue/white color scheme, and Champagne Silver finish has every other putter assessing themselves.

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Wilson, the gold standard for blades "back in the day," is back at it with the Wilson Staff Model Blades. These beauties are precision milled and feature a Fluid Feel Hosel allowing a larger head and wider sole. All of the blade feel with surprising forgiveness. Set runs from 3-iron to pitching wedge. \$1,199.99



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Get a Grip

The Lamkin Sink Fit pistol putter grip combines a traditional feel with today's popular oversize grips. Promotes proper wrist alignment for more control/consistency.

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The New Way to Improve at Golf

While you've been looking for a new way to get better and shoot lower scores, scientists have unearthed something far more important – how the brain functions and how we learn. It is a fact we have never known more about the golf swing, enjoyed better conditioned golf courses, or used more advanced and forgiving equipment than we do today. So the question remains: Why hasn't the average amateur handicap dropped in 50 years while the pros continue to set scoring benchmarks?

The first clue might just lie in new studies by the world's leading performance researchers, psychologists, and

kinesiology experts. These findings may hold the secret key to releasing the low handicapper in all of us. There is a correct way to use swing thoughts.

Let's turn our favorite internal cues into external ones for more efficient learning. Note the following as examples:

Don't think ... Get my hands ahead of the clubhead at impact.

Think ... Lean the shaft forward at impact.

Don't think ... Shift weight from my right foot to my left foot on my downswing.

Think ... Shift my weight forward on my downswing.

Don't think ... Keep my left arm straight in my backswing.

Think ... Trace a wide arc with the clubhead.

Don't think ... Turn my shoulders while resisting with my hips.

Think ... Coil like a spring.

Don't think ... I'm going to straighten my slice by swinging from the inside and rolling my wrists through impact.

Think ... I'm going to straighten my slice by trying to hit a hook.

Don't think ... Keep the triangle formed by my arms and shoulders intact when I putt.

Think ... Swing the putter like it's a pendulum.

Connie DeMattia is the PGA Director of Instruction at Cantigny Golf.



The Prevalence and Prevention of Golf Injuries

Golf historically has been perceived as being a low risk sport when it comes to injuries. In reality, golf demands a lot from your body. The game of golf requires the player to have explosive power, and these actions when repeated over and over can put stress on the tissues, causing injuries.

Many golfers are often plagued by physical injuries. There are the acute injuries that typically happen at a single traumatic episode, such as hitting the ground. However, more common in the golfer are overuse injuries. These injuries are more subtle and usually occur over time. Some are caused by the repetitive nature of the golf swing, while others are the result of other sport-related injuries, sedentary lifestyle, or a weak and tight physicality.

As cited from Dave Phillips at the Titleist Performance Institute, "With professional

golfers, almost 80 percent of the injuries come from overuse. Injuries in amateur golfers can be caused by overuse, but in most cases they occur due to swing patterns developed around physical limitations. As a result, they over-stress areas of the body, and create further injury to pre-existing conditions."

The three most commonly injured areas of the body are the back, shoulder, and elbow.

The golf swing is broken down into four phases: backswing, downswing, ball strike, and finish. Any limitations in the range of motion will hamper the golfer's ability to achieve the proper swing plane, thus increasing the stress on the involved joints and muscles.

To avoid golf injuries at any skill level, it is important for the golfer to develop

a solid swing technique, and engage in a specific routine of stretching and flexibility exercises performed prior to golfing as well as after the round.

As a golfer, you want to stay injury-free to practice and compete regularly, which ultimately lets you elevate your performance. Incorporating a simple stretching/warm-up routine before you begin can significantly reduce your chances of sustaining an overuse injury.

Seek the advice of an orthopedic specialist in your area if any injury occurs to get an accurate diagnosis and prevent recurrent problems.

Anne Connors is a Titleist Performance Institute-certified personal trainer and certified Katherine Roberts' Yoga for Golfers YFG Instructor.



Sweet Home Chicago

Mitchell Makes it Happen

It was an unlikely combination.

After all, Todd Mitchell lives in downstate Bloomington and Scott Harvey, his partner in the U.S. Amateur Four-Ball, lives in Kernersville, N.C.

It's not like they can get together for a quick nine. But something clicked in friendship along the way on the amateur golf trail and they decided to team up when the USGA dropped the Amateur Public Links in favor of the Four-Ball five years ago.

They made it to the semifinals in the 2014 inaugural at the Olympic Club, and to match play every year, but always came up short.

Until this year.

On May 29, Mitchell and Harvey cashed in. They won the fifth U.S. Amateur Four-Ball, Mitchell collecting his first USGA championship and Harvey his second to go with the 2014 U.S. Mid-Amateur.

They did it on the Old Macdonald course at Bandon Dunes in Bandon, Ore., the pair of 40-year-olds outlasting a pair of 21-year-olds, East Carolina teammates Logan Shuping and Blake Taylor, 2 and 1 in the 18-hole championship match.

"I don't know that I can have a better feeling from a golf and competition side," Mitchell said. "As close as Scott and I have become over the past, probably six years, I'm elated that it happened like this."

Mitchell, a two-time Illinois Amateur winner, carried himself and Harvey over the finish line by winning three straight holes down the stretch. The duo was 1 down before Mitchell got up-and-down for birdie on the par-4 14th, two-putted for birdie from 62 feet on the par-5 15th, and smashed an 8-iron to five feet over a blind approach on the par-4 16th. Dormie 2 turned into victory after they halved the 17th.

"I finally showed up," said Mitchell, who was a contributor all week. "Something needed to happen, one way or the other, and I felt like there for a while, early on, and then we lost a little bit of the momentum."

Mitchell was runner up in the 2008 U.S. Mid-Amateur, which is great, but doesn't get you a trophy and your name

on the wall at Golf House. This does. Harvey was thrilled for him.

"This is the best event going currently, and it's just more fun," Harvey said. "Everything you're doing is with someone. It just feels that much better."

Six Elected to Hall of Fame

Carol Mann, longtime professional Emil Esposito, and veteran golf writer Len Ziehm are among the six notables elected to the Illinois Golf Hall of Fame on May 30.

Mann, who honed her game at Olympia Fields Country Club as a teenager, has been in the World Golf Hall of Fame since 1997, so her induction to Illinois' Hall of Fame has been long anticipated.

Likewise the induction of Esposito, the best player from a golfing family who found success in twice winning the Illinois Open, but whose career-changing victory came in 1979, when he won the first Illinois PGA Championship held at Kemper Lakes Golf Course. Owner Jim Kemper was so taken by how Esposito kept it together on the tough closing holes he hired him as the head pro.

Ziehm, the bulk of whose career had been under the employ of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, covered both Mann and Esposito and countless other stars in a career of golf coverage that began at the Western Open at Olympia Fields for the *Hammond Times* in 1968 and is still going strong. The Ziehm cackle, heard when he sinks a birdie putt and belts a big drive, is among the most welcome sounds in the game.

Also elected were golf course architect William B. Langford, golf promoter Harry Radix, who created the original trophy for the low season scorer in pro golf, and Francis Peabody, the coal tycoon who loved golf and caddies and spurred the creation of the CDGA to help both.

The induction celebration is slated for Friday, Oct. 18 at The Glen Club in Glenview. Contact the Illinois PGA at (847) 729-5700 for ticket information.

