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TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

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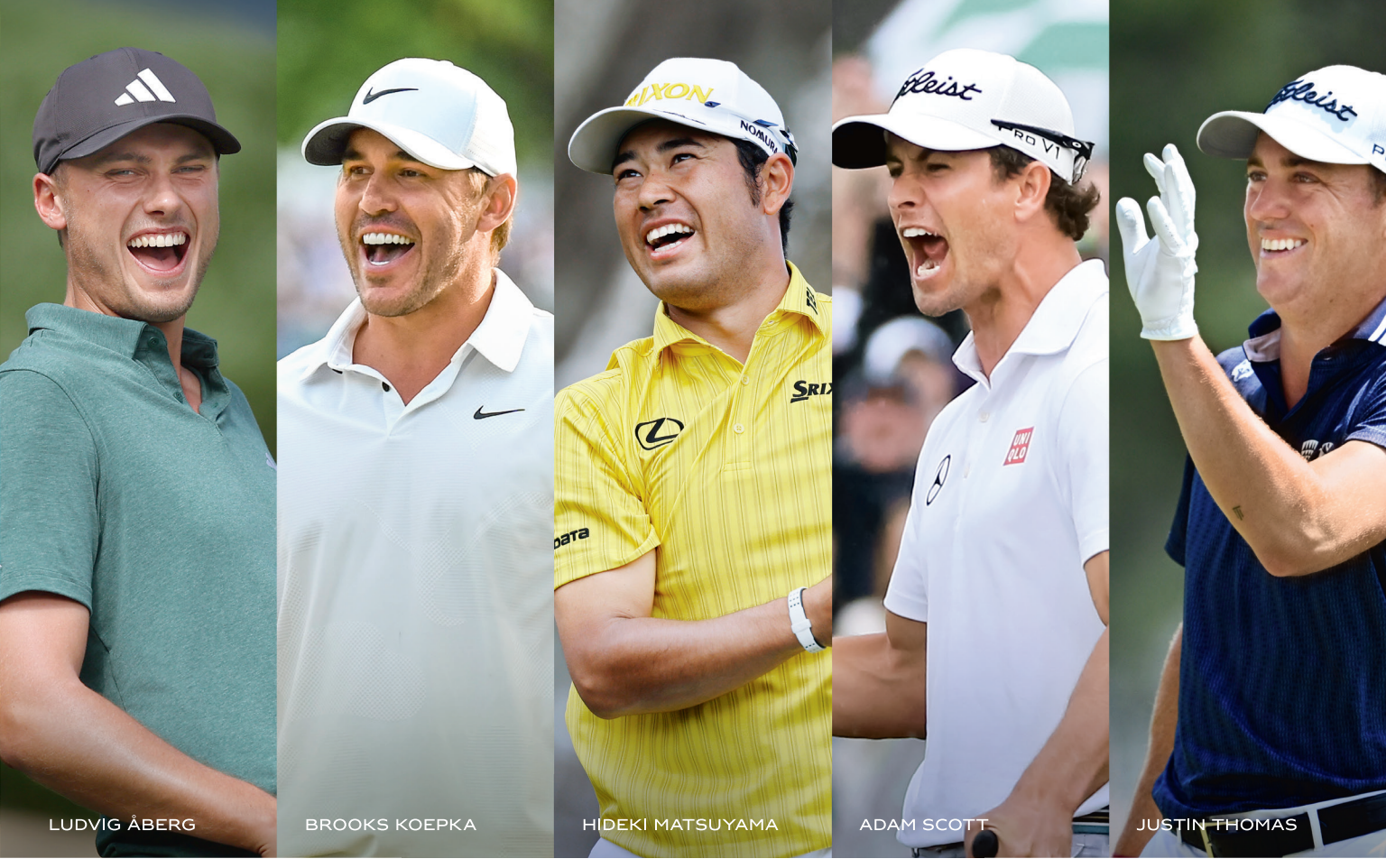



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Lee Trevino is living his best life.
PHOTO BY DAVID CANNON/ GETTY IMAGES

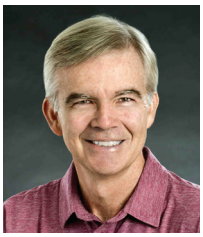
CONTRIBUTORS



MOGIE ADAMCHIK is a photographer and videographer who has worked with brands, athletes and tournaments across the golf space. She is particularly passionate about projects that elevate women in sports. Her work includes collaborations with the USGA, LPGA, Eastside Golf, the NWSL's North Carolina Courage and individual female athletes. She recently worked on Barstool Sports' Internet Invitational and Steph Curry's Underrated Golf Tour.



JED JACOBSOHN is a photographer known for high-quality sports imagery. His work spans major sporting events and intimate athlete portraits, serving both editorial and commercial clients. His photography has appeared in The New York Times, Sports Illustrated and Time, and he has received top honors from World Press Photo and Pictures of the Year. He is based in the San Francisco Bay area.



TOM MACKIN is an award-winning freelance writer based in Scottsdale, Ariz. He is a contributing editor at Troon Magazine, managing editor of AZ Golf Insider (the magazine of the Arizona Golf Association) and author of the Play Away column in the Met Golfer Traveler. He still cannot believe a golf course was built two decades ago in his hometown of Bayonne, N.J.



PETRA PÉTERFFY is a Hungarian illustrator and motion designer based in Berlin. With a background in psychology and visual communication, her work explores bold color palettes through abstract forms, rich textures and dynamic patterns.



WILL SCHUBE is a writer and editor based in New York City. His work has appeared in publications such as GQ, Rolling Stone, Skratch, Boardroom, The Washington Post and more. He also runs The Hobbyist, a newsletter about free time.

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTORS: Christine Bader, P.J. Boatwright III, Fred Couples, Bill Fields, David Foster, Bill Hornstein, Geoff Leighly, Jessica Marksbury, Jason E. Miczek, Scott A. Miller, Ran Morrissett, Greg Nathan, Dana Smith

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EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
Greg Midland

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
John Mummert

ART DIRECTOR
Donna Harrison

MANAGING EDITOR
Daria Meoli

SENIOR WRITER
David Shefter

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Rachel Clarke

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
Ron Driscoll
Evan Rothman

PHOTO EDITOR
Jackie Diller

USGA MEMBERSHIP SERVICES
Marianne Gaudioso, Pamela Ochab, Susan Wasser, Louie Zivkovic

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PUBLISHER
Howard Milstein

CEO
Jason Adel

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
David DeNunzio

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Small Moments, Major Impact

By **CHRIS FRASER**

THERE'S A COMMON SAYING: "For those who know, no explanation is necessary; for those who don't, no explanation will suffice." Golf sometimes feels that way. Those of us who live the game know the rhythm of a round, the quiet satisfaction of a well-struck shot and the friendships forged in four-hour stretches.

I'm in my ninth year at the USGA but my first in a new role with the USGA Foundation. As I set out to encourage and nurture support for our mission, one question comes to mind: How different would life be without golf?

Where would I be without the small moments? Grass clippings on my shoes, replaying a round shot by shot, the near-constant background noise of Golf Channel. And who would I be without the big impacts? Golf has helped me see the world, make lifelong friends and enjoy a family foursome.

Golf teaches lessons that last. It asks for honesty when no one is watching, patience when things don't go our way and respect for both tradition and one another. It also gives generously in return: perspective, camaraderie and memories that linger long after the round ends. Yet





JASON E. MICZEK; EDWARD M. PIO RODA; KYLE LAFERRIERE





Chris Fraser (top image, left) brings a lifelong love of golf to his new role leading the USGA's membership and philanthropic efforts.

even those who love the game don't always pause to consider how they might help sustain it.

At the USGA, everything we do is guided by a simple ideal: For the Good of the Game. That includes programs like Keepers of the Cup, which brings together supporters who help to preserve the history, integrity and experience of the international Curtis Cup and Walker Cup Matches. It also includes the U.S. National Development Program campaign, which opens doors for young players, giving them access to elite coaching and competition that might otherwise be out of reach. And it includes the USGA Members Program, which connects golfers from all walks of life to the USGA mission, giving them a voice in the game and a chance to help shape its future.

These efforts are powered by relationships. Across the country, our major gift officers work with people who care deeply about golf. Conversations often begin with a shared memory – a first U.S. Open, a favorite course, a junior event – and grow into a desire to give back.

The impact is direct. Funds raised through the USGA Foundation flow directly into the game: amateur golf, player development, access initiatives, sustainability. Membership reflects connection; philanthropy deepens it, amplifying the reach and impact of every golfer's commitment.

For those who know golf, no explanation is necessary. But for the game to endure, it still needs our care.

And that, like the joy of a great round, is something we can all help carry forward.



CHRIS FRASER
USGA Chief Philanthropy Officer


PLAYER
TOTAL
THRU
ANDY SCHONBAUM
Argentina
E
17
IBM

LEADING OFF

Urban Oasis

IN JANUARY, Mateo Pulcini of Argentina (putting) survived a 2-hole playoff with Virgilio Paz Valdes of Venezuela to win the 11th Latin America Amateur Championship at Peru's Lima Golf Club, whose 18th hole allows greenside and bird's-eye viewing.

photo by **LOGAN WHITTON/LAAC**




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QUICK 9

What to know, see and share from the world of golf



MY SHOT

Grateful for Golf

by **GREG NATHAN**
President & CEO, National Golf Foundation

SCOTT A. MILLER

HENRY HILL'S opening line in "Goodfellas" declares: "I always wanted to be a gangster." It's not nearly as cold, but I knew in my early 20s that I wanted to work in golf. More than 30 years later, I appreciate that gift of knowing where I wanted to be.

I grew up playing competitive tennis in White Plains, N.Y. – my intro to golf was blading wedges on the grounds of North Street School. A bit later, I ventured out onto a muni named Maple Moor after being mesmerized by the fizzing ball flight produced by my friend Frank Bensel. This was four decades before his historic back-to-back 6-iron aces in the 2024 U.S. Senior Open at Newport C.C.

I got a taste of club life during summers as a tennis instructor, and playing after-hours holes hooked me on golf. I read Golf Magazine, Golf Digest, Links and anything else I could get my hands on. After failing to walk on the tennis team at Lehigh University, golf became my sport – up there with hopping on the bus for 100+ Grateful Dead shows.

After graduating, I took a widely opened mind to my first job on Madison Avenue, at the ad agency Ammirati & Puris. I made lifelong ⟶

(continued from page 11)

friends (including my incredible wife, Alyson) and saw first-hand how a great company operated.

With help from two golf industry veterans, I built a Rolodex of contacts that helped me land a job at Golf Magazine in 2000. It was a fascinating seven-year ride that led to a meeting with the National Golf Foundation's Joe Beditz, who would become my mentor and the man I succeeded as its CEO in 2024. As I wrap up my 19th year at the NGF, I'm proud and, yes, immensely grateful.

The NGF is best known as golf's definitive source for data, insights and the state of the golf business. Relationships are what I value most, and the partnership with the USGA has been strong for years. Providing CEO Mike Whan and his team with independent, data-backed insights is challenging and rewarding. We all care deeply about making the game better every year.

I'm where I always hoped and intended I'd be, attempting to prove that there isn't a single golf business the NGF can't help. Being in your dream job… now *that's* gangster!

EXPERTS EXPLAIN

Driver's Ed

Here's how not to put the cart before the course

by **BRANDI MERRICK**
USGA Manager, Green Section Education

GOLF CARTS play an important role at many courses. They help players get around – some layouts would be impractical or impossible to traverse without them – and are a source of revenue for operators, too.



On the other hand, golf carts can negatively affect course conditions – especially if used incorrectly. Course superintendents have various ways to manage the impact of cart traffic, but there are some important things golfers can do to help.

When getting ready for your round, check the day's cart policies and stick to them. Be aware of holes that are cart path only, follow the 90-degree rule when it's in effect, and respect any traffic-control signs, stakes or ropes that you encounter. These measures are designed to spread wear and protect sensitive areas, and may also be in place for your safety.

As you drive around the course, avoid steep slopes and obviously wet or extremely dry areas, stop and start slowly, and always park with all four tires on the path where possible to avoid damaging nearby turf. Steer clear of high-traffic areas when you can – one cart driving down a fairway won't do much damage, but concentrated traffic can quickly lead to worn-out grass and bare spots that are no fun to play from. This type of damage can often be found where carts enter and exit the hole, so be especially mindful in those areas.

The total amount of cart traffic is also a key factor. More carts mean more stress on the grass, so if you're able to walk when playing or can share a cart rather than riding solo, it makes a real difference. The next time you do take a cart, keep these simple tips in mind. With a little care and common sense, you'll do your part to help keep the courses you play in great shape for everyone.

KYLE LAFERRIERE

TRIVIA TIME: Glenna Collett Vare is the only player to win the same USGA title 6 times (U.S. Women's Amateur). How many have won the same event 5 times? *(answer on page 15)*

MILESTONE MOMENTS

Remembering Judy Bell

1936 - 2025











When Judy Bell became the first female president of the USGA in 1996, she reminded others, "We didn't invent this game – we're just here to look after it." Bell had already served the association for more than three decades, having started as a member of the U.S. Girls' Junior Championship Committee in 1961. Here are a few accomplishments and honors earned by the longtime Colorado Springs resident, who died on Nov. 3, 2025, at age 89:

- As USGA president in 1996-97, established the USGA Foundation and its Fellowship and Grants Program, which provided nearly $65 million to programs that make the game more accessible.
- Helped grow and support LPGA*USGA Girls Golf, which has gone on to introduce the game to more than 1 million girls at 700 sites worldwide.
- Served for 17 years on the USGA's Women's Committee and helped conduct women's championships. In 1987, became the first woman to join the USGA Executive Committee.
- As a volunteer Rules official starting in the 1960s, officiated 11 U.S. Opens, 34 U.S. Women's Opens and 10 Masters Tournaments, among other events.
- Played in 38 USGA championships, reaching the U.S. Girls' Junior semifinals in 1952. Also advanced to the quarterfinals of the U.S. Women's Amateur 3 times. Shot 6-under-par 67 in Round 3 of the 1964 U.S. Women's Open at San Diego Country Club.
- Played on USA Curtis Cup Teams in 1960 and 1962, and served as captain in 1986 and 1988.
- Earned the USGA's Bob Jones Award in 2016, and was inducted in the World Golf Hall of Fame in 2001. Received membership in the Royal & Ancient Golf Club in 2015 and was named First Lady of Golf by the PGA of America in 2001.

