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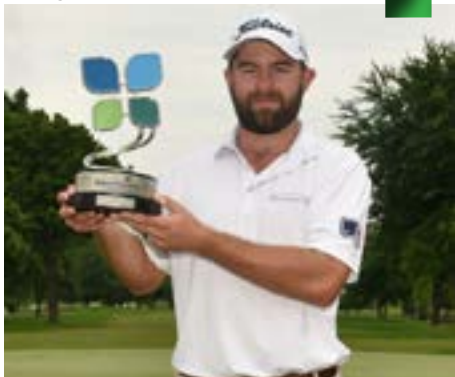
SUPER- INTENDENTS MAKE GOLF BETTER



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[EDITORIAL]

Welcome to our 33rd year of publishing this golfing magazine. It was formally a magazine, then a newspaper for Rhode Island, followed by a southern New England newspaper to now an online publication covering southern New England. This is the easiest and it reaches the largest audience. Course Superintendents really do make golf a better game. How much more fun is it to play on a course with nice greens and tee boxes, fairways that have grass and you can tell where the fairway ends and the rough begins. The aesthetics of a course adds to the pleasure of golfing.

Last year we highlighted golf associations, golf course owners and municipal courses. We knew we had to cover the superintendents. There are many stories in this issue focusing on superintendents and their organizations. Next time you see a superintendent or a crew member out on the course say thank you.

Isn't Scottie Scheffler having a great season? It took Tiger Woods over eight months to earn the #1 ranking in the world, but it only took Scheffler 42 days from his win on Super Bowl Sunday to Sunday at the Masters to claim the title. Amazing! We have a story, and we also have a story by Tim Geary that was written in July of 2017 when Scottie played in the Northeast Amateur in East Providence, R.I.

We always try to highlight something that are readers can take advantage of in golf. This issue it is Valley Country Club in Warwick, RI. I recently had the opportunity to play this course that had been private since the 1920's that had two famous designers each designing one of the nines forty years apart. Valley has gone public and you would be wise to give a try. You will really enjoy it.

The Golf Show in Orlando returned after taking off 2021 because of Covid. It was much smaller than usual as most of the major manufacturers did not attend, but there were still plenty of products for us to see and review. This issue features Sqairz golf shoes. While we were interviewing the founder of the golf shoes Retief Goosen, former U.S. Open champ and current Champions Tour player walked in and asked if he could try a pair. He was not the only pro seen asking about these shoes that are becoming so popular now.

A product that we had reviewed many years ago, The Putting Arc, has signed on as an advertisers and we are doing a review for his product that you see each week out on Tour. I've used mine since 2006, and it's the putting that has saved me as my length off the tee gets shorter and shorter.

Our two travel stories this issue are about Innisbrook and Disney World. One has a PGA Tour stop, and the other has four great courses besides a famous mouse.

There is much more to read in this issue, and I hope you enjoy it. Feel free to send in any comments to bruce@snegolfer.com. We always enjoy reading responses and it often leads to changes that makes this publication better. Keep your head down and swing easy.

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Checking in for the Golf Season

As we head into the golf season, here are a few check list reminders to help you hit the ground running:

Check your grips – Depending upon the amount of use your clubs get during the year, it's a good recommendation to replace your grips at least once a year. Typical signs that your grips need replacing include a shiny slick look/feel or clear wear out spots on the grips.

Check for Clean – Give your clubs a bath! Let the clubs soak for a bit in hot soapy water and then scrub them with a firm bristle brush to clear out the dirt and grass from the grooves, so that you can create cleaner contact between the ball and face at impact.

Check your wedges – Your wedges are the most used irons in the bag and should be replaced when showing signs of wear on the face. The grooves on the face will lose their edge and become smoother, limiting spin potential.

Check your distances – Its best to use a rangefinder to measure known pin distances and then hit some shots to those distances. We recommend hitting 10 shots with each club to get your average carry and total

distances and make note of them, especially your carry distances. You can create your own distance chart to hang from your golf bag, in the back of your yardage book or tape numbers to your shafts below your grips.

Check your yardage book – Having a yardage book for a course you frequently play can help you shoot lower scores. Taking a look at how you play certain holes can be eye opening. I try to map out the best way to play the holes based upon reasonably well struck golf shots. Having a plan of how to get around a golf course is something that all good players do. You can also understand your weaknesses and plan your practice sessions accordingly.