Oh Deere

John Deere Classic tournament director Clair Peterson always thinks young when it comes to sponsor exemptions, on the theory that kids who experience success today will come back to the tournament as stars tomorrow.

This year is no exception. Peterson awarded exemptions to the top four amateurs in the world – some have turned pro, all the more reason to come to Silvis from July 11-14 – for this year's 49th renewal at TPC Deere Run.

U.S. Amateur champion Victor Hovland, Pacific 12 champion Collin Morikawa, NCAA champion Matthew Wolff and four-time All-America player Justin Suh, the top four according to the Scratch Players ranking, will all tee it up in the Deere.

"With players like Zach Johnson, Jordan Spieth, Jason Day, Justin Thomas and Patrick Reed having gone on to stardom, we think it has worked out very well for both the players and our fans," Peterson said.

He could have thrown in Bryson DeChambeau as well. Like Johnson and Spieth, he's a former exemption awardee who returned to win the Deere.

"We are thrilled to have such an outstanding group of top young players competing in this year's John Deere Classic," Peterson said. "It gives our fans an opportunity to see them up-close and makes it interesting for them to follow the trajectory of their careers."

Junior Achievement

Before Hovland and Co. were college stars, they were juniors, and that group's local showcase was the Western Junior, which just ran at Rich Harvest Farms in Sugar Grove from June 17-20. Included in that elite crowd of 156 were Aurora's Scott Boyajian, a Metea Valley lad who'll go to Aurora University, and Zach Place of Roselle, who prepped at Lake Park High – across the street from Medinah Country Club – and will attend Northern Illinois.

They were joined by Luke Armbrust (Wheaton), Danny Fisher (Lake Forest), Evan Myers (Northbrook) and Tyler Isenhardt (Geneva) and a host of highly-ranked juniors from around the world.

How hard is the Western Junior to win? Tiger Woods tried and couldn't get the job done while he was winning three straight U.S. Juniors.

Fifty for Father

Not too many people decide on a whim to play a course in each of the 50 states in as many days.

There has to be a reason behind it. Golf fan Pete Crozier, a Chicago radio producer of yore, has one.

To benefit the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation.

Crozier's father died from complications from the disease 20 years ago. Son Gavin Crozier is afflicted with it.

Crozier began in Southport, S.C., worked his way west, and expects to play in Illinois at the end of June.

"I fly to Hawaii and Alaska," Crozier said, adding that he'll finish his odyssey in Worcester, Mass., on the course his father grew up on.

"As a son and a father of loved ones with diabetes, I know the struggle is real," Crozier said. "I empathize with families who are wrestling with the disease, physically and emotionally. The grind. The worry. The fear. Diabetes is relentless. Insatiable. The monster lurking at the bottom of the stairs, waiting for its victims to slip."

Down Memory Lane

When Venturi Did the Double

Is it really 60 years since Ken Venturi completed the Gleneagles Double? Since the smooth-swinging Californian successfully defended winning at the southwest suburban course the year before?

The calendar pages fall quickly sometimes. Those who were there will tell you it seems like yesterday that the McNulty brothers, owners of the course, were determined not to let tournament golf disappear from Chicago after George S. May got into a huff over a picayune PGA of America rule and shuttered his famed Tam O'Shanter tournaments four months before the 1958 carnival. They jumped at the chance to host, and had so much fun they would host one on the same weekend in 1959.

Venturi opened with a 5-under 65 in the inaugural and outlasted Jack Burke Jr., Julius Boros and Gary Player to finish at 8-under 272 to win by a stroke and collect \$9,000 from the purse of \$50,000, which about matched the purse at The Masters, the biggest of the season.

That was good,

and 1959 was better. Venturi was nine strokes back at the half-way mark and five back after 54 holes. With only Arnold Palmer and Bo Wininger to climb over, Venturi punched out a final-round

66 for 7-under 273 to edge Johnny Pott, the leader all week, by a shot to win \$9,000.

Venturi won it on Gleneagles' anything-but-flat greens.

"I had 25 putts on the last round in beating out Pott," Venturi said. "It was the greatest putting day I've ever had."

He didn't have a chance to go for a third in succession. Citing losses, the McNultys ended the tournament. Venturi would go on to win the 1964 U.S. Open in the cauldron at Congressional and used that to jump into television, with a decades-long career at CBS.

In 1991, the Western Open set up shop around the corner at Cog Hill, and Venturi, on the CBS broadcast crew, was feted by the McNulty family at Gleneagles, 32 years after his twin wins. He was touched.

"I'm still the champion of the Chicago Open," he said, grinning.

– Tim Cronin



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"Type 1 diabetes is an auto-immune disease where a person's pancreas stops producing insulin. It strikes children and adults – and it has nothing to do with diet or lifestyle. Type 1 diabetes cannot be prevented and there is no cure."

Through the first two weeks, Crozier had taken 1,268 shots – averaging 90.6 per round, but more important, raised \$29,200 for JDRF.

Chip Shots

Scottie Scheffler won the inaugural Evans Scholars Invitational at The Glen Club, beating Marcelo Roza with a 20-foot birdie putt on the second hole of sudden death to collect the \$99,000 first prize in the Web.com Tour showcase. ... Tony Albano Jr. repeated as Will County Amateur champion at Balmoral Woods in Crete. ... In our May issue, we mixed the architect responsible for the remodeling of Wedgewood Golf Course in Joliet. Greg Martin deserves the credit rather than David Esler. Martin also made changes to three holes around 2006 at Joliet Country Club after plans by Esler were considered and not made a few years earlier.

—Tim Cronin

PROFILES

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Shopping for gifts can be tough – what do you get when the person has almost everything? The answer: a Tour-quality custom club fitting experience from Club Champion, the No. 1 premium club fitter, builder, and retailer of the best brands in golf. They offer more than 35,000 hittable head and shaft combinations – a true, Tour-level experience for any golfer.

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HOW A DREAM



2014 winner Emily Collins ran away with the IWO, winning by a tournament-record 9 strokes. (Erik Czupryn / Mistwood Golf Club)

Phil Kosin was not happy.

An advocate for equality, Kosin didn't like the way Vince Solano, then the owner of Royal Fox Country Club, went about getting publicity for his club when it hosted the 1992 Illinois Open. Solano used his sponsor exemptions to invite three women, collegians Kelly Johnston, Renee Heiken, and Nicole Jeray.

Kosin saw this as a publicity stunt, which it was. He also thought the women had no chance playing from the same tees as the men – and, hitting longer clubs into the greens, none made the cut, though two years later, Heiken qualified and made the cut on the same course.

Subsequently, during a rain delay at the LPGA tournament at White Eagle Golf Club, a number of golf writers, Kosin included, talked about what it would take to stage an Illinois Women's Open. The conclusion was it would take a winning golf course and a bunch of money to do so, and that the group had neither.

But the germ of the idea stuck in Kosin's brain.

In the spring of 1995, he unveiled the Illinois Women's Open, a 54-hole tournament to be played at Odyssey Country Club, the new layout on the south end of Tinley Park.