USGA ARCHIVES

RISING STAR

Grace Carter

by **CHRISTINE BADER**

FRANKIE WAKES UP Grace Carter, the 2025 U.S. Girls' Junior medalist and semifinalist, at precisely 6:55 every morning, including when he travels with her. Frankie was on course with Carter when she won the Girls 13 division of the U.S. Kids Golf World Teen Championship in Pinehurst, N.C., in 2023. Frankie is not a daddy-caddie on the bag; Frankie is a green-cheeked parakeet who travels in his own mesh backpack.

Like many golfers, Carter, 15, has superstitions and lucky charms. She uses a smiley-face ball marker, clipped to the right side of her hat brim, for putts over 20 feet, and an American flag ball marker, clipped to the left side, for shorter putts. If she plays well on the first day of a tournament, she has the same dinner she had the night before.

But the parakeet? That's a new one. Carter adopted him after hearing an elementary school classmate's show-and-tell about her own parrot. When he's on the driving range with Carter, Frankie's chirping usually blends in with other birds. But when he sees other kids, he starts calling out his own name, causing understandable confusion among nearby golfers. "I guess he likes kids," Carter says.

Though he hasn't said so explicitly, Frankie must be pleased with Carter's success of late. In addition to the honors from last July's U.S. Girls' Junior at Atlanta Athletic Club's Riverside Course in Johns Creek, Ga., his keeper notched four AJGA victories in 2025, including a tournament-record 16-under-par 200 at October's 1st Clubs for Kids Foundation Junior All-Star Invitational. In November, Carter won her age group in the Notah Begay III Girls National Championship for the straight third year with a blistering 69-66-66 to finish 15 under. Frankie wanna a birdie? Frankie gets a birdie.

Carter says her favorite player is Scottie Scheffler, for his ball-striking and overall excellence. With Frankie's support, Carter looks poised to parrot Scheffler's success.



DARREN CARROLL

Carter reeled off 4 victories in AJGA tournaments in 2025, the most of any competitor.

THE CARTER FILE

Age: 15

Height: 5'6"

Hometown: Jupiter, Fla.

School: Homeschooled

Graduation year: 2029

Favorite school subject: Art

Pet: Frankie, parakeet

Professional aspiration: LPGA Tour golfer

USGA championships (best finish): 1 (2025 U.S. Girls' Junior – semifinals)

TRIVIA ANSWER *(from page 13):* Three – Bob Jones (U.S. Amateur), JoAnne Carner (U.S. Women's Amateur) and Carolyn Cudone (U.S. Senior Women's Amateur)

DATA DIVE

Record Tying

A male-female divide? Not when it comes to USGA records, where a lot of superlatives match.



MAYBE IT shouldn't be a shock given that the USGA launched the U.S. Amateur and U.S. Women's Amateur in the same year, 1895. Yet the number of USGA records that are the same for males and females still seems surprising. (Less so: A lot of big names hold big records.) Here's where the sexes are tied as the 2026 championship season approaches.

LARGEST 54-HOLE LEAD

10 strokes

MALE:

Tiger Woods, 2000 U.S. Open, Pebble Beach (Calif.) Golf Links

FEMALE:

Babe Didrikson Zaharias, 1954 U.S. Women's Open, Salem C.C., Peabody, Mass.

LONGEST 36-HOLE MATCH

41 holes

MALE:

Walter J. Travis d. H.H. Wilder, 1908 U.S. Amateur, Round 2, Garden City (N.Y.) G.C.
Charles (Chick) Evans Jr. d. Reginald M. Lewis, 1920 U.S. Amateur, Round 2, Engineers C.C., Roslyn, N.Y.

FEMALE:

JoAnne Gunderson Carner d. Marlene Stewart Streit, 1966 U.S. Women's Amateur, final, Sewickley Heights G.C., Sewickley, Pa.

MOST TIMES MEDALIST

6

MALE:

Walter J. Travis, **1900**, **'01**, '02, 1906-'08 U.S. Amateurs
Robert T. Jones Jr., 1920, 1923*, 1926-**'27**, 1929*-**'30** U.S. Amateurs

FEMALE:

Margaret Curtis, 1901*-'02*, 1905*, **1907***, 1909*, **1912** U.S. Women's Amateurs
Glenna Collett Vare, 1921-**'22**, 1924, 1926, 1931*, 1934* U.S. Women's Amateurs

* = Co-Medalist;
Bold = Won championship

LARGEST WINNING MARGIN, ANY MATCH

14 and 13

MEN:

Jerome D. Travers d. George A. Crump, 1915 U.S. Amateur, Round 1, C.C. of Detroit, Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich.
Robert T. Jones Jr. d. John B. Beck, 1928 U.S. Amateur, Round 3, Brae Burn C.C., West Newton, Mass.

FEMALE:

Anne Quast Sander d. Phyllis Preuss, 1961 U.S. Women's Amateur, final, Tacoma (Wash.) C. & G.C.

OLDEST CHAMPION

69 years old

MALE:

Lewis Oehmig, 1985 U.S. Senior Amateur

FEMALE:

Marlene Stewart Streit, 2003 U.S. Senior Women's Amateur

MULTIPLE HOLES-IN-ONE, SAME CHAMPIONSHIP

2

MALE:

Donald Bliss, U.S. Mid-Amateur (1987, two in same round)
Bill Ploeger, U.S. Senior Amateur (1996, 2003)
Walter Hall, U.S. Senior Open (2005, 2006)
Frank Bensel Jr., U.S. Senior Open (2024, consecutive holes)

FEMALE:

Nancy Porter, U.S. Women's Open (1972, 1976)

PARENT-CHILD CHAMPIONS

1

MALE:

John Richardson, 1987 U.S. Senior Amateur (father), Kemp Richardson, 2001, 2003 U.S. Senior Amateur (son)

FEMALE:

Kathy Cornelius, 1956 U.S. Women's Open (mother), Kay Cornelius, 1981 Girls' Junior (daughter)

OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS WON

4

MALE:

Willie Anderson, Robert T. Jones Jr., Ben Hogan, Jack Nicklaus

FEMALE:

Betsy Rawls, Mickey Wright

USGA ARCHIVES

ON DISPLAY



My 1992 Masters Irons

by **FRED COUPLES**
World Golf Hall of Fame Class of 2013

IT WAS THE BREAK of a lifetime. I'm still not sure how that ball on No. 12 didn't end up in Rae's Creek, but I guess some things are just meant to be.

I look forward to the Masters every year – still do, even now in my 60s – and in 1992, I was playing really well in the lead-up. I had won twice in March and reached No. 1 in the world ranking.

A storm blew through Augusta National on Saturday that year, so I had to finish my third round early Sunday morning. After I finished – in second place, a stroke behind Craig Parry – I went back to my house and slept for a few hours.

I got off to a sluggish start in the final round and fell three behind, then laid the sod over my 2-iron tee shot on the short par-4 third. The next swing is the one that got me back on track – an 8-iron to within 6 inches for a tap-in birdie. Little did I know it would be far from the most consequential 8-iron shot I'd hit that day.

I've always been a scoreboard watcher, and they're hard to miss at the Masters. So I knew I was ahead by three strokes as I stepped to the 12th tee, right in the heart of Amen Corner. It's the shortest hole at Augusta but so dangerous given its shallow green, the swirling wind and all that pressure.

It was 166 yards to the hole, a perfect 8-iron. I'm an aggressive player so I won't lie and say I was aiming for the middle of the green, but I did push it to the right. The ball hit the bank, started trickling back... and somehow came to rest on the steep slope above Rae's Creek.

After I chipped within a foot to save par, I noticed a ball in the water. It was a Maxfli, the same brand I played, belonging to defending champion Ian Woosnam. My ball should have been right next to his, but divine intervention kept it dry.

When I holed out on 18, Ray Floyd, who finished runner-up, gave me a hug as I exited the green – a classy gesture from a good friend.

Adding to the emotion of the day was the Green Jacket presentation in Butler Cabin, where my college roommate at the University of Houston, Jim Nantz, presided over the ceremony. Thirteen years before, we sat in our dorm as Jim interviewed me after I had "won the Masters." Now, it was happening for real.

It's nearly 35 years later, and that's still sinking in.

Fred Couples – By the Numbers

31	63	1st	15	77
Cuts made at the Masters Tournament (2nd all-time)	Oldest player to make the cut in the Masters (2023)	American to reach No. 1 in the Official World Golf Ranking	PGA Tour victories between 1983-2003	Skins won in the "Skins Game," most all-time

JONATHAN KOLBE; USGA ARCHIVES

Of the **82 million scores** posted in 2025 by golfers with a USGA Handicap Index, more than 94 percent of them were recreational rounds.

MATCH PLAY

SUPER SOUTHPAWS

It took almost a century for a left-hander to win a USGA championship. (Maybe it was suffering all those jokes about standing on the wrong side of the ball.) Since 1988, however, lefties have been on a roll. Can you pair the 10 USGA southpaw champions with their title(s)?

CHAMPION

1. Ralph Howe III
2. Phil Mickelson
3. Brian Harman
4. Cory Whitsett
5. Brad Benjamin
6. Julia Potter-Bobb
7. Erica Shepherd
8. Thienna Huynh
9. Kimberly Dinh
10. Sam Engel

EVENT

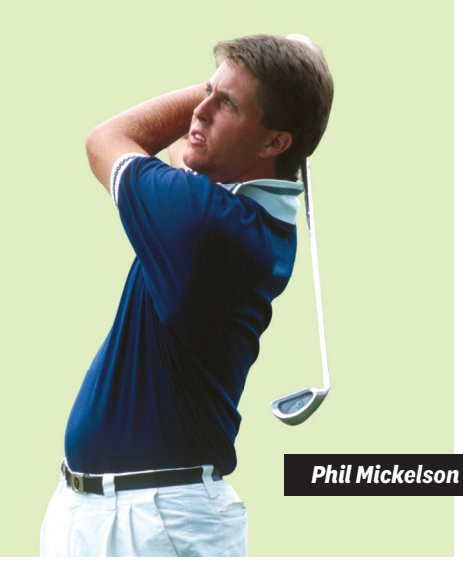
- **a.** 2023 Women's Mid-Amateur
- **b.** 2003 Junior Amateur
- **c.** 2013, '16 Women's Mid-Amateur
- **d.** 1988 Amateur Public Links
- **e.** 2024 Amateur Four-Ball
- **f.** 2007 Junior Amateur
- **g.** 2022 Women's Amateur Four-Ball
- **h.** 2009 Amateur Public Links
- **i.** 2017 Girls' Junior, 2019 Women's Amateur Four-Ball
- **j.** 1990 Amateur

(Answers on page 18)









LOGAN WHITTON; JEFF HAYNES; DOST & EVANS; STEVEN GIBBONS

CATCHING UP WITH...

Chelso Barrett

by **DAVID SHEFTER**
photo by **JED JACOBSOHN**



THE BARRETT FILE

Family: Wife Kortnie, 3-year-old daughter Blair

Residence: Morgan Hill, Calif.

Biggest USGA Moment: Runner-up, 2011 U.S. Junior Amateur

Quote: "I love what I am doing, and it's freed me up to play better. Whether I shoot 85 or 65, I'm still going to give a lesson Tuesday morning at 9 o'clock."

ANSWER KEY *(from page 17):* 1. D; 2. J; 3. B; 4. F; 5. H; 6. C; 7. I; 8. G; 9. A; 10. E.

Nearly **15 million 9-hole rounds** were posted by golfers with a USGA Handicap Index in 2025, up 5 percent from 2024 and 46 percent from 2020.



STEVEN GIBBONS

FOR SOMEONE literally born into the game, the thought of burning out on it never crossed Chelso Barrett's mind as he grew up at the family-owned Bretwood Golf Course. The 36-hole public facility in Keene, N.H., was built by his grandfather and great-uncle a generation before Barrett was born. Chelso honed his considerable skills there – good enough to finish runner-up to Jordan Spieth in the 2011 U.S. Junior Amateur, play four seasons at Texas Christian University, and eventually try pro golf.

It didn't pan out. Two unfulfilling seasons on PGA Tour Canada, along with unsuccessful attempts at qualifying for the PGA Tour, led to burnout. He decided to take a one-year hiatus from competitive golf in Starkville, Miss., where his now-wife Kortnie (Maxoutopoulis), whom he met while both competed at TCU, was the assistant women's golf coach at Mississippi State. Barrett accepted an assistant pro position at the university golf course.

In the back of his mind, Barrett had long suspected he might end up being more successful teaching than playing – and so it proved. Barrett, 31, fell in love with golf again as an instructor.

When Kortnie became the associate women's coach at San Jose State in 2021, Barrett took a job at nearby CordeValle, becoming the club's director of instruction three years later, teaching members and working regularly with 10-15 promising juniors and amateurs. In 2025, he also found time to become the Northern California PGA Section's Player of the Year, winning two tournaments and never finishing outside the top 6.

All of this caught the eye of the Northern California Golf Association as it sought a coach for the U.S. National Development Team's newly created Northern California State Team, one of 30 rosters under the U.S. National Development Program (USNDP) umbrella.