Check your golf balls – Decide on one brand and type of golf ball and load up on them! You are looking for consistency in your game and it certainly helps to play the same ball all of the time. Decisions need to be made around price, spin, feel and color. Whichever ball type you decide, do your best to stick with it.

Check your swing – Film your swing with your phone camera. There are many free apps that allow you to draw lines, compare swings and replay them in slow motion.

For more help with distances, course management, equipment or swing analysis, please get in touch with us! Our brand-new Academy facility is located at Cranston Country Club: www.toddcampbellgolf.com, toddcampbell@pga.com, 508-951-4371 ■

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N.E. Turfgrass Show is an Annual Highlight for Superintendents

Gary Sykes (right) is the executive director of the New England Regional Turfgrass Show at the Rhode Island Convention Show, the annual event in March that brings many hundreds of golf course superintendents to Providence. "This is an opportunity for course superintendents and often their owners and general managers to see what new equipment and new ideas are out there to help improve the industry," said Sykes.



Sykes formerly was the superintendent at Green Valley C.C. in Portsmouth, RI. He is a graduate of the University of Rhode Island's Turfgrass Management program headed by Dr. Noel Jackson. He also played golf at URI for the late Tom Drennan, who often wrote stories for our publication.

"The Show has been held for over 50 years with its beginning under the late Dr. Joseph Troll who was a professor in the UMass program. The University of Connecticut also has a fine Turfgrass program.

"The superintendents need to continue their education to keep their Class A licenses, so there are many classes held during the Show. There is also a huge display of new products and services that are on display and attendees get to see and touch. "We have had over two hundred vendors at the Show some years," added Sykes who spends all year working on the show.

One of the highlights of the Show is that they bring in guest speakers who talk for about 45 minutes. You will notice on our "looking back" column near the back of this issue that Jim Palmer was the speaker in 1998. I remember it well. In the early 2000's Dennis Eckersley was the speaker. He wowed the guests, just like he does on the Red Sox network. I asked him after he finished, "Was that pitch that you threw to Josh Gibson a strike before that next pitch that he hit for a homer to help the Dodgers win the World Series?" He put his fingers



about a quarter-inch apart and said, "It was that much outside."

My favorite memory of the Show was when Jim Nantz was the speaker. After he was finished I noticed Sykes giving him a check. Nantz, who was living in Connecticut at the time, turned the check over, endorsed it, and gave it to his course superintendent and said, "Put this in your Scholarship fund." Total class! Nantz told the audience that he always tries to mention how great the conditions are where he is broadcasting tournaments from, and the name of the superintendent who runs the course.

There are great organizations that help run the Superintendents Associations. John Lombardi is the current president in Rhode Island. He is ably assisted by executive secretary Julie Heston who handles most of the logistics for Rhode Island and also the Cape Cod Chapter. GraceMarie Chapin is the executive secretary for the Connecticut organization.

Don Hearn, formerly the Certified Golf Course Superintendent at Weston G.C. in Weston, Mass., is the executive director of the Golf Course

Superintendents Association of New England and has served in that capacity for 12 years. His office is at Golf House located on the TPC Boston property. "We try to help Superintendents as much as possible," said Hearn who mentioned that the New England chapter, organized in 1924, will soon be celebrating its 100th year and is the second oldest in the United States, having been nipped by two months by the Ohio Superintendents Assn "We do a great deal of working with allied groups such as Mass Golf, New England PGA, New England Golf Course Owners Association, Frances Ouimet Scholarship Fund and regional Chapters of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA). We have to stay alert to pesticide regulations on both the local and national level, water use regulations, the latest in turfgrass research, employment trends, and many other areas, and we work well with other associations to the benefit of all," added Hearn. We also try to tell the story of how superintendents and their staffs try extremely hard to create outstanding playing conditions for golfers to enjoy. The New England Association is a resource for superintendents to stay abreast of what is happening in the industry. ■

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Turned Pro:	2019

Cameron Young

Cameron Young is one of the few pros on Tour that is a native of the Northeast. He grew up in New York and is the only amateur to win the New York State Open, a feat that he accomplished in 2017 at Bethpage Black. He had a very successful career at Wake Forest University where he won two tournaments his freshman year. He played in the 2015 U.S. Amateur where he lost to Jon Rahm in the second round.