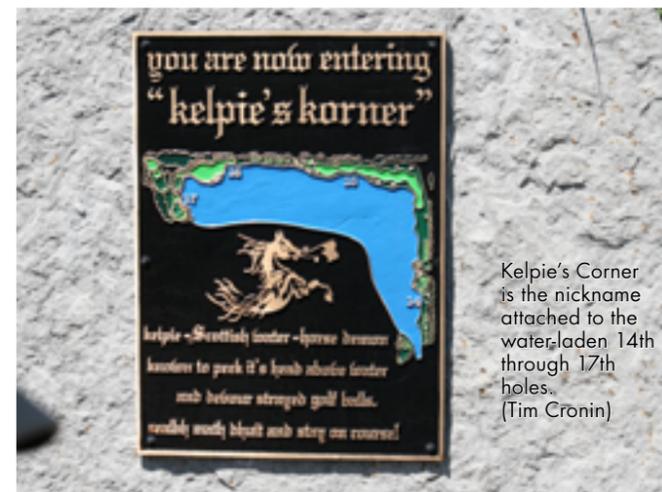
Backing it via publicity in his *Chicagoland Golf* and his radio show, and with his wallet, Kosin offered a \$5,000 purse, \$1,000 to the winner. Small change compared to the Illinois Open, which had the backing of the Illinois PGA, but a start. And a statement.

A history buff, Kosin had a trophy commissioned and named it for Elaine Rosenthal, the great golfer from yesteryear who played out of Ravisloe Country Club and won the Women's Western Amateur three times.

Entries for the inaugural came in, tee times were set, and Kosin and head pro Ed Staffan had Odyssey ready. Then it rained. And rained and rained. The course was flooded.

The first round was cancelled. But after 36 holes, there was a clear winner. Southern Illinois women's coach Diane Daugherty scored 5-under 139 and beat Andrea Keller by five strokes.

"I think it's important for people, especially women, to support this ongoing event," Kosin said before the second edition.



Kelpie's Corner is the nickname attached to the water-laden 14th through 17th holes. (Tim Cronin)



Scoreboards dotting the course keep players and gallery up to date. (Tim Cronin)

This was top-notch golf, and close competition. Kerry Postillion of Burr Ridge survived a 110-degree heat index and a three-hole playoff against Daugherty to win in 1997 after surrendering a nine-stroke lead while walking in that cauldron. Both players took carts in the playoff.

Entries rose from 38 the first year to 78 by 1999, the second year it was played at Mistwood Golf Club in Romeoville. That year's winner was Postillion, an eminent amateur who annexed the Rosenthal for the third time in four years.

To Phil Kosin, this was more than a golf tournament. This was close to a calling, a duty to give back to the

game. Greg Kosin, Phil's brother, saw the commitment to women's sports firsthand and was drawn in to lending a hand.

"Phil had an immense passion for golf," Greg Kosin said.

To Phil Kosin, this was more than a golf tournament. This was close to a calling, a duty to give back to the game.

"As a sportswriter, he had covered the Chicago Hustle (the local women's pro basketball team in the former Women's Professional Basketball League that lasted from 1978 to 81). He had a strong relationship with the team members. I really think that his involvement in that league planted the seed

for the Illinois Women's Open. Phil saw that women golfers were not being given the same chances to excel as the men. And he wanted to do something about it."



Nicole Jeray, the winner in 1998 and 2003, is trying to become the first winner in three different decades. (Tim Cronin)



Diane Daugherty, first winner of the Illinois Women's Open, was awarded permanent possession of the original trophy, named in honor of Elaine Rosenthal, in 2015. (Dan Phillips / Mistwood Golf Club)

BECAME REALITY

By Tim Cronin with Neal Kotlarek

All the Kosins, including father Joe, pitched in. Today, the scholarship awarded by tournament proceeds is the Joseph A. Kosin Scholarship. It encourages and promotes the attainment of higher education goals for women who have achieved academic excellence in the classroom, have demonstrated leadership in the community, and excelled at golf.

“Our entire family is extremely touched with the impact these scholarships have had on young women,” Greg Kosin said.

Phil ran the show and, between one-liners and pronouncements on topics of the day, golf and otherwise – being around his 50,000-watt personality was like listening to his radio show, minus commercials – ran it well.

“Phil wanted the players to feel special,” Greg Kosin said.

“He wanted the course to be in perfect shape. He wanted real-time scoring so the players knew where they stood during the competition. And he wanted to ensure most of all that the players would feel welcome. If one needed help with boarding, the tournament committee would find a place for them in a volunteer’s home.”

All of this is not lost on the players.

“Everyone who competes really appreciates how well the tournament is run,” said Jeray, who played in it when she could spare a week off from the LPGA or Futures/Symetra tours. “The players are just as excited to play in the pro-am as they are to play in the open. It’s a lot of fun and the golfers who enter are simply blown away by the skills these women possess.”

Jeray, an accomplished LPGA veteran, won the first of her two titles in the finale at Odyssey in 1998, her total of 5-under 211 standing as the tournament record for seven years. She won at Mistwood in 2003, and late last year joined the Mistwood staff, shortly after Hannah Kim, the runner-up in 2017 and a

recent Northwestern graduate, raced through the field at a record-setting 16-under 200 for 54 holes.

“That is a tremendous score, especially considering the quality of Mistwood’s golf course,” said Jeray, who has also been on the short end of two playoffs, and is the only player with four top-two finishes. “I don’t know if I

Unlike the men’s Illinois Open, which is restricted to players from the state, the Illinois Women’s Open is open to the world.



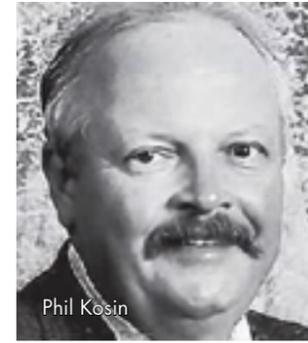
Greg Kosin, brother of IWO founder Phil Kosin, helps keep his brother’s tournament alive and assists greatly with the scholarship component of the week. Mistwood general manager Dan Bradley is in the background. (Tim Cronin)



Alexandra Farnsworth, a.k.a. the Dandy from Vandy, en route to taking the 2017 title. (Tim Cronin)

have a minus-16 in me this year, but I am playing really well right now and am looking forward to playing with these amazing women.”

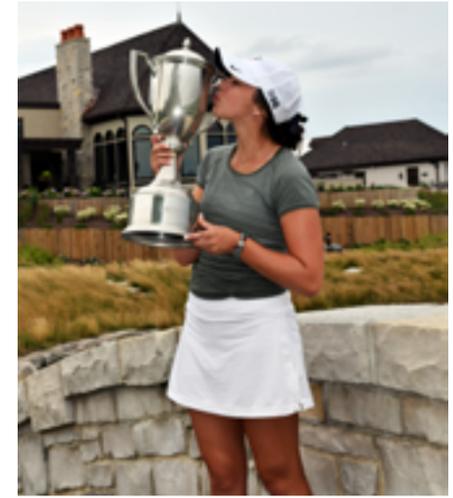
Unlike the men’s Illinois Open, which is restricted to players from the state, the Illinois Women’s Open is open to the world. Two years ago, Katja Pogacar of Slovenia – and Ohio State – finished sixth. Today, she’s on the Ladies European Tour.



Phil Kosin

This year’s playing, at Mistwood Golf Club in Romeoville on July 16-18, will be the 25th state championship for women. It’s now the Phil Kosin Illinois Women’s Open – renamed after his passing after the 2009 tournament – and a fixture on the Illinois golf scene.