Barrett got the gig, in no small part due to his playing experience and an ability to connect with juniors.



Chelso Barrett (above right) battled Jordan Spieth in the 2011 U.S. Junior Amateur final. Now Barrett (far left) is an up-and-coming instructor who works under Jon Horner at CordeValle.

"My greatest coaching influence is Jon Horner, the head pro at CordeValle," said Barrett. "He tells me to teach through stories. It's really fun with these high-level players, because I remember what they are going through mentally and physically."

Telling a young student that he once went toe-to-toe with the likes of Spieth, major champion Cameron Smith, and PGA Tour winners Wil Zalatoris and Nico Echevarria can provide more connection than a swing tip.

"Competing helps me as a coach," said Barrett. "I think it's important to stay in touch with the game, in particular the mental game and the pressure you feel. Playing keeps me fresh and helps me relate to the kids and what they'll be feeling on the course."

When Barrett and NorCal State Team captain Pat Hurst, a two-time USGA champion and former LPGA Tour star, gather the players for their first formal camp in April, those past experiences will certainly resonate. But Barrett is more excited about playing a role in the game's future.

"The sky's the limit," said Barrett. "We're just scratching the surface."

A MERRY JOURNEY

Lee Trevino's success comes from hard work and discipline, allowing him to enjoy precious time with his family – just don't ask to see his trophies...

by **MIKE TROSTEL**
photo by **LEONARD KAMSLER/GETTY**

LEE TREVINO HAS ACHIEVED professional success that most of us can only dream of. In addition to winning six major championships and 29 PGA Tour events over his storied career, he is one of only four players to win the U.S. Open, The Open Championship and the PGA Championship – twice.

One might think that the game and the joy of playing it might have lost some luster after all these years, but for Trevino, 86, golf still delivers happiness. His favorite partners these days are his family, especially his beloved wife of 42 years, Claudia, and his son, Daniel, with whom he played the 2025 PNC Championship. His performance there, which included holing out an approach shot for an eagle 2, was nothing short of extraordinary.

Just like the man himself.

How did serving in the Marines impact your life?

Oh, hell, that's the only reason I'm alive. I mean, I'm a farm boy. I came up the hard way. I've been on my own since I was 10 years old. I caddied, I did everything. I was working, I was mowing fairways when I was 14, and I had no structure. I had no one to tell me right from wrong. I did what I wanted. You know, a 14-year-old kid is not thinking good. I'm very fortunate. All those drugs were around, but we couldn't afford them. We didn't have any money. I knew it was out there, but we didn't run in that crowd.

[But] I had gotten into a little bit of trouble. A police officer got me and he said, "How old are you?" I said, "I'll be 17 next week." He took me to recruiting and I ended up four years in the Marine Corps.

Were you already playing golf at this point in your life?

I didn't really play at the time. I was trying to do odd jobs, to eat, and to make a living. And when I got out of the →



A product of hardscrabble roots, Lee Trevino burst onto the scene in 1967 at age 27, winning PGA Tour Rookie of the Year. He then won the 1968 U.S. Open for his first of 6 major titles.

Marine Corps, I went to work at Columbian Country Club in Dallas to build a new nine holes. I welded for six months – the pipes, the irrigation system. Then a guy discovered me hitting balls on a range one time, and he said, "Man, you hit the hell out of it." I said, "I monkey around with it because I learned to play with one club."

When you learn to play with one club, you can do a lot of stuff. And he said, "You have a lot of potential." He had a par 3 course and a driving range, and he hired me. That's why I was so good with a wedge and a driver. Because for five years, I hit balls. That's all I did. I won the first tournament I ever entered.

I got out of the Marine Corps in '61. I won the Texas State Open in '65 and the New Mexico Open about a month later. I won the first two tournaments I played in. Never played in an amateur tournament.

And then in 1967, you finished fifth in the U.S. Open and received an exemption on the PGA Tour. Did you envision a career after that?

No. You know what? I am no different than anyone. I was acting the same way that everyone does, all these athletes doing it today. You can't give a lot of money to a guy that's never had any. Because he's going to spend it – and he's going to spend it foolishly.

I would be dead, in prison or broke right now if it wasn't for my wife Claudia. She gave me structure. She showed me how to be a dad, which I never was, with my other kids. I was her kid. She raised me. Even though I was 18 years older than her, Claudia raised me. Amazing.

In 1971, you win the U.S., Canadian and British Opens in the span of 20 days. Did it feel like way back when you won your first two tournaments?

Well, you know, it's funny. I don't want you to think that I'm cocky or I got a chip on my shoulder. But every time I teed it up, I thought I was going to win and I was disappointed if I didn't. You have to understand, it took me a few years to realize that you could still be a hell of a player and a star and lose 98 percent of the time. And that's what golf's all about. You lose 98 percent of the time. Unless you're Scheffler or Tiger, or Nicklaus. He was in that category.

But we played a lot. You know, we played 30, 35 tournaments a year. I mean, that's the way I did it. I've won 58 golf tournaments, eight majors in this country [including senior majors]. And I've won probably 30, 35 tournaments around the world. There's not one trophy or one plaque in my house. You walk in my house, you would not think a golfer lived there unless you went in the garage where the clubs are.

I have two bedrooms upstairs. One bedroom has no furniture in it. And all the trophies are on the floor amongst all the books and the plaques and all the pictures and stuff. I don't have them on the walls or nothing. My majors, I have wrapped up differently. I wrap them up in blankets and I have them in cases. And I have them stored under the stairwell in a room inside the house. I haven't seen them in years.

Why do you keep the trophies stored away like that?

I have to answer too many questions. I don't have people at my house anyway because that's the first thing they ask. "Where are the trophies?" I say, "Ah, that's past history." And I let it go. You get people in your house and you got trophies. "Oh, how'd you win it? Who'd you [beat]?" It's not a tour. I invited you to dinner.

What is it like to partner with Daniel in an event like [the PNC Championship] and share the game with your family?

I had four other kids, and I was around, but not the way you're supposed to be. I never did many things with them. I had Olivia four years before Daniel, who was born when I was 53. And for the first time in my life, I saw soccer games and lacrosse games, ballet and piano recitals. It was wonderful. He and I are extremely close. We're pals. And my daughter, too. We do a lot of stuff together.

The Trevino File

Age: 86

Birthplace: Garland, Texas

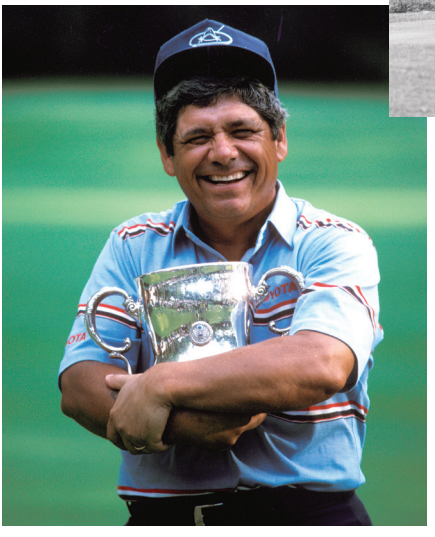
Turned pro: 1960

Professional victories: 92

Major championships: 6 (2 U.S. Opens, 2 PGA Championships, 2 Open Championships)

World Golf Hall of Fame induction: 1981





From top: Tossing his cap after his 1971 U.S. Open victory; relishing his 1990 U.S. Senior Open win. With Claudia, his wife of 42 years, in Palm Desert, Calif.

USGA ARCHIVES

Daniel and I, we talk every day. He has an apparel company. We hit balls together and play. We talk about golf. This PNC tournament is very special to us, because we get to play together. And I can't beat him now, so he needles me a little bit.

As soon as we jump on the plane, regardless if we finish last, in the middle, or whatever, we're already putting our strategy together for next year.

What about golf makes it a game that can produce a bond between family and friends?

It is absolutely essential that family play, OK? I don't play golf anymore, but my wife will tell you that if she wants to go, I'm ready. The only person who I take out and play golf with, with the exception of my son and my son-in-law, is my wife.

I love playing with her. I tee her ball up. She'll tell you. And I play her tees. If you're going to play with your wife, you can't play different tees because you don't have any communication. We ride in the cart, I tee her ball up, I take a 5-hybrid, 6-hybrid, and I'll hit it. She hits her drive, and we play. When she goes to the driving range, I don't hit balls. I watch her.

There's an old saying and there's a lot of truth to it. And you have to think about this. It's that every husband tells their wife that they love them. She knows that. Because you're there. [But] you got to tell her you like her: "I really like you. That's why I like to be around you and close to you." She says, "You're a damn pest."

From your upbringing, starting in the cotton field at age 5, welding, being a caddie, paying your dues; did you ever envision one day you'd be in the World Golf Hall of Fame at the top of the mountain?

I see that question asked all the time to athletes in football. No. And the reason it's no is, see, a football player, when they're getting him ready, his vision is that he's going to be a pro. I was different. I was scrambling to try to eat, to put a roof over our heads, feed the family. I had no idea where I was going or where I was going to end up. And like I said, I had no structure. I didn't know anything about the future. You have to know something about the future.

We lived minute to minute, hour to hour, day to day. Other than that, I had no idea what was on the other side of the street. And I didn't care, either. The Lord gave me a hell of a talent. And my wife said this one time, I was looking at my hands and I said, can you imagine these hands doing all they've done with a club? My wife looked at me and she says, "Yeah, the hell with your hands. Thank God for your mouth." Because you know, I can hold court.

I practice. I hit balls every day. I go out there. I'm putting on the carpet. I'm working on my clubs. I'm in the yard chipping balls at 86 years old. Where am I going? Nowhere. Because the thought in my mind is that the Lord gave me a hell of a talent, and I'm going to have to see him pretty soon. I don't want him to be disappointed because he'd probably make me caddie for Arnie. He's probably going to say, you got to start at the bottom [laughs].



A LASTING LEGACY

My father's dedication to golf spurred an internship program that would have made him immensely proud

by **P.J. BOATWRIGHT III**
with **RON DRISCOLL**



P.J. Boatwright III attends the USGA's 2024 orientation for more than 200 interns in the program named for his father, P.J. Boatwright Jr. (opposite page).

STEVE BOYLE; USGA ARCHIVES

ONE OF THE FIRST indications I had of my father's stature in golf came while we were watching TV. Every weekend we would tune in to the PGA Tour event, and one January, the Bing Crosby Pro-Am was on. As we watched, every so often the phone would ring, and Dad would go answer it. When he came back into the room after the third call, I asked him who was on the phone.

The calls were coming from a PGA Tour official, double-checking with him about whether they were handling a Rules situation properly. And I'm thinking, the guys on Tour are calling Dad and asking, "Are we doing this right, P.J.?" His role in the game was clearly much bigger than I realized.

Then came the 1972 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach. I'm watching the final round at home, and there's Dad, following Jack Nicklaus on every hole. The USGA president in 1972, Lyn Lardner, wanted to walk the final round with Nicklaus, and he asked Dad to accompany him, knowing that if a Rules situation arose, Dad would handle it quickly and properly. The next day, everyone at our local golf course told me they'd seen my father on TV.

After my father passed away in 1991, my mother shared details about the program the USGA was launching in his name. We thought it was a nice idea, but we never expected it to become such an overwhelming success. I remember thinking that Dad would be proud of it, because he spent his whole career in golf administration. It's all he ever really wanted to do. →





P.J. Boatwright Jr. in a familiar U.S. Open pose, with a putter and a can of spray paint that he used to mark hole locations.





Boatwright, the USGA's executive director from 1969-1980, often walked the course with competitors to lend his Rules expertise as needed.

USGA ARCHIVES

More recently, my son, Jack, won the 2018 Metropolitan Golf Association Junior Championship, and we found out after the awards ceremony that about half of the MGA staff had launched their careers through P.J. Boatwright Jr. internships. It was astonishing to me.

People at the USGA have since told me that nearly 40 percent of the staffers at Allied Golf Associations today, including one-third of the executive directors, are Boatwright alumni. It's a testament to the pent-up demand that existed and the success the program has had in bringing people into the game and launching so many careers.

My father never wanted to go on to work for the PGA Tour, like his predecessor Joe Dey did. It was all about the USGA, which – at least the way I've always perceived it – is about golf for everyone, and not so much the commercial aspects of it. Certainly, there's money to be made and the U.S. Open makes a lot of it, but everything else the USGA does on behalf of the game is so much more important. Those are the things that Dad really cared about; there couldn't be a more fitting way than these internships to honor him.

IN HIS OBITUARY, my father was described as the world's leading authority on the Rules of Golf. That must sound arcane to someone who doesn't know golf. I mean, what's the big deal? But golf is different. It's not played on a standard field or court with the same dimensions. As a result, unusual situations arise, which is why in the old days you had these two massive binders filled with the Decisions on the Rules of Golf.

Dad made many of those decisions. Sometime after he died, I was reading some of them and thinking how meticulous and thoughtful he was. On reflection, he really was the chief justice of the world of golf. And if he'd chosen to go into law, he probably would have been a good judge for the same reason.

In its own way, it's an important legacy, because golfers are competitive, but they want to play the game the right way. They want to win by the Rules, they want them to apply to everybody, and they'd like for the Rules to be consistent and not change too often.

A funny story recently crossed my mind. Dad got a phone call one day from someone with a Rules question. The gist of it was this: a guy hooks his drive into an adjacent fairway, and a deer comes along, picks up the ball and moves it to a different spot. The golfer plays it from that new spot, but two shots later, he loses the ball. He drops a ball and holes out with it. What's the ruling, they wondered?