He turned professional after graduating in 2019 and played on mini tours. He played on the Korn-Ferry Tour in 2000-21 where he won twice and finished the season at number 17 to earn his PGA Tour Card for 2000-21. In his first start he finished tied for second at the Genesis Open and followed that up with a tie for second at the Sanderson Farms event. He recently finished tied for 13th at the prestigious Arnold Palmer event in Orlando and is currently ranked 22nd in the FedEx Cup standings. His career earnings are just over \$3.5 million as of April 18.

Putting Arc is Excellent Tool to Improve Putting

It was about 2006 when I first saw the Putting Arc. I was at the PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando and was introduced to Dave Hamilton. He had patented a golf training device for putting called, logically, the Putting Arc, and he was demonstrating it at the Show. Hamilton, who resides in Mississippi, had incorporated in 2002 after the Putting Arc was designed in 2001.

"This product came about with the efforts of three people," said Hamilton to the group of writers that were listening to him. VJ Trolio, an assistant pro at Old Waverly G.C. in Mississippi, was watching Jay Haas putt and noticed that his putter did not go straight back and straight through as taught by most golf instructors. He noticed that the putter went slightly inside on the backstroke and then back inside on the follow through.

Trolio then got a line laser, attached it to his putter, and tried to measure how much the putter moved inside at different distances from the ball during the stroke, while keeping the laser on the ball-target line. He gave these measurements to Hamilton, who was a member at Old Waverly, and asked for the answer.

Hamilton had no idea, but his son, Joey, was a math and computer programming wizard and worked on the Star Wars Missile Intercept System. He gave his son the measurements, and the next day Joey explained that the putter was moving on a very large circle (an arc that had been first documented over 2,200 years ago).

Being an entrepreneur, Hamilton and his two compatriots used a band saw and a string to lay out the ellipse on plywood. They patented the product in 2002 with all three of the founders' names on it. They built many more, and started demonstrating them at tournaments. It was Greg Norman who saw the wooden putting arc in 2003. He told Mike Shannon, our Tour rep, that it needed to be smaller and lighter so that caddies could easily carry it around. Within two months a small T3 version of the putting arc was on the market.

Hamilton was off-and-running. The full line has expanded to include the Deluxe, the MSIII (that I was given in 2006 and still use all the time today), the MS-

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Bruce Vittner is a long-time member of the Golf Writers of America and the Golf Travel Writers of America and can be reached at bruce@snegolfer.com.

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R.I. Golf Course Superintendents Award \$26,600 in Scholarships



The Rhode Island Golf Course Superintendents Assn. awarded \$26,600 in scholarships for 2022. Each student received a scholarship of \$2,400. The recipients are Ashley Cromack-Montclair State, Cara Cummins-Roger Williams Univ., Caroline Daly-Boston College, Margaret Drohen-Univ. of Mass., Brice Giblin-Roger Williams Univ., Linda St. Laurent-Endicott College and Benjamin Wood-Bridgewater State.

The Ryan Reynolds Scholarship was awarded to Benjamin Chase who attends Merrimack College. The Dr. Noel Jackson Research Scholarship of \$5,000 is awarded to Elizabeth Varkony, a graduate student at U.R.I. The Richard Skogley Memorial Scholarship will be awarded at a later date this year.

Each year the RIGCSA hosts a golf tournament in which all proceeds go into providing scholarships to deserving students and funding research at the University of Rhode Island. This year they will host the 39th Annual Scholarship and Research Tournament at Pawtucket Country Club on September 27. If you would like more information or to contribute to this fund, please contact Julie Heston, RIGCSA Chapter Executive at 401-934-7660, jheston@verizon.net or visit the website at www.rigcsa.org. ■

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GOLF COURSE SUPERINTENDENTS: The Game's Hidden Heroes

How many times have you watched a PGA tournament and the announcers refer to the condition of the golf course as “perfect”?

A golf course is usually an escape for most, a four plus hour retreat from everyday living, a chance to enjoy the company of others in a bucolic setting. And we take it all for granted. We expect the fairways to be perfect, divots replaced, bunkers to be free of weeds and rocks and above all, greens to be smooth and true.

We've all played on courses that looked like they were used for war games, and early in a season many are in that kind of condition. But the good ones shape up quickly and that's not by accident. If you play on a well-groomed and maintained golf course, you have a knowledgeable superintendent and a great crew that work very hard.