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Emily Swartart prevailed in 2013 in a two-hole playoff over two-time winner Nicole Jeray. (Tim Cronin)



In 2015, 15-year-old Madasyn Pettersen birdied the last five holes to storm to an improbable victory. (Tim Cronin)



Golf in Michiana from John Wooden to Today

By John Fineran

Long before he was “The Wizard of Westwood,” John Wooden was “The Earl of Erskine.”

Wooden, who coached UCLA to 10 NCAA men’s basketball championships in a 12-year span from 1964 to 1975, pulled off a golf feat that even left his old-time coaching rival, Notre Dame’s Digger Phelps, speechless. Phelps, whose Fighting Irish ended the Bruins’ 88-game winning streak on Jan. 19, 1974, did not know that Wooden, who coached high school basketball at South Bend Central in the years before World War II, was a natural when it came to the game of golf.

There aren’t many golfers, maybe a dozen or so, who have accomplished what then 28-year-old Wooden did eighty years ago, on June 26, 1939, at South Bend’s still young Erskine Park Golf Course during a round with his friends. During a round of 75, Wooden made a hole-in-one at the par-3 sixth hole and a double-eagle 2 at the par-5, 504-yard 16th.

It is arguably the greatest feat ever accomplished in one round in South Bend, one not likely to be matched during the 40th U.S. Senior Open, set for June 27-30 at Notre Dame’s renowned Warren Golf Course, a Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw design that opened for play in May 2000 just north and east of the school’s famed golden dome, which can be seen from many places on the course.

Within a 25-mile radius of Warren, both above and below the Indiana-Michigan state line in what is known as Michiana, there are more than 20 golf courses, both nine and 18 holes, that you can play.

Golfers with varying handicaps from low to high have visited Michiana through the years to play these same courses and left with fond memories.

Warren itself was the site of a hole-in-one made by former United States Secretary of State and current Augusta National Golf Club member Condoleezza Rice, who was in town to watch her alma mater play Michigan State on September 17, 2011. She used a 7-wood to ace Warren’s 14th hole (the eighth hole for the tournament) from 150 yards while playing with Notre Dame women’s basketball coach Muffet McGraw, who has eight fewer NCAA titles on her resume but is as fond of golf as Wooden was.

In an interview with Golf Digest in 2010 just a couple of months before his death at the age of 99, Wooden said his ace/albatross feat occurred while playing with some teacher friends “at Erskine golf course in South Bend in the 1930s, before I went into the service.”

Wooden got proficient enough at the game, receiving lessons from Scottish pro John Watson, who was Erskine’s first professional and later the head pro at South Bend Country Club, which in its 100-plus years of existence has hosted the 1935 Western Open, the 1938 and 1951 Western Amateurs, and the 1942 NCAA Championship.

As Wooden told Golf Digest about that glorious day: “The par 3 was on the front nine, about 175 yards with a 5-iron. I didn’t see the ball go in, but the players standing by the green, I knew it was in from their reaction. On the par 5 on the back nine, I had no idea I could reach the

green, but that same group was in front of us. I still have the hole-in-one silver (gift) ball given to me and the scorecard. They’re here somewhere.”

The card, signed by his playing partners and those in the group ahead, was found shortly after Wooden, a native of Hall, Indiana, died on June 4, 2010, just about four months shy of his 100th birthday. His daughter Nan Muehlhausen found it while cleaning out Wooden’s two-bedroom condo in Encino, Calif.

Erskine Park, seven miles south of Warren in South Bend, opened on June 27, 1925. It was designed by noted architect and golf professional George O’Neil, who also designed South Bend Country Club and other notable courses around the country. O’Neil, the first professional at Beverly Country Club, numbered among his golf students one Charles “Chick” Evans Jr., America’s most notable amateur golfer before Bobby Jones and the founder of the Evans Scholarship program administered by the Western Golf Association that sends caddies with financial needs to college.

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Wooden Golf Card



Blackthorn



Ebel



This bunker, called Traveler's Grave by some, fronts the green of the par-5 fifth hole. It's possible to need to chip from one side of the green to the other if the pin is placed just so. (Tim Cronin)



The clubhouse of the Warren Course is just behind what will be the 18th green for the U.S. Senior Open. (Tim Cronin)



The approach shots at the Warren Course are normally run-ups, but not this one with Juday Creek interfering. (Tim Cronin)

It's an autumn Saturday television fixture. Notre Dame, usually in the rankings, playing a foe of decades-long rivalry before a sold-out house in the stadium originally designed by Knute Rockne himself, just a few blocks from the administration building, the famed golden dome.

Go a few blocks north of Notre Dame Stadium and you find Warren Golf Course, a university-owned public layout that opened in 2000 and has drawn rave reviews since. On football Saturdays, it plays host to high-rollers and other pals of the university, eager for a morning game before watching the Fighting Irish try to wake up the echoes once more.

At the end of June, Warren fell under television's spotlight, the university using the 40th U.S. Senior Open as a way to get its educational message out to a largely different audience.

"We got to show off our university world-wide for four days," said John Foster, Warren's director of golf and the co-chair for the U.S. Senior Open. "And these aren't the same fans who are necessarily tuned in on Saturday watching Notre Dame football."

Bringing in one of the biggest tournaments in golf was the goal of Notre Dame almost from the moment the Bill Coore-Ben Crenshaw layout opened. Instantly recognized as a cut above the norm, the only question was how to go about it. This would be different than waving a \$1 million guarantee in front of, say, Ball State to act as cannon fodder for the Fighting Irish on a balmy September afternoon.

"In 2002, we decided to start hosting USGA qualifiers, with the end game actually hosting a championship here," Foster said. "We hosted 11 qualifiers. It's a cultural thing. We got comfortable with each other."

In 2010, the course hosted the U.S. Women's Amateur Public Links, which unfortunately is no longer played. But that got USGA brass on site during tournament play, and boosted Warren's chances. In 2012, the two parties had danced together enough that Notre Dame invited the USGA to bring the Senior Open to Warren.

Three years later, Foster's phone rang.

"As you can see, the USGA and Notre Dame are a lot alike," Foster said of the long incubation period.

Warren presented a 6,943-yard par-70 pop quiz to the 156 players in the field. Less than 100 yards short of the maximum length of 7,020 yards, it might not be as difficult as calculus, which all Notre Dame students tackle, but it'll do for the 50-plus set.

"It's a shotmaker's good players course," Foster said. "No flukes ever came out of here."

That generally matches who wins a USGA championship. The courses are hard – sometimes unfair, especially at the U.S. Open – but rare is the winner who emerges without having a pedigree beforehand.

It helps to have been there, so to speak.

"When you play in a USGA national championship, it should be a little intimidating," said Ben Kimball, the USGA's new set-up man. "Fair, but intimidating. We want them to have butterflies in their stomach. We want them to be worried about that first tee shot. We want them to have nervous hands."

Throwing up is optional.

Most sites for spectator tournaments have to go to great lengths to accommodate galleries. Not Notre Dame. Logistically, it may be the best course for hosting galleries this side of Augusta National. The Warren course just happens to be next door to Notre Dame's largest parking lot for football.

The White Lot can handle 7,000 cars, and that was able to accommodate just about everyone coming to gawk at the golfers on any given day. Notre Dame planned for a total of 125,000 for the week, building from day to day.

Often the USGA asks for major changes to a course. Not so this time. The biggest thing was laying down some sod to narrow a few of the typically-generous Coore-Crenshaw fairways.