My father asks a couple of questions, and as they talk, the caller says, oh, I forgot to tell you – in the process of playing the hole, the golfer also played a wrong ball. Dad's puffing his pipe, mulling it, and he's puzzled. Finally, he asks, when did this happen? Well, it turns out it



Right: Graham Boatwright plays a tee shot as his brother/partner Jack and their caddies, sister Casey and father P.J. Boatwright III, observe during the 2024 U.S. Amateur Four-Ball at Philadelphia Cricket Club. Below: A young P.J. III takes some swings under his dad's watchful eye.

didn't; it was a bunch of guys at a bar who fancied themselves Rules experts, wondering what the ruling would be. So Dad tells them, call me back when it actually happens!

Another key role my father played for many years was setting up the course for the U.S. Open. He was a very good player who competed in four U.S. Amateurs, won the Carolinas Open twice and made the cut in the 1950 U.S. Open. It's my favorite major, largely because it requires a precise game of golf. To his mind, the rough should be demanding; otherwise, it comes down to whoever makes the most putts. He thought a champion should be required to hit most of the fairways and most of the greens, and they should have to hit their driver at least a half-dozen times a round. That was his perspective.

I remember watching my father during the 1979 U.S. Open at Inverness, going out in the afternoon after play ended. He'd be on the course with his assistant, a putter and a couple of balls, and he'd hit putts from all over the green to make sure the hole locations were fair but challenging. There wasn't a team setting the holes; it was just Dad with a putter and a can of spray paint.

THE PAST FEW years, I've attended the welcome dinner for the Boatwright interns at the USGA. In 2025 there were 215 interns, a record total, and it was so gratifying to see. I told them a brief story that I thought might be useful to them, because golf is a small world and relationships matter.



My father grew up as the son of a well-to-do cotton merchant in South Carolina. He wasn't a very good student but he never thought he'd have to be; he figured he would just go into his father's business. He played golf in college and never got his degree at either Georgia Tech or at Wofford College. Then, his father's business went bust.

Dad was on his own, with no business to join. Sorry, son. One of his first jobs was at the Savannah River Plant making plutonium, a job that didn't require a college education. One of his best friends was Peter Tufts, the son of Richard Tufts, patriarch of Pinehurst Resort and the incoming president of the USGA. When a job as secretary of the Carolinas Golf Association became available, my father got it, and poured himself into the work. As my mother told it, he spent

FROM TOP: JONATHAN ERNST; COURTESY OF BOATWRIGHT FAMILY


From tee to green,
PING
cisco
paycom
Viktor Hovland
Team Cisco Ambassador



The 2025 class celebrates the completion of their P.J. Boatwright Jr. Internship Program orientation at Golf House in Liberty Corner, N.J., last May.

weeks and weeks studying the Rules of Golf. If he was going to run championships, he had to know the Rules. And he did everything at those championships, seeing as they had a staff of two people.

He made such an impression that he had some persuasive advocates when a position opened up in 1959 for the assistant director at the USGA under Joe Dey, and he got the job. For the next 10 years, he nailed it at the USGA, and when Dey moved on, he became executive director. I advise the interns to stay in touch with the people they meet and work with, because it's true that relationships matter.

I have a plaque on my wall at home with my father's hole-by-hole scores from the 1950 U.S. Open at Merion Golf Club. He had a chance to win the medal awarded to the low amateur, but he shot 79 in the final round and ended up as the third-low amateur. In 1981, when the U.S. Open returned to Merion, my father's friends at the USGA made a medal for him inscribed "Third-low Amateur." It was a sweet gesture, and the only medal like it in the world. My mother made it into a necklace that she wore frequently, and now it belongs to my daughter, Casey.

Two years ago my sons, Graham and Jack, qualified for the U.S. Amateur Four-Ball, winning their qualifier with a score of 9 under par. They both received a medal, so now, all three of our children own a USGA medal. We all went to Philadelphia Cricket Club for the championship – I caddied for my older son, Graham, and Casey caddied for Jack. Although they missed the cut for match play, we were able to get a wonderful photo of the four of us, with my daughter and me in our caddie bibs with the Boatwright name on our backs.

My dad would have loved it that my wife, Cathy, received the USGA's Ike Grainger Award marking 25 years as a volunteer Rules official who has worked dozens of championships, and that she has a lower handicap than I do. He would be proud to know that our children all play golf and two of them qualified for a USGA championship. That would have thrilled him, along with the fact that the program named for him has been so impactful over the past 35 years. It's something we're all incredibly proud of.

JASON E. MICZEK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A GREAT GOLF HOLE

by **RAN MORRISSETT**

THE VIEW FROM the elevated tee on the par-4 8th hole at Southern Pines (N.C.) Golf Club is beguiling. The fairway tumbles downhill, gracefully bending to the right past a pair of impressive fairway bunkers with a large lake running along the right side of the hole and curling behind the green.

The playing angles are exquisite. Flirt with or carry the fairway bunkers and enjoy a fine, open line into the green. Steer conservatively left away from the bunkers off the tee and your approach shot becomes muddled, as an elongated left-front greenside bunker intrudes into play. A hidden back-left greenside bunker is all too happy to introduce itself if your approach shot travels a little too far.

To have a clear look at the green, the exacting tee shot also needs to carry a valley in the fairway – which plays smaller than it looks, as it runs along a slight ridge that sheds balls to either side. Miss left, and you're in pine trees punching out from hardpan; miss right, and you're in those deep bunkers – or worse.

The green has its own demands. When the hole is tucked in the lower-left bowl, sandwiched between the bunkers, it is great fun to play an approach right of the flag and see it feed into the bowl and finish close to the hole. The nerviest location is back-right, with the aforementioned bowl on the left and a bank of short grass right and long – all of which whisk away slightly errant shots.

Even when the 8th at Southern Pines treats you shabbily, you can't help but love it given its beauty and strategic merit – and that's the mark of a great golf hole.

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photos by **MOGIE ADAMCHIK** • *illustration by* **GEOFF LEIGHLY**

THE 8th AT Southern Pines (N.C.) Golf Club

PAR: 4

YARDAGE: 390-287

ARCHITECTS: Donald Ross (1906); Kyle Franz (2021)

A TEE SHOT that hugs or carries the bunkers on the right side of the fairway sets up a better angle for the approach.

THE FAIRWAY curves along a ridge that sheds balls toward trouble on either side.



THE GREEN is protected by bunkers on the left and a steep, closely mown bank that runs along the right side and around the back.

Pull out gatefold









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PHOTO ESSAY

THE THRILL



O CANADA!: Shelly Stouffer, of British Columbia, celebrates with friends – and champagne – after winning the 2022 U.S. Senior Women's Amateur at Anchorage Golf Course in the first-ever USGA championship in Alaska. (Steven Gibbons/USGA)



OF VICTORY

Emotions reign when players achieve their long-held dreams in the crucible of USGA competition



A GOLDEN STATE: Andrea Lee, right, congratulates Robynn Ree after Ree reached the quarterfinals of the 2017 U.S. Women's Amateur at San Diego Country Club. (Steven Gibbons/USGA)

"The feeling is out of this

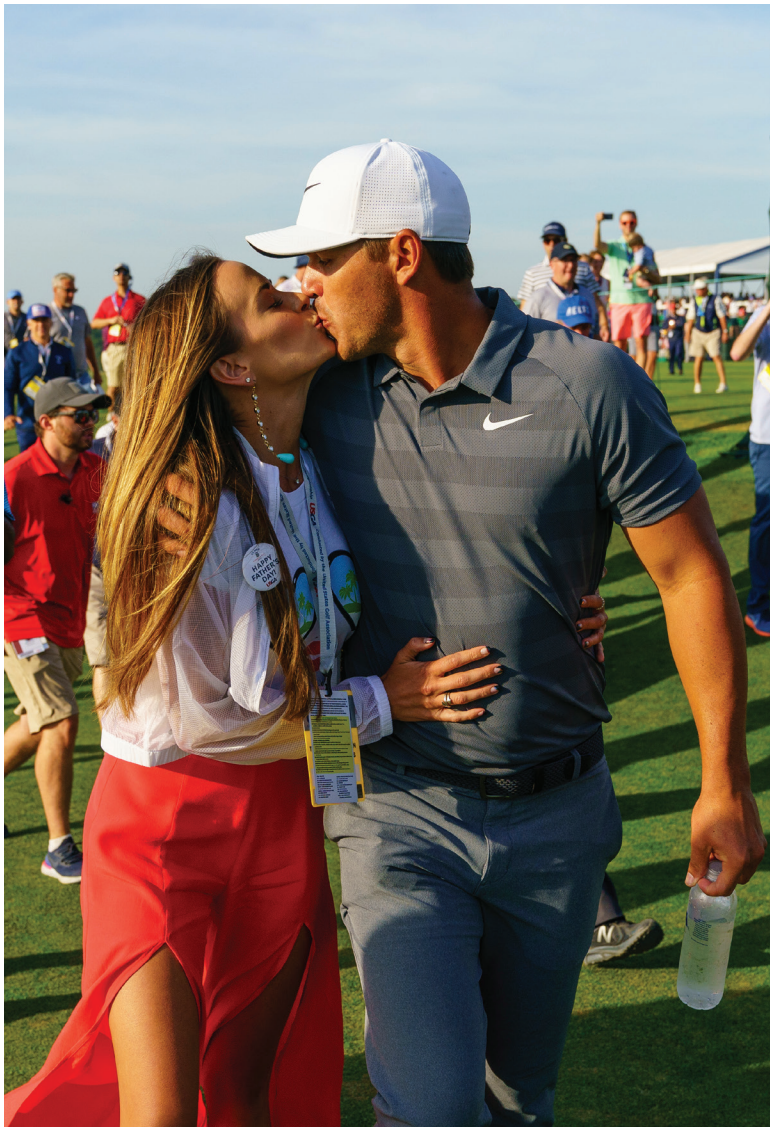
world. It's so clich



A GOLDEN STATE: Andrea Lee, right, congratulates Robynn



HISTORIC DOUBLE: Nine years after his victory there in the U.S. Amateur, Matt Fitzpatrick shares the joy with his father, Russell, after capturing the 2022 U.S. Open at The Country Club in Brookline, Mass. (Chris Keane/USGA)



BACK TO BACK: Brooks Koepka kisses his future wife, Jena Sims, after finishing off a repeat triumph in the 2018 U.S. Open at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club in Southampton, N.Y. Koepka prevailed the previous year at Erin Hills for his first major victory. (Darren Carroll/USGA)





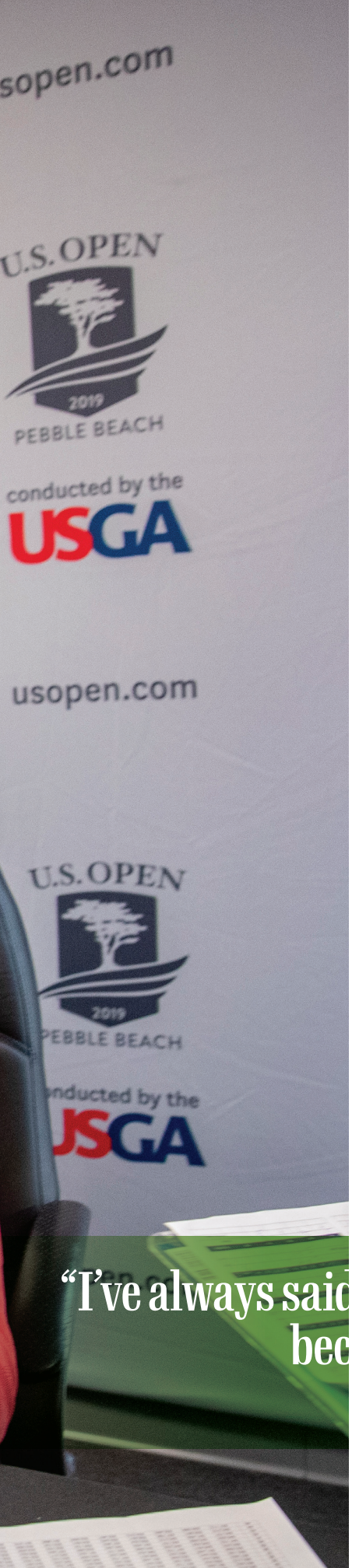
TEAM EFFORT: Ellen Port, a 7-time USGA champion, kisses her husband and caddie, Andy Port, after her quarterfinal victory in the 2024 U.S. Senior Women's Amateur at Broadmoor Golf Club in Seattle, Wash. (Steven Gibbons/USGA)

than winning a national title. Every time I go out and practice, I dream about reaching this point."

– Ellen Port



WELL DONE: Justin Rose, the 2013 champion, congratulates Gary Woodland (seated) after Woodland completed a final-round 69 to defeat Brooks Koepka by 3 strokes in the 2019 U.S. Open at Pebble Beach (Calif.) Golf Links. (Darren Carroll/USGA)





THE BIG TWO: Arnold Palmer, left, congratulates Jack Nicklaus after the Golden Bear defeated The King in an 18-hole playoff for the 1962 U.S. Open title at Oakmont (Pa.) Country Club, the first of Nicklaus' 4 U.S. Open wins. (USGA Archives)



MOTHER'S LOVE: Tiger Woods and his mother, Kultida, embrace after he finished his historic run of 6 USGA trophies in 6 years with the 1996 U.S. Amateur at Oregon's Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club. Woods later joked that he felt pressure to win, as it was the first of his USGA events that his mother attended. (Robert Walker/USGA)





MOTHER'S LOVE, PART 2: Emma Talley holds the Robert Cox Trophy as she shares a hug with her mom, Jennifer, on the heels of her 2-and-1 victory in the final of the 2013 U.S. Women's Amateur at the Country Club of Charleston (S.C.). (Chris Keane/USGA)

true. It's overwhelming."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HOW GOLFERS THRIVE

TRAIN LIKE A CHAMPION

What are the building blocks to golf success? As the U.S. National Development Program shows, it starts with a solid foundation

BY **JESSICA MARKSBURY**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY **PETRA PÉTERFFY**





WHAT IS THE SECRET to nurturing talent in order to extract maximum results? And why do some elite young players enjoy long and fruitful pro careers while others don't quite reach their full potential? The answer, of course, varies. Take a look at the ranking of the top 50 players on the PGA and LPGA Tours, from Scottie Scheffler and Rory McIlroy to Jeeno Thitikul and Nelly Korda, and you'll find 100 unique success stories. But identifying the commonalities shared by golf's top performers was the primary starting point for Dr. Beth Brown, the senior athlete development specialist for the USGA's U.S. National Development Program (USNDP). Brown was tasked with creating a foundational ethos when the program was founded in 2023. Her solution: USNDP THRIVE™, an acronym – more on that later – but more accurately an aspiration that represents the USNDP's core principles.