A perfect example is Pawtucket Country Club, where Mike Whitehead has been the superintendent for the past 22 years. It all began quite by accident when he had friends who were working on the crew at Wannamoisett CC in Rumford, R.I. where Whitehead grew up.

“They convinced me to join, that it was a lot of fun and it was,” he recalled. “We worked for a guy who was pretty good with the kids. He didn't try to kill us. I learned so much from his approach and I tried to model my approach after him. I like my guys to enjoy their job and not feel like they're slaving away all day.

“It's not a high paying job so we try to do little things for them, to keep them coming back. We buy pizza and breakfast sandwiches. We have little contests with golf clubs involved. We try to make it fun.”

It was at Wannamoisett, in 1984, that Whitehead decided he'd make golf course management his career choice. “I caught the bug and decided to enroll at URI in their turf management program. I've been doing it for almost 40 years.”

In that time agronomy has evolved dramatically. “It's changed immensely,” he confirmed. “There's a lot more science involved. We have better tools



Mike Whitehead

now to test what's in the soil, test the moisture. We use electronic meters, hand-held devices. Cell phones have helped out immensely too. We run our irrigation systems with cell phones. A lot of golf courses do that now.

“There's been a lot of technological advances in the products we use. The safety, the mowing equipment and cultural devices have come a long way. Things don't break down as much. They're built to last.”

They're also very expensive. “It's kind of outrageous to me how much a fairway mower costs. You could buy a BMW off the lot for what you pay for a fairway mower. That's the way of the world.”

The annual budget at Pawtucket for taking care of the course is a little over \$1 million.

“More money goes into greens maintenance,” he said. “When you're mowing them at a 10th of an inch you need to be apply chemicals and fertilizer on a weekly basis to keep them healthy.” And just the right amount of water, which may be the trickiest of all.

Whitehead's first job after graduating from

URI, in 1989, was as an assistant superintendent at Pleasant Valley in Sutton, Ma. "They still had the PGA tour event there." He spent four years at PV and then returned to Wannamoisett as the assistant for the next 10 years.

Complaints? Everyone has some. At Pawtucket C.C. the main complaints received are about the bunkers. "We spend a ridiculous amount of time trying to maintain bunkers, literally every day once the season has gotten going," he said. "We're raking them and pulling weeds, pulling stones.

Pawtucket's greens are almost all 100 years old. The third green was rebuilt a year before Whitehead arrived and the practice green has been modified. The other 17 greens are original and the grass has evolved. "They've been shaved down, stomped and been through any kind of weather that you can imagine," he said. "It's really survival of the fittest (when it comes to the type of grass).

"It's all creeping bent grass with a little velvet bent grass and then poa."

Poa is Whitehead's favorite surface for putting, but it needs to be maintained properly. "Some of the best greens in the world, like Oakmont, are mostly poa. You can shave it low and if you give it the proper TLC (tender loving care), it's wonderful, but it can go south on you if you don't."

Disease is a huge concern. "And it's getting worse," said Whitehead. "The summers around here are warmer than they used to be. I've seen that in my years in the business. Climate change is real. I don't know what the cause is but it's a reality. You can't argue with the numbers and we have many more humid nights in the summer. It doesn't get below 70 and that's when the fungi can really devastate turf."

That's the biggest challenge for maintaining golf courses in Whitehead's opinion. "I have a feeling we'll be growing Bermuda grass up here before you know it. That seems to be the trend, but I'm hoping at least this season is a little cooler and drier than we normally have. In my time at Pawtucket I've had maybe four or five years that I thought were ideal.

"My first year here it was like that. We never had a heat wave and we had timely rain, so I was able to turn around the conditions with my crew pretty quickly from what it was. It was pretty bad

when I started, especially the greens. We haven't had too many summers like that so it's been a battle. You try to prepare ahead of time and then keep a close eye on things."

Superintendents regularly have to re-educate themselves as the science evolves. "It's a continuing education," said Whitehead. "I'm certified through the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America. To maintain a Class A certification you have to get a certain amount of continuing education points through a five-year cycle.