Golden-age Golf Near the Golden Dome

By Tim Cronin

"It's strategically wide for a reason," Kimball said. "You have to play the angles to get around the golf course. But the putting greens are very small and undulating."

"There were a couple areas on the golf course we looked at modifying, on Championship 1, 9, 15, and 18. There were some angles we wanted to bring in. Bill Coore was here on the grounds with me, flagged those areas himself."

The biggest change was in the routing. To aid in spectator flow down the stretch, the course was rearranged, but if you hadn't played it before, you wouldn't think any part of the routing was contrived. Good golf holes can line up in just about any order, and, as Kimball said, "This is a phenomenal test of golf."

Count Rocco Mediate among the admirers.

"Warren is just a fantastic place," Mediate said. "Lee [Janzen] and I played it last year after our PGA in Benton Harbor; it's just fantastic. It's a campus you can't do justice talking about. You've got to see it, it's really cool. And you can see a lot of it from the golf course."

"We've never had anything close to this cool."

That there's a U.S. Senior Open at all is due to the popularity of a man who didn't play in the first one, because he wasn't eligible.

The idea was admirable. With the excitement caused by the Legends of Golf, a festival of birdies by senior golfers Sam Snead and Gardner Dickinson that went extra holes and brought NBC surprise ratings in the summer of 1979, and a handful of other tournaments for the 50-plus set popping up, the USGA in 1980 did, for it, a rare thing.

It decided to start a third professional open championship to go with the U.S. Open, which started in 1895, and the U.S. Women's Open, which the LPGA handed to the USGA in 1953.

The inaugural United States Senior Open would be played at no less a location than Winged Foot Golf Club, a pedigreed venue close to New York and the USGA's headquarters.

Novelty and nostalgia would surely carry the new tournament to grand heights.

Surely not.

This was a party the USGA threw and only members and pals of the players attended. ABC's weekend coverage showed gallery ropes and no galleries. It also showed Roberto De Vincenzo, a grand old pro whose scorecard snafu cost him a playoff in the 1968 Masters, winning the inaugural, beating amateur Bill Campbell.

If people had heard of De Vincenzo, they had likely not heard of Campbell, one of the great amateurs in an era when people paid no mind to amateur golf. Something was missing. Interest. Something else as well. Excitement.

And someone.

Arnold Daniel Palmer.

Palmer had turned 50 in 1980 and could play in the other senior tournaments. But the USGA stuck to its amateurs-first guns and set the age eligibility at 55, the same as senior amateur golf.

That left Palmer, golf's greatest drawing card for two decades, on the outside looking in, which left the galleries to decide to stay home and the TV audience to watch anything but the snoozer at Winged Foot.

Something had to be done. The USGA could have shuttered the Senior Open, declaring a lack of interest, or waited for Palmer to become eligible in 1985 while hemorrhaging cash. Instead, it changed its rules.

Beginning in 1981, you could be 50 and play in the Senior Open, same as the few other pro senior tournaments.

That opened the door for Palmer, and he stormed through. Arnie not only played in the 1981 affair at Oakland Hills, he won it in an 18-hole playoff over Billy Casper and club pro Bob Stone.

ABC wasn't there, but the galleries poured in. The second Senior Open was a hit, thanks to the King. While Palmer would not win it again – he finished second in 1984 – it would remain a hit, with all the usual suspects – Player, Nicklaus, Trevino, Irwin – winning at least once, and with a few surprises along the way, adding spice to the sauce. Who was Larry Laoretti, anyway?

Frank Hannigan was the USGA's tournament director then, on his way to running the organization. Asked years later if the rule change was designed to get Palmer in, he laughed and said, "Isn't every rule change designed to help Arnold Palmer?"

Palmer is gone, and Nicklaus and Player no longer play, but the Senior Open rolls on, now 40 and acting half its age. Like Notre Dame, it has staying power.

The field was dotted with entries from 15 states and Australia last year, including Wisconsin team member Bobbi Stricker, who employed a famous caddie-daddy: Steve Stricker.

Multiple-year winners include Emily Gilley and Aimee Neff – both back-to-back as amateurs – as well as Jenna Pearson, to date the only player to win as an amateur and as a professional, doing so five years apart.

Pearson had almost repeated in 2007, her first year as a pro, but for a playoff that turned into golf's version of Groundhog Day. She and amateur Nicole Schachner tied at 1-under 215. The rules called for a four-hole playoff, playing Mistwood's first and second holes, then the par-5 third hole twice.

Each carded at 18 for the quartet of holes, and it was off to sudden-death on No. 3. They parred. Back to the tee. They parred again. They matched with par 5s five straight times until Schachner made another par and Pearson bogeyed the hole to end the playoff after 10 holes.

The playoff format has been sudden-death since.

"We've seen a teenager (15-year-old Madasyn Pettersen, in 2015) win the tournament, and in 2010 we saw Allison Fouch win the tournament while she was in the middle of a very successful career on the LPGA Tour," recalled Dan Phillips, Mistwood's player development director. "We are truly thrilled to be the host venue and consider the tournament to be one of our marquee events at the club. From club owner Jim McWethy to every member of our staff, we want the Open to be the highlight of women's golf in Illinois."

As noted, Phil Kosin was not only founder but hands-on with the tournament from the start through 2009, the last one before he died.

Almost everyone who played in the Illinois Women's Open has been appreciative of its existence, but one parent of a collegiate golfer went in another direction one day at Mistwood, and confronted Kosin with others hanging about the scorer's table.

The complaint had something to do with the operation of the tournament, so obscure the memory of specifics has faded. But the point being made by the complainer was that he could run it better

than Kosin, who must have been making a fortune doing so.

"I've put \$75,000 into this," Kosin responded. The complainer had no answer to that.

"The Illinois Women's Open wouldn't be what it is today without the vision and commitment of Phil Kosin and the Kosin family," Phillips said.

Happily, McWethy believed in Kosin's tournament and took it under his and his course's wing after Phil's passing, with the charity scholarship component continuing. Today a great deal of the spadework is done by Greg Kosin. In recent years, the purse has been boosted to \$25,000, with a first prize of \$5,000 for the low professional.