It's no coincidence that "thrive" is a verb – an action word. Merriam-Webster defines it as "to grow vigorously or flourish," and "to progress toward or realize a goal despite or because of circumstances." The word is also found in adjectival form in the USGA's longstanding mission, which is "to champion and advance the game of golf to ensure a thriving, welcoming and sustainable future."

This country's youth is the quintessence of that future, and the USNDP, now in its fourth year, has a lofty goal: to foster future generations of American golf talent by providing a pathway to success. That pathway includes providing support and training, as well as competitive opportunities and financial support when needed.

"At the grassroots level, we have organizations focused on holistic development in golf, for example, First Tee and LPGA*USGA Girls Golf," said Brown. "But what we don't have in the U.S. is one focused on holistic development as we get to higher levels, to elite



Pilar Berchot (arms raised) likes the look of a putt by Shyla Brown (right) at last fall's USNDP National Junior Team Training Camp, while Angela Zhang, Mia Hammond and Ronin Banerjee look on.

performance, intentionally focused on that pathway. With USNDP THRIVE, we have an opportunity to pick up where some of the grassroots organizations are leaving off and continuing to not only talk the talk but walk the walk. That's the key, to follow through and do things in an intentional way.

"We're all about fostering future generations of American golf talent, and ultimately our goal is for athletes to perform better," she continued. "And we can do it in a way where we can care about the whole human *and* help their performance in golf."

The letters in THRIVE represent the areas that Brown and her team deem essential to top-tier performance and holistic well-being: Training, Health, Relationships, Individual development, Values and Equipment.

THRIVE defined

Training: The high-level players who comprise the USNDP generally have their own swing coaches and at-home practice routines. Chris Zambri, head coach of the USNDP, understands that and views his role as supplemental. As a result, practice sessions during in-person training camps and team events emphasize strengthening the players' course management skills, taking deep dives into statistical analysis and developing more purposeful practice plans.

Health: Physical, psychological and emotional well-being is the emphasis here, and players have access to experts in various fields, including sports conditioning, psychology and nutrition. During

EDWARD M. PIO RODA; MOGIE ADAMCHIK



HOW TO THRIVE IN YOUR OWN GAME

Ready to incorporate THRIVE's principles into your golf journey? See below for some improvement tactics the U.S. National Junior Team utilizes

HAVE SOME 'T'!

USNDP coaches Chris Zambri and Tiffany Joh crunched the numbers and discovered that – contrary to popular belief – ball-striking, not putting, is the biggest performance differentiator in game improvement. With that in mind, use a distance-measuring device or launch monitor to test your mettle with these 3 training drills.

LINE DRILL: How well do you keep your shots on-line? In this accuracy drill, hit 10 balls to a single center-line target, and track how many shots you hit on-line, with a goal of staying within 5 to 7 yards of your intended line.

CARRY DISTANCE DRILL: Do you know how far you hit each club? See if you can hit five consecutive shots within 5 yards of your anticipated yardage.

ODD YARDAGE DRILL: Once you have established baseline carry distances with your clubs, practice taking yardage off at random. For example, if you hit a 9-iron 100 yards, try using that club to make the ball travel 93 yards instead.

'H' IS FOR HYDRATION

Are you drinking enough water? You may be surprised by how much is recommended for peak performance. Nutritionist Rob Yang recommends ingesting half of your body weight in ounces each day. For a 150-lb. person, that's a whopping 75 ounces!

SET GOALS

Individual development ('I') isn't just for the young. Take some time to assess your strengths and weaknesses. Play a few rounds keeping detailed statistics on fairways hit, greens in regulation, penalty strokes and putts. Where do you notice a deficiency? Make that area your practice focus.

GEAR UP

Playing professionally fitted equipment ('E') is one way to optimize on-course performance without making any swing changes. Ill-fitting clubs can lead players to make unconscious compensations in their swings, resulting in mishits and frustration. Club-fitting experts can identify and mitigate ball-striking inconsistencies, giving you the best chance of playing well with the swing you already have.



one recent team gathering, players were tasked with creating for themselves a healthy snack-pack for the golf course from a gas station convenience store – a real-world application of their learnings from team nutritionist Rob Yang.

Relationships: Fostering meaningful relationships with parents, coaches and teammates is always a priority, but this category widens the net to include fellow competitors, officials, caddies, mentors and media representatives – all of whom players will encounter throughout their competitive careers. In-person training camps and team competitions enable the players to bond as friends and teammates, and those relationships continue to strengthen throughout the year, with teammates often opting to room together, partner at match-play tournaments and support each other's successes.

Individual development: This pillar addresses the players' need for self-assessment, goal-setting and personalized training plans. Additionally, peak performance planning is emphasized so that athletes understand and learn to develop a structured training and competition schedule that increases the probability of long-term success, while decreasing the likelihood of burnout or injury. Training camps are designed to identify strengths and weaknesses, with resources at the ready to support players in any given area.

Values: Players are encouraged to engage in self-reflection: Who am I? What do I stand for? Or as Coach Zambri has been known to put it, what is the thing that matters regardless of whether you win the tournament? What kind of reputation do you want to have among your peers? If you win a national championship but don't emphasize integrity, is the win as meaningful? The USNDP stresses core values such as competitiveness but also seeks to foster a strong sense of sportsmanship and gratefulness. At training camps, for example, players are rewarded not just for winning a match, but for demon-

"IF YOU LOOK AT THE TALENT AND THE DEPTH OF COMPETITION NOW, EVERYONE IS JUST SO CLOSE IN TERMS OF HOW GOOD THEY ARE TECHNICALLY AND TACTICALLY."

TIFFANY JOH,
USNDP assistant coach



Top to bottom: Chris Zambri leads a USNDP session at Desert Mountain in Scottsdale, Ariz.; Tiffany Joh and Zambri confer during the 2025 USNDP training camp; Beth Brown (left) and Mo Martin, the regional coach for the western U.S.

access to tools that will support the players' long-term excellence and well-being. These include opportunities for custom club and ball fittings, stat-tracking apps and portal access, the use of launch monitors and training aids, and health trackers, too.

ONE PERSON WHO understands the significance of these categoric pillars more than most is USNDP assistant coach Tiffany Joh. Joh's illustrious golf résumé includes two U.S. Women's Amateur Public Links Championship titles (2006, 2008), a berth on the 2008 USA Curtis Cup Team, and four All-America honors in her career at UCLA. Joh spent 11 years on the LPGA Tour before launching a coaching career in 2021, starting at California State University San Marcos, then at the University of Southern California before being hired in 2024 as USNDP assistant coach, working alongside Zambri.

"Where Coach Zambri and I came from, we were heavy on the 'T' [Training]," she said of their college coaching backgrounds. "I probably overlooked the importance of having a more holistic view of player development. Subconsciously, I knew it was important, but I didn't realize how important.

"Now, anytime we start being proactive about bringing something else out of the acronym, whether it's in training camp or discussions with the kids, we talk about how Coach Zambri is really 'HRIVE-ing,'" she continued, laughing. "I remember saying to Beth, yeah, the 'T' will get you on tour, but the rest of it, the 'HRIVE,' will help you *stay* on tour."





strating behaviors that align with these core values.

Equipment: Providing players with top-of-the-line equipment and technology is another foundational priority, from gear to facilitating

EDWARD M. PIO RODA(2); LOGAN WHITTON


OVR PERFORMANCE





Left and below: Players are put through their paces during USNDP National Junior Team training camp in Bowling Green, Ky., last November. Right: National Junior Team member Mia Hammond, of New Albany, Ohio, analyzes some playing data.

At its core, the USNDP is designed to produce more American major champions. As Brown, Joh and the rest of the staff have discovered, however, there's a lot more to winning than swing mechanics and technical mastery.

"If you look at the talent and the depth of competition now, everyone is just so close in terms of how good they are technically and tactically," Joh said. "But sometimes that intangible aspect comes in, like how well do you nurture the relationships that are important to you? Especially if you're a tour player, it can get incredibly lonely to be away from your friends and family for long stretches. So how are you continuing to cultivate relationships when you don't have as much time to invest in them?

"Then, of course, the 'I' – 'Individual development,'" she continued. "The difference between an elite junior who becomes an elite pro golfer, or an elite junior who falls off the map, a lot of it comes down to how much they are investing in individual development. Are they setting goals? Are they giving themselves feedback and responding to it?"

THRIVE aims to bridge that gap, with principles integrated into every part of the curriculum. At training camps, the U.S. Junior National Team participates in a curated itinerary that includes extensive practice and on-course situational guidance (Training); nutrition advice and mental-game strategies (Health); an environment that is conducive to cultivating deep and meaningful bonds with teammates and coaches (Relationships); skill-based assessment and data-backed recommendations for improvement (Individual development); opportunities to demonstrate competitiveness, sportsmanship and gratefulness (Values); and access to the latest resources (Equipment). Every exercise the team performs and every learning session the team attends is tied to THRIVE.

"This is not just a feel-good idea,

"BEING ON THE TEAM HAS HELPED ME WITH SOME OF THE THINGS I MIGHT HAVE OVERLOOKED BEFORE – THINGS LIKE NUTRITION, FITNESS, COURSE MANAGEMENT AND PRACTICE PLANS."

LUKE COLTON,
USNJT member

EDWARD M. PIO RODA (3)



Angela Zhang of the U.S. National Junior Team chooses her snacks wisely.

or developing soft skills," said Brown. "These things really can impact performance. Every programmatic decision that we're making, every single thing that we're offering either virtually or in person, is all within the THRIVE framework, because we know that this will lead to long-term excellence and well-being."

The application of THRIVE's principles isn't limited to the 24 players who earn spots on the U.S. National Junior Team. The curriculum is shared with every player who joins the greater USNDP family – an ever-growing group that also includes grant recipients and state team players – in the form of webinars. In 2025, that total pool of USNDP juniors grew to 629, a total that is scheduled to increase annually and to nearly triple by 2030.

Webinar topics are presented by the USNDP's team of experts in every category, including coaches Zambri and Joh, and encompass a wide variety of topics. Every USNDP player can attend virtually, and in 2025, there were 17 webinars available to players. Additionally, 24 State Junior Team coaches and captains attended at least one in-person THRIVE Trainings in 2025, with approximately 80 percent of attendees completing all additional requirements to earn the THRIVE Certified distinction. More trainings are scheduled, and an eLearning platform is in the works.

GIVEN THE SIGNIFICANT resources allocated to the USNDP, it's natural to wonder: Is it working? There are already encouraging markers of progress. Eighteen of the 22 players on the 2025 National Junior Team improved their WAGR ranking — some by large margins. Notables include Anna Fang, of San Diego, who moved from No. 317 to No. 56, and Luke Colton, of Frisco, Texas, who jumped from No. 93 in early 2025 to No. 32 in November. Colton will enroll at Vanderbilt University in the fall.

"Being on the team has helped me with some things I might have overlooked before," Colton said. "For things like nutrition, fitness, course management and practice plans, the USNDP has so many professionals in all these fields, and that's been really helpful."

Emerie Schartz is another success story. Schartz, of Wichita, Kan., moved up more than 230 spots in the WAGR in 2025 and will compete for Texas A&M in the fall. She credits the data analysis she received with helping her identify areas of improvement.

"Coach Zambri's line testing and yardage testing have had a huge impact on my game," Schartz said. "It's so great for distance control and knowing whether clubs are on line. And it helps show us problem areas without being emotionally involved. Sometimes you can play a round and say, oh, I didn't putt well, when really you weren't hitting your irons close, and you were leaving yourself crazy long putts. It shows you what you're struggling with."

Schartz said she's also reaped the benefit of THRIVE's nutrition guidance, including a simple tip of adding a bit of salt to her water on hot summer days to increase hydration.

EDWARD M. PIO RODA

Even if your path is unclear.



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"Rob Yang has simplified my diet and highlighted some areas where I was struggling, like my water intake," she said. "I definitely was not drinking enough, especially during my daily life."

Each player absorbs THRIVE's principles in different ways. Some, like Colton and Schartz, readily adopt practices as they're presented. With others, change doesn't happen overnight. Joh said she can relate to that.

"The biggest thing is awareness," she said. "Not every player takes stuff from the 'H' and the 'R' and the 'I' and the 'V' and incorporates it, but at least they're aware of it. I think back to when I was 15, 16 years old. At one point, I fueled an entire round with a box of Fruit Loops. Did I know that probably wasn't great for my game? Of course, but I wasn't ready to change yet. We're just hoping to introduce these concepts a bit earlier, so they have more time to prep for what's going to be required at a really elite level."

EMMA TALLEY, like Joh, knows what it takes to succeed at the highest level. Talley won the 2013 U.S. Women's Amateur Championship and the 2015 NCAA Individual Championship, becoming only the fifth woman ever to win both events. (Rose Zhang became the sixth to achieve the feat in 2022 and added an additional NCAA title in 2023.) Talley was a four-time All-American at the University of Alabama and played seven seasons on the LPGA Tour. She recently attended the U.S. National Junior Team's training camp in her home state of Kentucky and came away impressed.