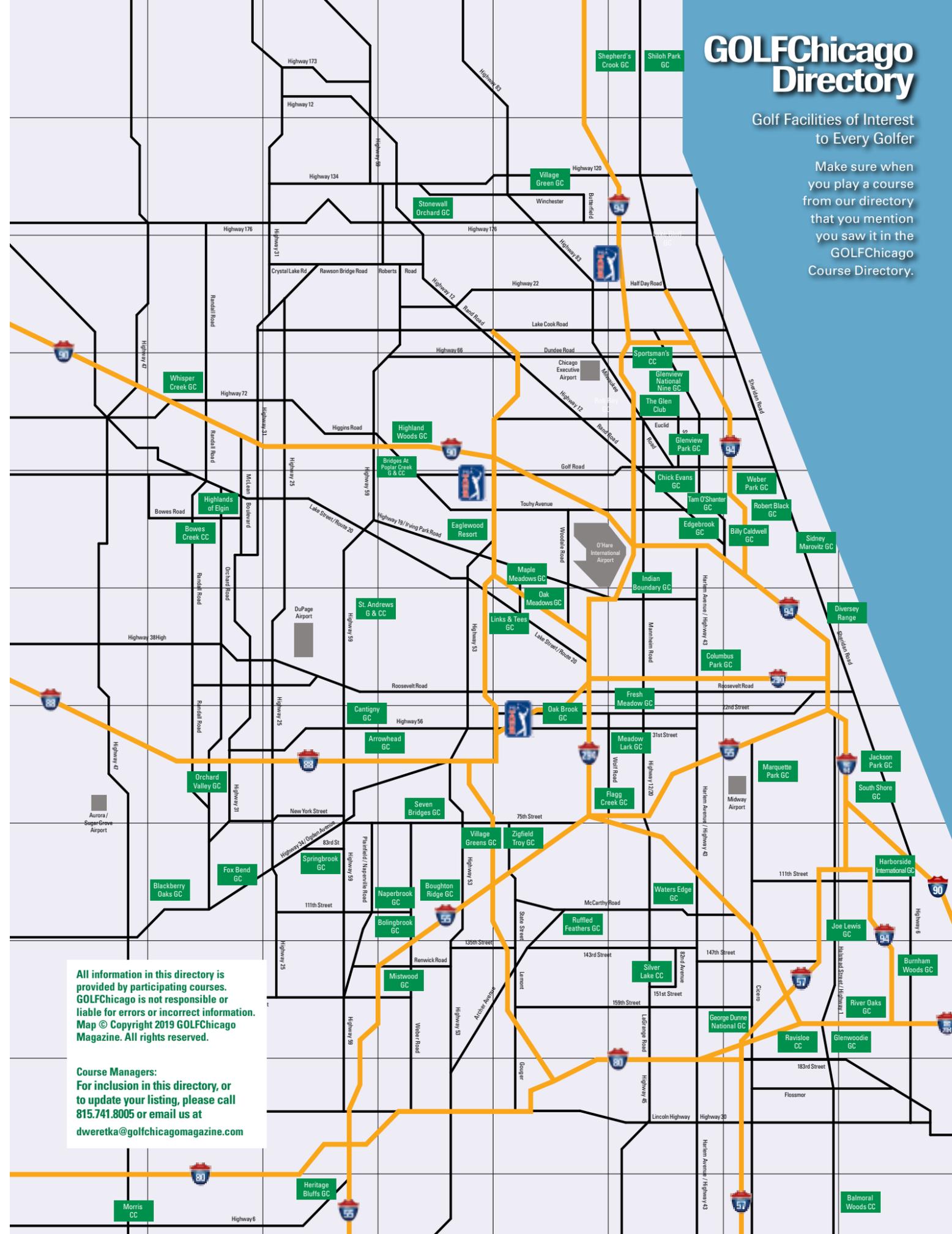
"Phil was a pretty amazing man," Jeray added. "His vision of an Illinois Women's Open has motivated other states across the country to hold their own women's state opens. He created a legacy that has impacted and inspired hundreds and hundreds of women."

Twenty-five years after the soggy start, the Illinois Women's Open is a welcome and permanent part of the state's golf scene. If not for Phil Kosin, the women of the state and beyond might still be waiting for someone to create it.

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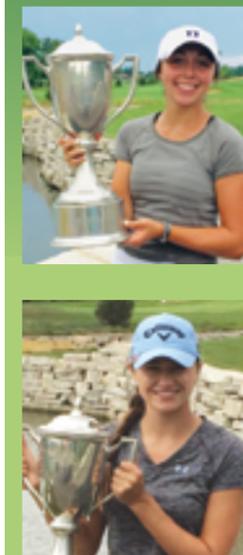
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Course #2: par 72,
5341 - 6818 yards
Since 1926, golfers have sought out St. Andrews for its two championship courses. With its vast rolling terrain and mature trees, St. Andrews offers a high-quality golf experience for players, golf outings, leagues, and permanent tee-times. Guests will also enjoy the award-winning 32-acre Practice Center with premium range balls and 10 heated, sheltered hitting bays. Other amenities: golf carts with GPS, J.J.'s Bar & Grill, exquisite lakeside ceremony site, and live entertainment.



Springbrook Golf Course

630-848-5060
2220 W. 83rd St.
Naperville, IL 60564
golfnaperville.org

Springbrook Golf Course commands some of the finest views of Naperville's open space and trails. The facility features a challenging, parkland-style championship course, a recently renovated practice facility with a one-acre turf practice tee, a large practice putting green, and two short-game practice greens with bunkers. Golfers of all skill levels return time and again to play. Enjoy post-game refreshments on the expansive patio with great views of the course. Springbrook also offers lessons, outings, a well-stocked golf shop, and more.



Stonewall Orchard

847-740-4890
25675 West Highway 60
Grayslake, IL 60030
stonewallorchard.com

Cutting through hundred-year old oak and pine trees, Stonewall Orchard Golf Club has quickly become one of Chicago's most prolific public golf courses.

Since opening in 1999, the Arthur Hills-designed gem located in northwest suburban Grayslake has served as Final Stage Qualifying site for the U.S. Open, and currently sits in rotation with Olympia Fields and Medinah Country Club as host site for the Illinois PGA Section Championship held every Fall.



Mistwood Golf Club

815-254-3333
1700 W. Renwick Rd.
Romeoville, IL 60446
mistwoodgc.com

Mistwood Golf Club, with its recent multi-million dollar renovations and new state of the art golf-learning center, has become one of the premier golf experiences in the Chicagoland area

Mistwood, host of the Illinois Women's Open, features new Scottish-style stacked sod-wall bunkers, which are not something seen in traditional American golf. Other amenities include a full-service pro shop, golf instruction, and wonderful dining.

- *Golf Magazine's* "2013 Best U.S. Renovation You Can Play"
- Golf Range Association of America "2013 Top 50 Golf Ranges."



Naperbrook Golf Course

630-378-4215
22204 W. 111th St. /
Hassert Blvd.
Plainfield, IL 60585
golfnaperville.org

Located in Plainfield, scenic Naperbrook Golf Course is a "links style" course that features rolling hills and wide fairways. Challenges in the way of ponds, a double green, and hidden bunkers await golfers of all levels. Additional amenities include a ten-acre driving range, separate lesson tee, and practice putting greens. Enjoy post-game refreshments on the picturesque patio; Naperbrook also offers lessons, outings, a well-stocked golf shop, and much more.



Orchard Valley Golf Course

630-907-0500
2411 W. Illinois Ave.
Aurora, IL 60506
orchardvalleygolf.com

6th Best Public Course in Illinois by *GOLF* magazine. One of Chicagoland's best public courses, Golf Digest ranks Orchard Valley 4½ Stars! A true championship layout featuring wetlands, lakes, roughs, water hazards, marshes, and more.

- PLUS... a program for everyone!
- SAVE on every round with the OV Rewards PLUS program.
 - UNLIMITED twilight golf and range with the PPP card.
 - Annual Memberships and MORE!



PGA TOUR Superstore

1017 Butterfield Rd.
Downers Grove, 60515
1319 E. Golf Rd.
Schaumburg, 60173
295 Center Dr. Vernon Hills,
60061

PGA TOUR Superstore carries the largest selection of golf clubs, clothing, footwear, and accessories for your game. With the most advanced technology for club fitting, we also offer the Fitting Van Experience which is a TOUR caliber assessment. With three Chicagoland locations, come see why nothing compares to PGA TOUR Superstore.



Tam O'Shanter Golf Course & Learning Center

847-965-2344
6700 West Howard Street
Niles, IL 60714
golftam.com

One of the most important courses in popularizing the game of golf in America is located right here in Niles, Illinois. In 1953, Tam O'Shanter Country Club hosted the first-ever nationally televised golf tournament.