"I wish we had something like that when I was going through amateur and junior golf," she said. "Professional golf is really hard, and they're lucky to have these mentors, because you need a big village when you play elite junior golf, and then going on to college golf and professional golf. When you go through a program like THRIVE, you're going to have those people in your corner for the rest of your life, and that's probably the coolest part about it."

Talley said she felt the Relationship aspect of THRIVE would have benefited her younger self.

"Just being around other players is really important," she said. "When I grew up, I was the only girl on the high school team, almost no one in my hometown played golf, so it was always just me. It's really cool to see the kids all together. Suddenly you have this community, and mentors around who are going to help you be successful."

Schartz concurred.

"I'm beyond grateful for all these relationships I've made, because they're truly friends I'll have the rest of my life," she said. "The experience with these kids and these coaches has helped me grow and mature, especially traveling on my own. Everyone on the team has had something to do with my game. I would not be where I am without their support."

Talley recently retired from the LPGA and welcomed a baby girl. THRIVE's principles, she said, would have also helped her process her pivot away from full-time professional golf.

"If I'd have gone through that program, 100 percent I could have used some of those strategies for this transition in my life," she said.

As the USNDP continues to grow, it's clear that golf's future in the USA is bright. What triumphs will the coming years hold? Time will tell, at least when it comes to on-course achievements. But one thing is for sure: The USNDP is about much more than accumulating trophies, a fact to which Talley can attest.

"These kids are going to thrive," she said. "Not just on the golf course but after their playing careers, too, because of what they're being taught."

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NEWS FLASH: 1896 U.S. OPEN

BACK TO THE FUTURE

JAMES FOULIS WINS 2ND U.S. OPEN AT SHINNECOCK HILLS AS USGA PRESIDENT STANDS FIRM ON INCLUSION

BY **BILL FIELDS**

SOUTHAMPTON, N.Y. (JULY 18, 1896) – Golf is still in its infancy in the United States, but no one can deny that the game is developing into more than a curiosity. Courses are sprouting, and clubmakers are busy outfitting new players. With every new course laid out on these shores and every man or woman who is intrigued to take up this stick-and-ball pursuit, the Scottish game is becoming ours as well.

Further evidence of this growth was fully on display in the eastern reaches of Long Island. About 90 miles from New York City, there was great interest in the happenings at Shinnecock Hills Golf Club.

Not quite two years ago, Shinnecock Hills was one of the five clubs that joined forces to form a national governing body, the United States Golf Association. Having hosted the U.S. Amateur and

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY
DANA SMITH




THE SHINNECOCK LINKS
ANDREWS
ROAD
RAILROAD
WHITECOURSE
RED COURSE
WON BY
JAMES FOULIS
UNITED STATES GOLF ASSOCIATION
OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP
LONG



WILLIE DUNN



this U.S. Open in those championships' second year of existence, Shinnecock Hills is now part of the USGA's nascent history in another important way.

The fields for both events were larger than a year ago, with nearly twice as many amateurs (58) and slightly more than triple the number of Open players (35). Some days, hundreds turned out to view the proceedings at Shinnecock Hills, which was recently expanded by Willie Dunn from 12 to 18 holes and a yardage of 4,423 yards.

The layout brims with challenge, from cop bunkers to ditches to railroad tracks. More than one golfer even had the frustration of finding out that a telegraph wire is of sufficient circumference to knock a gutta percha ball from its airborne journey. And with the Atlantic Ocean so close, the course can feature the winds of a British links, too, the kind that can perplex a player and stain a scorecard. It blew on the morning of the Open after overnight rain had given way to more summer sunshine, providing players one more thing to consider on a day already full of variables with a $150 sum (the same as in the Open a year ago) going to the winner.

The recent results were a reminder that Americans must not get ahead of themselves regarding their place in golf's competitive pecking order. Golf was, after all, invented elsewhere, where there have long been frequenters of the green. The new champions, amateur H.J. Whigham and professional James Foulis Jr., hail from abroad – Whigham is an Englishman and Foulis a Scotsman, both now settled near Chicago, where their respective trophies will sparkle until next year.

Whigham, son-in-law of 1895 U.S. Amateur champion Charles Blair Macdonald, did not face much resistance in the final match. Thirty-six holes were scheduled, but Whigham required not nearly the full allotment to defeat Bostonian J.G. Thorp, 8 and 7. To rule in the Open – 36 holes of stroke play contested on July 18, after the amateurs had held the stage through medal qualifying and a 16-player bracket – Foulis lived in tighter quarters. The professional at Chicago Golf Club, Foulis finished two rounds only three shots clear of England native Horace Rawlins, the difference-maker being Foulis' outstanding afternoon score of 74, the championship's low round by two strokes. For Rawlins, who works at the Sadaquada Golf Club in Utica, N.Y., it was a spirited if unsuccessful defense of the U.S. Open title he secured last year at Newport Golf Club in Rhode Island, where Foulis tied for third place.

It likely will be a very long time, if ever, before golf sees the precociousness of youth as exemplified by the late Tom Morris Jr., who won the first of his four British Opens at 17, the last when he was 21. His genius was as bright and fleeting as a comet. Most men are a little older when they solve the cham-





C.B. Macdonald

pionship puzzle. Harry Vardon, the man from the Channel Islands from whom much is expected, who grips the club in a distinct manner that distinguishes him before he begins his backswing, won his first British Open last month at age 26. That contest, at Muirfield, might well be remembered not only for Vardon's ascent but perhaps the farewell of a true legend. Tom Morris Sr., the Grand Old Man of Golf, who was just short of his 75th birthday and competing in his 34th Open, didn't tee off in the fourth round after failing to break 100 to that point.

Old Tom, a four-time champion, is a link to the very origins of an open competition, one of eight men who played in the first formal gathering in 1860, at Prestwick. The new American champion, 24, is no stranger to the colossus of the links and the Home of Golf. Foulis grew up in St. Andrews, his family home not half a mile from the Old Course's first tee. He is one of five golfing sons of James Foulis Sr., the foreman at Tom Morris' club-making concern in the "Auld Grey Toon." The younger Jim, as he is known to many, picked up golf pointers not only from Old Tom but other talented locals such as Bob Martin, Sandy Herd and Andrew Kirkaldy.

With a valuable introduction from Old



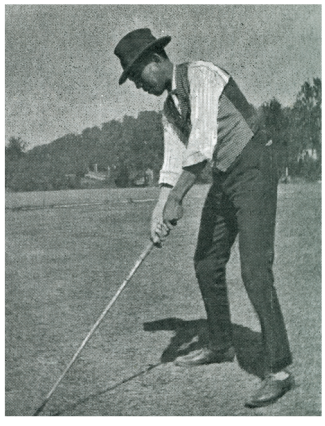
John Shippen

Tom, Foulis sailed with brother Dave to the U.S. 16 months ago to become the professional at Chicago Golf Club and is fully engaged in that early citadel of Western golf, passing along his knowledge to the exuberant members. Foulis has carried on despite a terrible fire at his workshop last fall, when thousands of dollars of equipment were lost to the blaze.

Mustachioed and standing five-and-a-half feet tall with a sturdy frame, Foulis is a man of moderation who indulges in the occasional cigar, but nothing about his golf is middle of the road. C.B. Macdonald gives no quarter around his new home, but Foulis has scant other opponents at his club who force him to his limits. His skill – especially the length of his drives – has turned heads and set records around Chicago. Foulis has recorded hits of more than 300 yards when the wind and turf were in his favor. Over the Shinnecock links, some of his shots finished more than 200 yards distant from the sand-formed tee from which they were struck. Less than a month before taking the long train ride to New York, Foulis was forced to halt his preparation for about a week when a hammer slipped as he was repairing his driving club, and he was left with a bad bruise on his left hand. But it healed sufficiently to allow him to get back in

harness and caused him scant difficulty on Long Island.

Before any of the 35 U.S. Open competitors teed off in the first round, trouble simmered before being smothered. A contingent of professionals protested the presence in the field of a Black player, John Shippen Jr., and a Native American, Oscar Bunn of the Shinnecock tribe, pledging not to compete if the local teenagers – both caddies at the club – were allowed to play. Theodore Havemeyer, president of the USGA, rebutted, saying the championship would go on even if the two young men were the only competitors.



Oscar Bunn

Members of the Shinnecock Nation were crucial to the construction of the golf course, which takes its name from the tribe. Bunn, who as an infant lost his father in a maritime disaster off Bridgehampton in 1876, grew up 2 miles south of the course. He took to the game and became proficient at it. He was not in his best form in the U.S. Open, shooting 89-85 to finish 21st, well away from Foulis' winning total, but his presence and promise speak to the future of homegrowns in golf.

Shippen, the 16-year-old son of a Presbyterian minister who is cleric and teacher at the Shinnecock reservation, was an entirely different matter, strongly contending for the title. Shippen's dedication and knack for golf have been clear to those in the Shinnecock vicinity for some time. Willie Dunn, now at Ardsley, north of New York City, took Shippen under his wing while at Shinnecock Hills, teaching him the ways of playing, club making and instructing others, to the point where he became the Scot's assistant pro.

"He is extremely sound and devoid of eccentricity, and he is good at every point," one observer wrote of Shippen prior to the U.S. Open. "He is a strong and sure driver, very clever in approach, and careful and skillful in putting." That is fulfilling the whole recipe, and despite knowing some were displeased that he was playing, Shippen went out in the morning round in a pairing with Macdonald and recorded a 78, matching his best home score, which tied him for second place with Foulis, Dunn, Willie Tucker and Canadian amateur A.W. Smith, just two strokes behind Joe Lloyd. Members and his fellow caddies were round the 18th green when he finished to cheer his fine play.

Shippen was steady through the first stages of the second round too, strongly teasing the prospect of an American-born champion. That hope evaporated, though, on the 13th hole, not a particularly difficult two-shotter. Favoring the right side, Shippen hit his shot too far right, the ball finishing on a sandy road from which he had great difficulty escaping. He ended up with an 11, shot 81 and finished in a tie for sixth, seven strokes behind Foulis.

Many had been looking forward to watching professional Willie Park Jr., two times champion of The Open in his home country of Scotland (1887, 1889). Last year, the Musselburgh man had captured the fancy of those on this side of the Atlantic during a series of challenge matches, the Shinnecock links among his stops across the Northeast. Superb on the greens, Park lost but one encounter during his tour, complementing his peerless putting with remarkable power, including some of the longest drives yet struck in the brief history of golf in the United States. Shinnecock had been interested in hiring Park as its professional, but it could not be worked out.

Further heightening the keen anticipation

among Americans of once again witnessing Park was the publication, just months ago, of "The Game of Golf," the first book of instruction by a playing professional who had taken up the pen. And quite the primer it is, the volume fairly overflowing with Park's specific and expert thoughts about a broad range of topics. One reviewer in his native land said Park "beats all his predecessors with as much ease as he had thrashed many an opponent on the links in his time."



THE FIRST TEE AT SHINNECOCK HILLS, 1900

Park was immersed in golf from a young age; his father, Willie Sr., won the inaugural 1860 Open among his four titles and his uncle Mungo was champion in 1874. Willie Jr. has finished no better than joint fourth since his 1889 victory, and he tied 14th in last month's Open at Muirfield, won by Vardon in a playoff over J.H. Taylor. Perhaps Taylor was fatigued following his long week at the championship, but Park nonetheless defeated him shortly thereafter in a 72-hole challenge for £100.

From pedigree alone, Park surely was expected to factor on Long Island. He was entered, and it was said he would be present by July 5. As the Shinnecock proceedings grew near with no sightings of the star, however, his presence seemed in doubt. Indeed, he didn't arrive in New York City from Liverpool on the Cunard steamship RMS Umbria until shortly before 11 o'clock on Saturday evening, by which time all that remained of the second U.S. Open were toasts for the champion and regrets from those he vanquished.

Having missed out on the championship action here, Park will be eager to take on all comers in match play. No doubt he will be extremely eager to see what kind of purse can be on offer if James Foulis were to agree to a head-to-head contest. What a match that would be!

As the Umbria steamed toward the dock in lower Manhattan, too late for Willie Park's purposes, the handsome Shinnecock Hills clubhouse, designed and expanded by Stanford White – who counts Madison Square Garden and the Washington Square Arch among his architectural achievements – was abuzz with satisfaction. The USGA was delighted with its host, the club earning a cup of its own from the governing body for the ways in which it greeted the golfers and those who watched them from the clubhouse veranda and its environs, set high on a bluff facing the ocean to welcome the sea breeze.

The men were center stage for these twin championships, but women have been a big part of things at Shinnecock Hills since its founding five years ago. Representing the club in the inaugural U.S. Women's Amateur last fall, Mrs. Charles S. Brown (the former Lucy Barnes) claimed the trophy. Among those taking in the action last week was a young woman to keep an eye upon should she decide to test the competitive waters in this year's ladies' championship in three months. Beatrix Hoyt – whose mother, Janet, was an original Shinnecock Hills shareholder – just celebrated her 16th birthday. Like Shippen, who acquitted himself so admirably but for one tragic hole, she is ready to test herself.

There is talk that the 1897 U.S. Open might go to Chicago Golf Club, where Foulis would be a formidable defender indeed, but that is 900 miles and a year away. For now, thoughts are with the golf just played and an imported game on the bounce to bigger and better days.