Today, a public 9-hole par-33 course remains, maintained with the goal of providing playing conditions reminiscent of those Hogan, Palmer, and Nicklaus enjoyed years ago. Swing out for a scenic round and walk in the footsteps of legends at Tam O'Shanter!
Year-round instruction available!



Water's Edge Golf Course

708-671-1032
7205 West 115th St.
Worth, IL 60482
watersedgegolf.com

Rated Best Places To Play by *Golf Digest*.
Water's Edge is Chicago's south side destination course. This championship 18-hole golf course offers bent grass greens and fairways, and a complete day/night practice and range facility, along with The Edge Bar & Grill for great meals and daily specials.

- PLUS... a program for everyone!
- SAVE on every round with the Edge PLUS Pass
 - UNLIMITED twilight golf and range with the Edge Practice Club



Weber Park Golf Course

847-674-1500, ext. 3600
skokieparks.org
9 Holes: Par 27
Yardage: 1,095

Located just twenty minutes north of Chicago on I-94, all ages will enjoy Skokie's Weber Park Golf Course. This 9-hole, par-3 golf course features bent grass greens, beautiful landscaping, and is ideal for learning to play golf, working on your short game, or gathering a few friends for a fun round of FootGolf.

- PLUS... a program for everyone!
- SAVE on every round with the Whisper Rewards PLUS program
 - UNLIMITED twilight golf and range with the PDP card
 - Annual Memberships and MORE!



Whisper Creek Golf Course

847-515-7680
12840 Del Webb Blvd.
Huntley, IL 60142
whispercreekgolf.com

Luxury Golf at a Whisper of a Price!
Whisper Creek Golf Club is a fair test for a gamut of golfers. From beginners to scratch golfers, anyone who appreciates a day on the course will come away feeling rewarded by a round at Whisper Creek.

- PLUS... a program for everyone!
- SAVE on every round with the Whisper Rewards PLUS program
 - UNLIMITED twilight golf and range with the PDP card
 - Annual Memberships and MORE!



At 94, Erskine Park is the second oldest of South Bend's three municipal courses. The construction of nine-hole Studebaker Park Golf Course, about two miles north of Erskine on South Bend's south side, began 100 years ago and is home to Michiana's First Tee program. Elbel Park, about 10 miles northwest of Warren, opened in 1963.

To the east of Elbel Park is Blackthorn Golf Club, which was designed by noted architect Michael Hurdzan and opened

25 years ago this August. It's been the site for the last 10 years of the Four Winds Invitational, a stop on the Symetra Tour for aspiring LPGA Tour players. About five miles east of Warren is Juday Creek Golf Course, an 18-hole masterpiece in Granger by architect Ken Killian that opened in 1989 and once hosted none other than cigar-chomping former Chicago Bears head coach Mike Ditka for a Special Olympics charity outing also attended by late Notre Dame and Northwestern football coach Ara Parseghian.

Parseghian, a scratch golfer, called South Bend Country Club his golfing home

and once played in a charity event there with Arnold Palmer. But Parseghian liked to get out and about Michiana's golf courses with former Notre Dame football coach Lou Holtz and recently retired Chicago White Sox broadcaster Ken Harrelson. All three were friends of the late golf professional George Thomas, who bought Brookwood Golf Course in Buchanan, Mich., back in the early 1990s. Thomas' son Joe is the professional now at the course about 14 miles from Warren.

Also north of the state line in Niles, barely 10 miles from Warren, is Blackthorn Group-owned Signal Point Golf Club, an innovative 1963 Robert Bruce Harris design above the St. Joseph River. It features two tees and two pin locations for each of its nine holes, one a challenging double-dogleg par 5. It was completely private until the Blackthorn Group bought it, and now can be played via a Blackthorn pass program.

North of Niles is the 36-hole Hampshire Country Club, 18 miles from Warren. Hampshire's two courses, which opened in 1961 and 1995, sit off a country road outside of Dowagiac. The oldest of the two courses, which measures 7,014 yards, was used by the Western Golf Association as a qualifying site for the Western Amateur when it was played at nearby Point O'Woods Golf & Country Club from 1971 through 2008. Among those who once qualified there in the early 1980s was Rocco Mediate. The Western Amateur, by the way, returns to the Point this July 29-August 3.

The Burke Golf Course opened in 1929 as an 18-hole course and is now nine holes because of campus expansion at Notre Dame. It was the home of the school's 1944 NCAA champions, and the late Billy Casper was on scholarship for one semester in the early 1950s before returning to his native San Diego to marry his wife.

While walking to the Burke's first tee, stop on the way past St. Mary Lake to offer a prayer at the prettiest place on the Notre Dame campus, the Grotto for Our Lady of Lourdes. (The Grotto's plaza and staircase are currently under construction, but you can still stop a distance away.)

And depending how your round goes, you might pass by on your way back to your car and ask for forgiveness for the bad thoughts or words you expressed.

John Fineran has covered golf in Michiana and beyond in parts of three decades, including a long stint at the South Bend Tribune.

ON THE SHELF

TIM CRONIN

Even as we come to the end of the majors season, and a month earlier with the switch of the PGA Championship to May, echoes of the Masters endure. Augusta National, the most natural looking artificial place on the planet, has that hold on people, and when Tiger Woods wins, the echoes linger longer.

David Sowell's definitive book, *The Masters: A Hole-By-Hole Chronicle of America's Golf Classic*, can keep them reverberating all year long. Sowell, a golf historian, issued the first edition in 2003 and followed with another in 2007. This most recent version, occasioned by the clamor of those bidding up the prices of the earlier editions, carries through last year, weaving in more recent tales of wonder and woe with others dating to the commencement of the Augusta National Invitation Tournament in 1934.

Care to read about Gene Sarazen's albatross on the 15th hole in 1935? It's here. Jack Nicklaus' "Yes sir!" putt on the 17th green in 1986? It's here. As is Billy Joe Patton's ace on the sixth in 1954, and just about every other stroke of significance in Masters history – or strokes, as in, for instance, the legendary and ignominious 13 Tom Weiskopf authored on the devilish par-3 12th in 1980. You may remember the number, but did you know it was in the first round? And that Weiskopf dumped two more balls in Rae's Creek in the second round for a 7, and thus 20 strokes on one hole over two days? That's the level of detail, entertainingly told, Sowell provides, hole-by-hole, chapter-by-chapter.

This is not a dry recitation of numbers and facts. This is a lively read, starting at the first tee – which has moved backwards from even with the door of the golf shop over the years to somewhere in Aiken – punctuated by twists of fate.

Sowell explains how the holes have changed over the years and puts everything into context. Each chapter begins with a diagram of how the hole appears today. The only possible addition would be diagrams of the original incarnations, especially the drastically changed 10th, 11th, and 16th.

A Tome of Triumph and Tragedy

He details the great plugged ball controversy between Arnold Palmer and Ken Venturi in 1958, smartly quoting each side from their biographies before explaining the ruling that aided Palmer's victory, the first of his four at Augusta. He digs into stories previously untold, such as who paid the bill for the original changes to the seventh hole.