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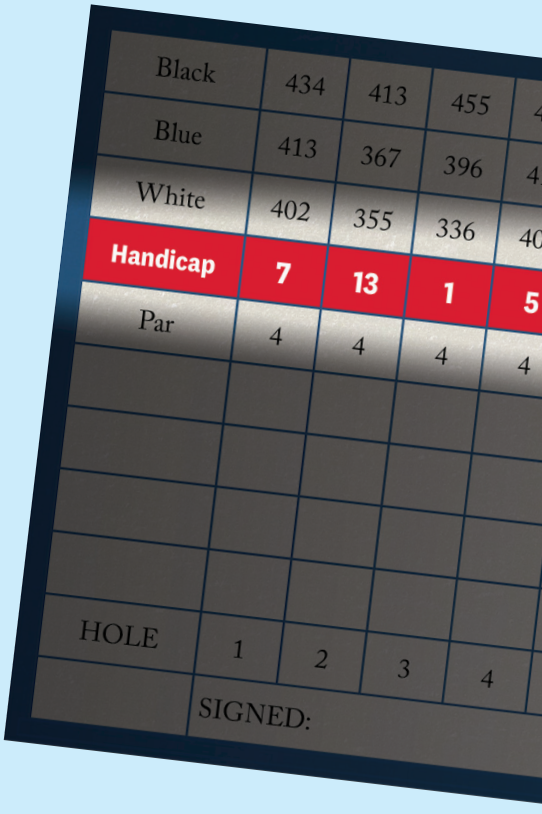
STROKE INDEX 101

DIFFERENT STROKES

Learn what goes into deciding the degree of difficulty for every hole on a golf course

By **WILL SCHUBE**



DAVID FOSTER

AFTER YOU BOTH convert your Handicap Index to a Course Handicap, you receive two strokes a side from your match-play opponent. Now it's time to plot some strategy, based on a glance at the scorecard to remind yourself where those strokes are assigned.

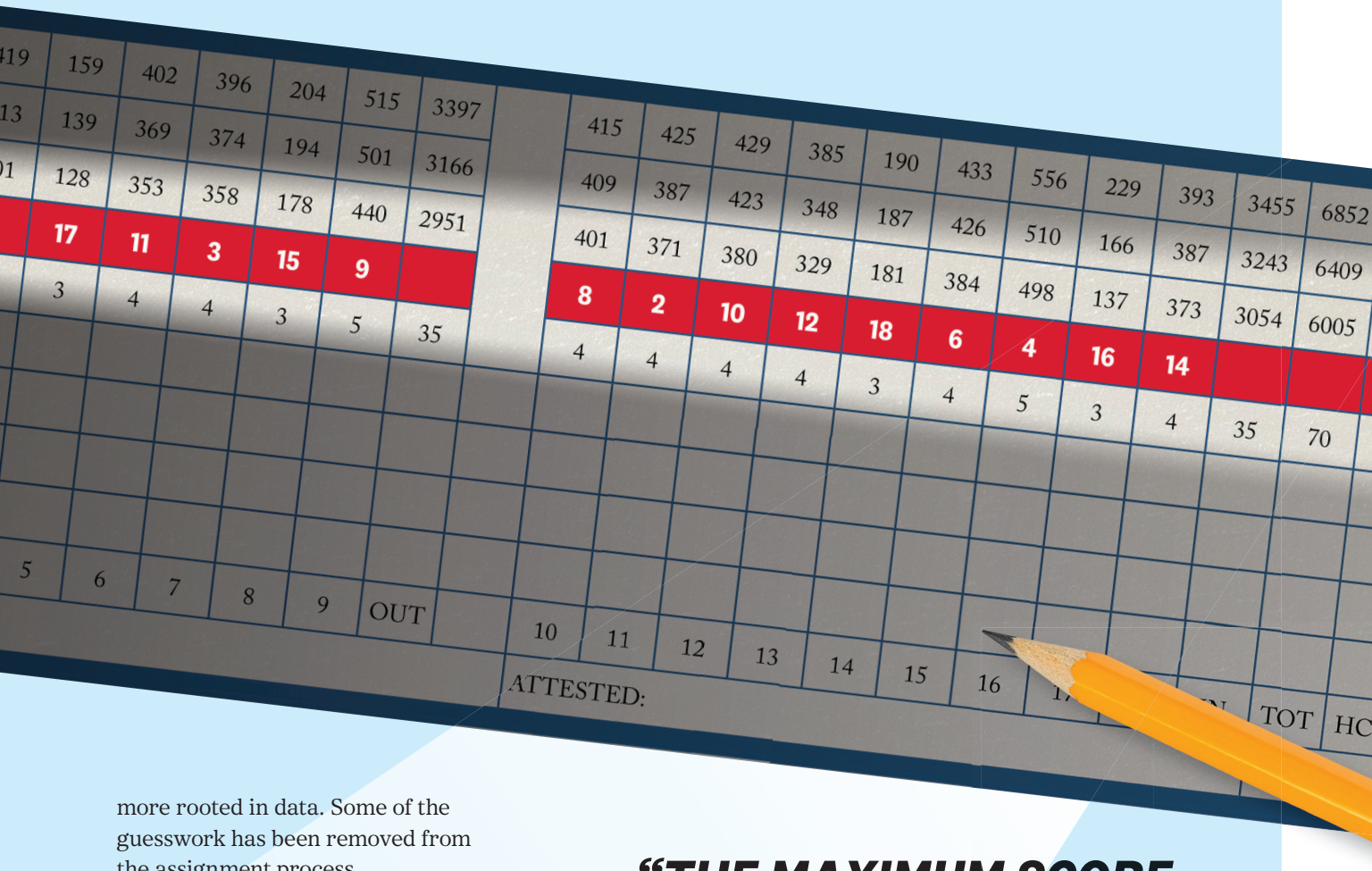
Few aspects of organized golf are as misunderstood as the process of assigning holes their individual stroke index values for handicap purposes. For something so crucial to the competitive elements of the game, there are plenty of misconceptions surrounding how each hole on a particular course is given a value from hardest to easiest.

Some of the confusion stems from the relationship between stroke index and the Course Rating System™. In short, there is none – at least not officially. The purpose of the system is to produce two numbers: the Course Rating™, which identifies the expected overall score from a specific set of tees for a scratch golfer on a good day, and the Slope Rating®, which measures the relative difficulty of the course for all players other than scratch. Both figures are independent from the stroke index.

They do work in concert, though, as a player's Course Handicap determines which holes they receive strokes on, plus the maximum number of strokes they can take on any hole for World Handicap System (WHS) score-posting purposes. As the Rules of Handicapping state, "The maximum score for each hole played is limited to a net double bogey, equal to double bogey plus any handicap strokes you are entitled to receive based on your Course Handicap."

Course Rating is handled across the country by the network of 55 Allied Golf Associations (AGAs), whose raters are well versed in the Course Rating procedure. However, those rating teams are not ultimately responsible for determining stroke indexes.

The final decision to assign stroke-index rankings from 1 to 18 is done independently by a course's designated staff or committee members. As technology continues to influence the Course Rating System, though, the somewhat artistic nature of hole handicapping has become



more rooted in data. Some of the guesswork has been removed from the assignment process.

"We now use Course Rating data to provide a recommended stroke index table or stroke index values for each hole, because that is pretty objective data," says Scott Hovde, the USGA's director of Course Rating and Handicap Research.

While stats, weather conditions, and other factors have helped give context to how a course is rated, a number of universal factors can be applied to every course across the globe. Says Hovde, "We're looking at the length of the hole, obstacles that impact scoring, how close penalty areas are, size of the green, depth and prevalence of bunkers, and rough height, among other aspects."

"THE MAXIMUM SCORE FOR EACH HOLE PLAYED IS LIMITED TO A NET DOUBLE BOGEY, EQUAL TO DOUBLE BOGEY PLUS ANY HANDICAP STROKES YOU ARE ENTITLED TO RECEIVE BASED ON YOUR COURSE HANDICAP."

This consistency, according to Hunter Koch, director of Course Rating for the Golf Association of Michigan, allows for a universality of ratings that streamlines how courses are viewed from a difficulty perspective. "Whether you're in Michigan or New Zealand, everyone is using the same guide," said Koch. "Hypothetically, there will be replicability of every rating."

There is, of course, still room for interpretation.

The evolution of the Course Rating System and the recommendations for golf officials regarding hole handicapping have come a long way, thanks in large part to the data Hovde mentioned. While data helps provide courses with an objective evaluation of the rating process, there remains a human element.

"We walk the course to do field work, measuring and rating from tee to green," says Koch. "Then, we'll play the course to see and feel it from the perspective of a player.

"At a recent course, I hit three greens with excellent shots from the fairway, but the ball just rolled off the back," Koch recalls as an example. "That's the definition of a firm adjustment," he adds, referring to a characteristic that can affect a hole rating.

As stated in the Golf Association of Michigan handbook, "Green surface difficulty is based on the speed and contours of the putting surface. Speed is determined using a Stimpmeter reading under mid-season playing conditions." This data point, Koch notes, might influence how a rater sees a course. "You then ask yourself, are these normal course conditions, or was this an abnormal course condition that caused this? Is it just that it's October and extremely dry because the green hasn't been irrigated recently? Or is it simply a firm green and the ball won't hold?"

This is a conundrum Hovde encounters often, especially when local AGAs provide recommendations to courses regarding



Volunteers from the network of 55 Allied Golf Associations (AGAs) across the country conduct Course Rating evaluations, which inform how stroke indexes are assigned.

JASON E. MICZEK

stroke-index allocations. "When we used scoring data, it would vary from month to month and generate totally different results depending on the group of players involved. Using Course Rating data is a lot more objective because it's something that's measurable. It's not impacted by a player's ability to play a certain hole; we just evaluate the hole for difficulty."

Though the WHS has worked hard to overhaul the procedure for stroke index assignments for more consistency, each course ultimately makes their own call on stroke-index values.

Says Derek McKenzie, USGA manager of Course Rating Administration and Handicapping Research, "One of the key points of emphasis is that the USGA is supplying recommendations based on the rating data. However, the adoption of the actual stroke allocation assignment is a decision for the course or club. For example, most clubs have a committee, and it's their right to assign those stroke indexes based on whatever they think is best for their golfers and the club itself."

This is why Course Rating and hole handicap allocation is more of a science than ever before but still involves some artistry and local knowledge.

"We're supplying that recommendation," adds McKenzie. "Oftentimes, the local committee will simply adopt it or maybe make small tweaks. It's not the USGA or even the AGA that's assigning stroke-index values. We're coming up with recommendations for the club's consideration, then they're deciding what they want the assignments to be."

To help rate courses as accurately as possible, Koch leans on the course staff to gain insight on whether the things he notices during his field work and round of golf are aberrations or features of the course. "We try to meet with the superintendent on-site, because they know the golf course better than anyone else. For example, green speed and rough height are two constant things that get baked into the rating process," he says. Unfortunately, these are two variables that can be quite different depending on when the course is played.

"If we try to rate a golf course at the end of April, the greens are not going to be up to speed," Koch says. "The rough might not have grown in yet. Maybe we have a dry stretch or wet stretch during the summer. The course as you rate it is never going to be the perfect representation of the average condition over 10 years. In that regard, we rely on intuition and local knowledge."

The difference between the method for arriving at a Course Rating and at individual hole rankings is what causes the most confusion for recreational golfers. Both for the entire course and on each individual hole, several additional factors come into play.

"We look at all sorts of effective playing length factors such as elevation changes, doglegs or

STROKE INDEX DO'S AND DON'TS

It is recommended that a stroke-index allocation be applied by **splitting the 18 holes into six triads** (1-3, 4-6, 7-9, etc.), with each hole ranked on its playing difficulty relative to par. The methodology accommodates both stroke- and match-play formats.

➜ **DO:** Apply odd-numbered allocations over the front nine and even numbers over the back nine. However, if the back nine is significantly more difficult than the front nine, as determined by the Course Rating, the allocations can be switched.

➜ **DO:** Spread allocations evenly so that players receiving strokes are able to use them throughout the round and not bunched on the early holes or late holes on the course.

➜ **TRY TO:** Apply the lowest hole value for each nine (No. 1 or 2) in the middle triad of a nine.

➜ **TRY TO:** Apply the second-lowest hole for each nine (No. 3 or 4) in either the first or third triad, unless the lowest hole has been allocated in that same triad.

➜ **TRY TO:** Assign one stroke index allocation for men and one for women, based on the most commonly played set of tees for each gender.

➜ **DON'T:** If possible, avoid assigning low stroke indexes (No. 6 or less) on consecutive holes.

layups, altitude if the course is at a higher elevation," says Hovde. "Those are looked at on every hole, which cumulatively creates the 9- and 18-hole ratings. We look at the obstacles for scratch and bogey golfers on those holes and create what's called a scratch value and a bogey value."

Those values are then compared to par for each hole, which is a fixed number. Ultimately, holes that are reflective of the largest gap in expected score versus par would generate the lowest stroke-index assignment recommendations; in other words, identifying the hole(s) where a golfer may most be in need of a handicap stroke.

Other factors go into these recommendations. "We look at things such as odds and evens," says Hovde, of the decision about which nine will be assigned the 1-3-5 etc. ranking and which gets 2-4-6 and so on, so that stroke holes for a match are evenly distributed.

"It's typically odds on the front nine and evens on the back nine. We have some guidelines about avoiding back-to-back low stroke holes. You don't want the No. 1 and No. 3 stroke holes to be right next to each other if possible, and we also recommend avoiding those at the very beginning or end of a nine."

This creates an interesting challenge for courses that boast tough finishing holes. Despite the drama it is intended to create, it can be a detriment to match-play scenarios, since plenty of matches don't get to the 18th hole. Says Hovde, "You get to that 16th or 17th hole and you lose, and you didn't even get a chance to use that stroke that might have helped continue the match."

Though the world of stroke indexes can be intimidating and has been known to cause an argument or two on the course, it's helpful to remember that clubs have the option to utilize a reliable formula to index each hole.

"The rating data and the assessment that the rating team is looking at on a hole-by-hole basis are populated into a formula that projects score," says McKenzie. As such, the Course Rating is simply a projection of a scratch golfer's expected score when factoring length and other data collected on-site. "Instead of producing those 9- or 18-hole projections, which are Course Ratings, we break that down on a hole-by-hole basis to provide a ranking of holes, based upon difficulty," he adds.

"WE HAVE SOME GUIDELINES ABOUT AVOIDING BACK-TO-BACK LOW STROKE HOLES. YOU DON'T WANT THE NO. 1 AND NO. 3 STROKE HOLES TO BE RIGHT NEXT TO EACH OTHER, IF POSSIBLE."

The next time you're at your local course and wonder why a hole that gives you fits is rated as relatively easy, while a hole you have no issue conquering is listed as one of the hardest, remember that stroke index is up to club discretion. When adhering to AGA recommendations, these numbers are informed by data. At other clubs, though, local committees work off their own system and the outcome can be a bit more unpredictable.

In this sense, stroke indexing reflects the game of golf itself.



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STAR TURN



L.A.'s Century City neighborhood provides the backdrop for the par-5 14th hole.

An architectural and cultural treasure, Bel-Air offers a blockbuster setting for the Curtis Cup

by **TOM MACKIN**

photos by **BILL HORNSTEIN**

SOMETHING UNUSUAL happened to Meghan Stasi after walking around Bel-Air Country Club in Los Angeles during the 2023 U.S. Women's Amateur. The four-time U.S. Women's Mid-Amateur champion, who was scouting players for the 2024 USA Curtis Cup Team she would captain, fell in love with the layout and could remember every hole afterward. "That doesn't normally happen unless I play," she said.

Stasi's experience surely would have brought a smile to the faces of Alphonzo Bell, George C. Thomas and William P. Bell. Tom Doak, too. All have played a role in the club's rich history, which will only deepen this June when it hosts the 44th Curtis Cup Match – but none more so than Alphonzo Bell.

The Southern California native struck it rich in 1921 when oil was discovered on a citrus ranch he owned in southeast L.A. County. He used some of that wealth to purchase 1,750 acres near Beverly Hills a year later. While real estate development was his primary goal, he brought in Thomas and William Bell to design a golf course on the property. The trio looked at two other sites before settling on a third, where the routing flows through four canyons. Still, the layout came together only after the two architects made an arduous walk to a barren hilltop in 1925.



Curtis Cup captain Meghan Stasi (above); in 2023, Megan Schofill won the U.S. Women's Amateur at Bel-Air.

According to a booklet the club published in 2024, the duo "took their famous last-gasp hike through the sage-covered hills of Bel-Air. Their ascent brought them to a ridge that was part of a hill close to the new Bellagio Road."

Although not the highest point on the property, the hilltop became the site of the Bel-Air clubhouse, and the pair recognized the potential of a nearby ravine known as the Cañon du Diablo, or Canyon of the Devil. Each of the three men successfully hit a ball over it – with a putter, no less – thereby confirming the viability of what became the par-3 10th hole. The one-shotter is firmly enshrined among the game's iconic holes, partly due to the white swinging bridge crossing the ravine that all players must traverse. It's a structure dedicated to the late Eddie Merrins, the legendary instructor affectionately known as the Li'l Pro, who served as Bel-Air's head professional from 1962 to 2003.

Other construction quirks only add to the club's lore. The property includes four tunnels, including one

44TH CURTIS CUP
BEL-AIR C.C.

Fast Facts

What: 44th Curtis Cup Match

When: June 12-14, 2026

Format: The first two competition days feature three foursomes and three four-ball matches. On the final day, eight singles matches are contested.

Field: 8 female amateurs from the USA vs. 8 female amateurs from Great Britain and Ireland

Info: curtiscup.org or the USGA mobile app



JASON E. MICZEK; JAMES GILBERT





Clockwise from top: the 1st and 9th holes; one of the famed cart tunnels; artful accents on a teeing ground; the par-4 15th hole.





after the 9th green leading to an elevator that takes players up to that 10th tee. There's also a new clubhouse, opened in September 2024, with spectacular views stretching across the nearby campus of UCLA to Century City and beyond to downtown Los Angeles.

Given the prime location, it's no surprise that the club has strong ties to Hollywood. In the mid-1930s, Howard Hughes landed his plane on the 8th fairway in his pursuit of Katharine Hepburn, who was taking a golf lesson at the time. In May 1950, the reception for Elizabeth Taylor's first wedding, to Conrad Hilton Jr., was held at the club. While Bel-Air doesn't confirm membership details, that list has been said to include Clint Eastwood, Jack Nicholson, Jason Bateman, Larry David and Will Ferrell, among others. Actor Chris O'Donnell recently served on the club's board of directors, while actor/director James Widdoes (a star of the 1978 movie "Animal House") served as president from 2017 to 2021.

No matter their golf experience, all have been challenged by a layout that demands creative shotmaking. Megan Schofill enjoyed that aspect of Bel-Air when she won the 2023 U.S. Women's Amateur here, defeating Latanna Stone, 4 and 3, in the final. "On some holes, you can land the ball on sidehills and it will run down to the fairway," said Schofill. "You can use the slopes on the greens to get the ball to feed to the hole or come back to it. And there are a few really hard dogleg holes. It's such a great golf course."

"It's a unique test that can play simple or very, very difficult," said Stasi, who returns as captain of the USA Curtis Cup Team in 2026. "And it's a fun course for match play."

Early leads before the turn are unlikely to remain safe during the Curtis Cup thanks to the more challenging back nine, described by a Los Angeles Evening Express writer after the course opening in 1926 as, "the nine of a thousand thrills."

"You're going to see birdies win a lot of holes on the front nine, which probably plays three shots easier than the back nine," said Tom Gardner, who in 2024 became Bel-Air's fourth-ever head professional. "On the back nine, you'll see a few pars win holes. I'm not saying that you can't make up ground if you're down going into the back nine, but the quality of shots you have to hit there is definitely elevated a little bit. So, you'll see a little bit more volatility on the back nine. Then you have a pretty good opportunity as you come out of the last canyon with 17 and 18 being birdie holes. If matches make it that far, we'll see some exciting finishes."

"Almost every approach on the back nine is uphill to the green, starting at 12, and even on 10 everything is uphill," said Adam Fannon, the club's general manager. "Every hole seems to be a bit into





Right: Legendary pro Eddie Merrins in 2017; the par-3 5th hole.

JOHN MUMMERT

the breeze, because 11 through 16 are in one big canyon, and the wind gets down in there and just swirls. Ken Venturi once called it the best nine holes of golf in California.

"The most fun hole for us to watch during the U.S. Women's Amateur was 16, an uphill par 3," added Fannon. "It can play anywhere from 140 yards to 200 yards, and there's a three-tiered green with massive bunkers left and right. If a shot is mis-hit there, par is a good score. We saw a lot of swings in matches on that hole."

Curtis Cup competitors will be tackling a course deftly restored in 2018 by Tom Doak and his team. Their work brought back many of the original design elements implemented by Thomas, who was also the visionary behind two other nearby gems, Riviera and The Los Angeles Country Club. Doak's design work at Bel-Air fulfilled his previously stated desire to restore the course to its full glory. Not prone to hyperbole, he had written in his 1996 book, "The Confidential Guide to Golf Courses": "In plan, Bel-Air might be the most spectacular golf course in the world."

The Curtis Cup marks the fourth USGA championship at Bel-Air, following the 1976 U.S. Amateur, 2004 U.S. Senior Amateur and the 2023 U.S. Women's Amateur. It also hosted stroke-play rounds for the 2017 U.S. Amateur, which was held at nearby Riviera.

"It's so picturesque," Schofill said. "Every hole is just beautiful. I've played a lot of courses where it's difficult to remember anything after the round. Every hole tends to look the same. That was the best part about Bel-Air – every hole was so different."

The way Schofill's words echo Stasi's is proof that Thomas fulfilled one of his goals when designing Bel-Air a century ago. In his 1926 book "Golf Architecture in America," Thomas wrote, "When you play a course and remember each hole, it has individuality and change. If your mind cannot recall the exact sequence of the holes, that course lacks the great assets of originality and diversity."

Perhaps no one appreciated those characteristics more than Merrins, who remained as Bel-Air's professional emeritus until his death in 2023.

"Someone was once quoted as saying that there will always be an England," he said in 2017. "Well, there will always be a Bel-Air. It's earned its rightful place. This club is made up of a lot of interesting characters – from the movie industry, from the world of athletics, from business, from professional fields. It's quite a conglomeration of people who are drawn here because of the game, this club and the golf course."

ADOBE STOCK

L.A. Confidential

ALTHOUGH THE two-time defending world champion Los Angeles Dodgers will be out of town during the Curtis Cup, there will be two World Cup soccer group stage games played at **SoFi Stadium** on June 12 and 15. Art fans will want to seek out the **Getty Museum**, just 3 miles west of Bel-Air. There you'll find a breathtaking collection on display both indoors and outdoors (advance tickets are required for entry, which is free). From architecture to 86 acres of gardens to art that spans the Middle Ages to modern day, the Getty is a true must-see. Live outdoor music aficionados have two classic options



to choose from. The **Hollywood Bowl**, built in 1922, has room for 17,500 spectators, who have enjoyed an array of music from the likes of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Billie Eilish and the Beatles. At just under 6,000 seats, The **Greek Theatre** in **Griffith Park** offers a more intimate concert setting. Nearby is **Griffith Observatory**, where you can see the stars through telescopes, visit the **Samuel Oschin Planetarium** and explore myriad exhibits. For a memorable Pacific Ocean view, head to the world-famous **Santa Monica Pier,** home to an amusement park, aquarium, food and superb people-watching.

FROM THE

ARCHIVE

of the USGA Golf Museum & Library



Five months after winning three medals in track and field at the 1932 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, Babe Zaharias tries out a different sport while on a press tour, making some clever moves at Madison Square Garden against New York Rangers goalie Andy Aitkenhead and winger Murray Murdoch. Zaharias began her World Golf Hall of Fame golf career two years later, while the Rangers went on to win the 1933 Stanley Cup Finals over the Toronto Maple Leafs.

athletically

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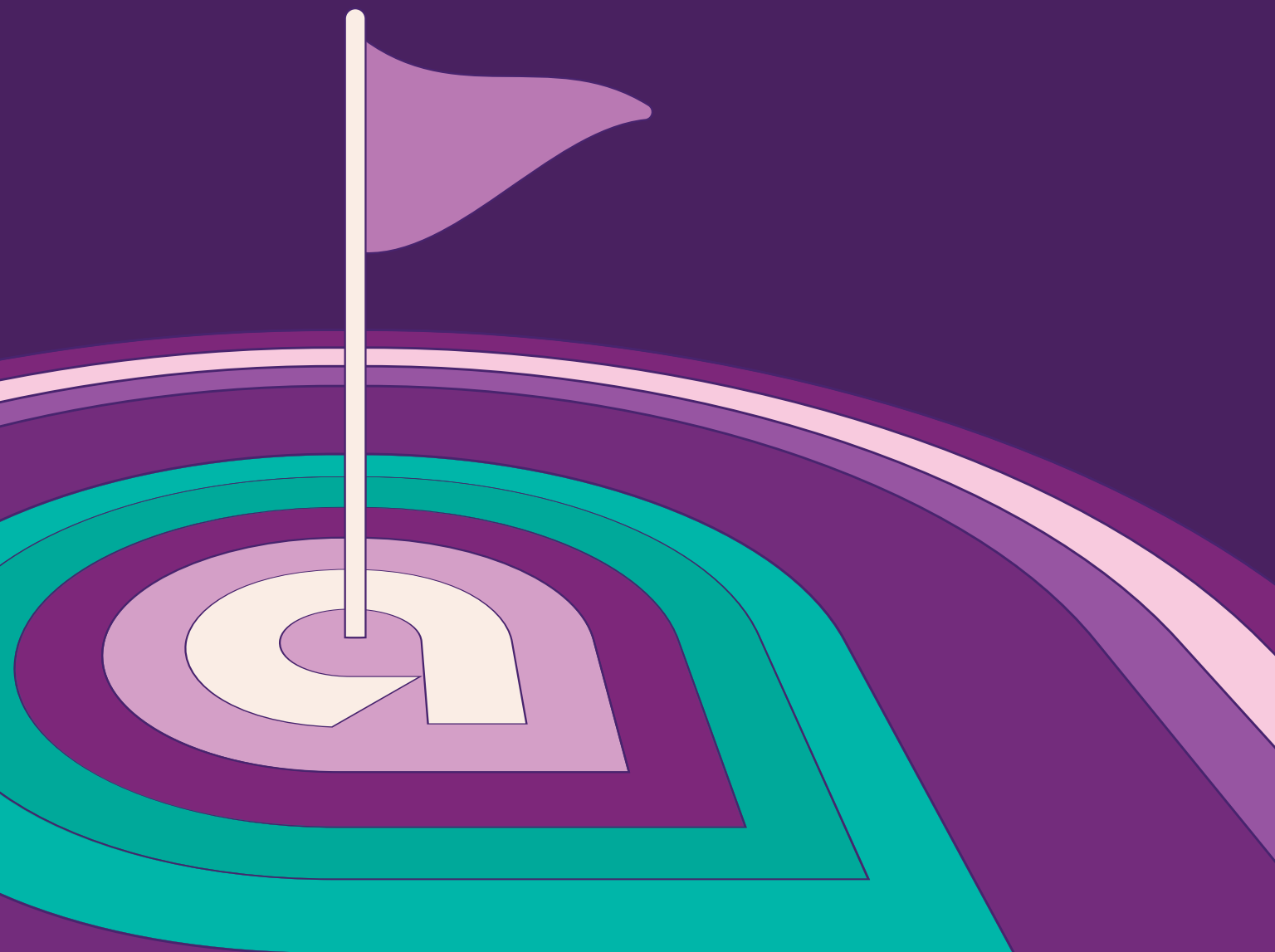

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