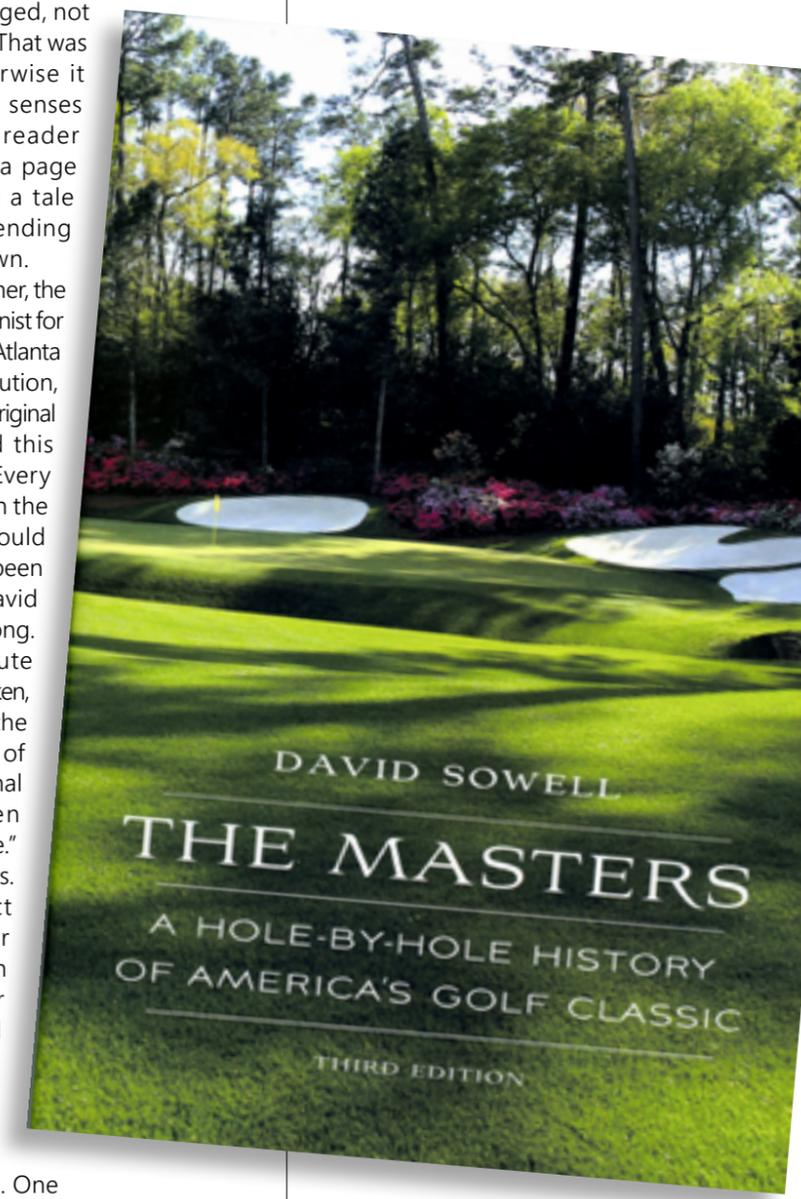
While the format is hole-by-hole, each chapter is thematically arranged, not chronological. That was wise, for otherwise it might dull the senses or tempt the reader to skip ahead a page or two to find a tale to which the ending is already known.

Furman Bisher, the estimable columnist for decades for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, took in Sowell's original work and paid this compliment: "Every kind of book on the Masters that could be written had been written until David Sowell came along. He takes a route previously not taken, giving each of the eighteen holes of Augusta National its own fifteen minutes of fame."

This he does. It's the perfect golf book for curling up with on a rainy summer day – or a cold winter night. It can be read start to finish or in spurts, skipping about. One can imagine another edition every few years, ready to be snapped up by the

cognoscenti. Sowell has given the Masters enthusiast a treat, and created for himself a cash cow.

The Masters
By David Sowell
University of Nebraska Press
287 pages
\$29.95



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Addison, 630-595-0071

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The Millennial and Golf

The game of golf is ever changing and evolving. We know this to be true. Whether it's in terms of equipment, clothing, or the actual courses. We have new ways to book tee times, ways to purchase golf items, and a seemingly infinite number of outlets for instruction. It's conceivable that golf changes and evolves faster than any other sport.

So if all of the above is happening, how are we changing with the game? At 35 years of age, I've seen my golf life change numerous times. It's unavoidable if you choose to do things like have a family while also sticking with this crazy game we all know and love.

As a youngster, the game is what you make of it. Sometimes you're at the mercy of a parent for how much you're exposed and your level of access. Sometimes you're just chipping in your backyard.

Your teenage years, I feel, define how involved most people will be with the game for the rest of their lives. If you have a driver's license and a girlfriend/boyfriend and you still manage to get out to the course, you're more than likely in it for the long haul. After all, you're putting your social status in jeopardy!

Which leads me to the group that good, bad, or indifferent, is creating change. Millennials. Depending on who you ask, this is the age group that was born somewhere between 1980 and 2000. They can be looked at as the people responsible for sites that let you pay/play by the hole. They're the hands that feed establishments like TopGolf. The ones that demand USB ports in golf carts.

I admit, I technically fall into this category, being born in 1983. I like to say, "yes, but I'm an old Millennial." The stigma on Millennials is that they're (we're) entitled, lazy, and questionable to be the elder generation in the country. I disagree. I think this generation is forward thinking and not unlike every generation that came before it; we're just changing and evolving.

Older Millennials, such as I, eventually have to throw any sort of self-serving agenda out the window. We have to adjust how we make time for golf. One word: family.

After I married my wife in 2011, I kept my permanent tee time at Oak Meadows and later

Schaumburg Golf Club, 8:00 on Sunday morning. I got down to an 8 handicap. We would drink adult beverages during and after our round. If it rained, we'd stick it out in the clubhouse until the all clear signal with no timetable. What a time to be alive!

Then, in 2014, something happened. Rather, someone. Someone that swooped in and took away my Sunday mornings. Someone that ballooned my handicap to a 15. Someone that didn't entirely take away the adult beverages, but severely cut them back. My son. And in 2017, my daughter. As much as I love this game, any parent will tell you how much of a backseat it takes to your family. Wouldn't have it any other way. Having said that, however, that part of my age group with young families needs to get creative.

Tee times at 6 a.m., 9-hole leagues, and the always popular post-round "drop me off at my car ... gotta go!" This is the golf reality that I live in and all of those "real Millennials" will live in soon – sooner than they think.

I have numerous friends a few steps ahead of me, where the kids are grown and they have a little more time to play because said children are busy with their own lives. Most will say that while they now have time, they don't have the money because the kids take it all. I'm in no hurry to evolve to that golf life. Partially the money thing, but mainly because I'm in no hurry to see my kids grow up.

So that leaves us with the empty nesters and retirees. The ones that have to fill their time. I imagine life is just a bucket full of golf trips, farmer's markets, and listing old stuff on eBay. If you've made it this far in your golf life, you don't have to worry about evolving anymore. Nice, isn't it? Enjoy those prime tee times. You've paid your dues. Maybe you're a grandma/grandpa who gets home after golf and gets to flip burgers and hotdogs for the grandkids. Good on you. You've changed and evolved to what many would call the pinnacle of golf life.

No matter what stage of life you're in, isn't it refreshing to know that you enjoy a game that you can adapt your life to? So get out there and be a part of it and we'll all find out together what's next.

I think this generation is forward thinking and not unlike every generation that came before it; we're just changing and evolving.

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