"When you go to New England Regional Turf Conference or the golf industry show, you take classes and seminars. There's a lot of online study. It's a big part of my winter, continuing education. There are constantly new products and new research coming out and you always want to stay on top of that. It gives you a leg up." ■

Tim Geary is a retired golf writer from the Fall River Herald and writes a column in each issue of snegolfer.com.

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Scottie Scheffler's Amazing Year on Tour

Normally we have players on our Rising Star column before they reach stardom. We were unable to do that with Scottie Scheffler because he became so great so soon. You have to call it greatness when a PGA Tour player wins his first PGA Tour victory on Super Bowl Sunday in Scottsdale in January of this year, and then becomes the number one player on Tour in only 42 days. What a rise, and what an accomplishment!

Scheffler's promise of stardom came at a very young age. He was born in Ridgewood, N.J., but the family moved to Dallas, Texas when he was very young. He took a liking to golf and his parents even took out a loan to join a prestigious country club where he could get wonderful teaching from Randy Smith.

He won the 2013 U.S. Junior Amateur and in 2017 was the low amateur at the U.S. Open. He was a four-year starter on the University of Texas golf team and after graduation he turned professional in 2018. In 2019 he had two wins on the Korn-Ferry Tour to earn his PGA Tour card for 2020.

He finished fifth in the FedEx standings in 2020, as he made the cut in 18 of 23 starts. He finished in the top 5 in six events and even shot a 59 in the second round of the Northern Trust event, becoming only the second player under the age of 25 to shoot a 59 in a Tour event (Justin Thomas was the other).

2021 was the year that Scheffler really shined. He had a second at the Dell Match Play in Austin, Texas, a tie for seventh at the U.S. Open and a tie for eighth at the PGA Championship. He was named as a Captain's Pick for the Ryder Cup and played wonderfully, even beating Jon Rahm in the singles event to cap off a great season and boost his confidence.

It was Golf Channel's commentator Colt Knost, also from Texas and a University Texas graduate and star player who made the comment—"Watch out when Scottie wins his first tournament!" That's what happened in Scottsdale this past January. Scheffler caught Patrick Cantley on the final hole and then won in a playoff. The floodgates were



open.

Scheffler traveled to the Arnold Palmer event in Orlando and nipped Billy Horschel on the final hole for victory number two. He then traveled back to Texas and beat Kevin Kisner to take the Dell Match play where he finished second last year.

Three victories in such a short time, but now it was time for The Masters. He wasn't the favorite when he got to Augusta—even with that great string of victories. "It takes years to learn all the intricacies of Augusta National," said most of the pundits.

He started with 69 in tough conditions. He followed that up with a 67 in very difficult conditions of cold and wind. He had taken the lead and by shooting 71's the last two days, he was able to lift the trophy and put on the green jacket.

This writer has been covering golf for 33 years, and I've never seen a golfer be on a streak like this besides Tiger Woods. It was fitting that Tiger was able to play at the Masters this year and watch someone do what only he has done in the last 30 years.

What more will Scheffler do this year? It will be fun to watch. ■

Bruce Vittner is the publisher and editor of snegolfer.com and is a member of the Golf Writers of America and the Golf Travel Writers of America and can be reached at bruce@snegolfer.com.

Tim Geary was Prescient about Scheffler

The following story was written by Tim Geary after the 2017 Northeast Amateur Tournament held in East Providence, RI in June of that year. The story ran in the August 2017 issue of Southern New England Golfer.

Scheffler Preparing for Pro Career

It really wasn't that Scottie Scheffler hit the wall during the 56th Northeast Amateur, but there was no doubt that fatigue, more mental than physical, played a major factor in his finishing in a nine-player logjam for 36th place at Wannamoisett Country Club.

That Collin Morikawa, of California, won the tournament was no surprise. Morikawa was one of the favorites entering the championship and his 11-under par total, while certainly eye opening, was not unexpected. But Scheffler, one of the most recognized names in the field of the world's top amateur players, was expected to seriously contend.

He certainly got off to a good start, firing a 4-under par score of 65 in the first round, but then followed that with rounds of 70, 74 and 71, respectable but not what he was looking for.

The adrenaline must have still been pumping because he recorded nine birdies over his first 31 holes but then didn't have a single one in the last 41. "It wasn't all bad," he said of his lack of time to prepare for the event. "I'm all right."

The University of Texas was certainly well represented at the Northeast. In addition to Scheffler, the Longhorns in the field included Doug Ghim, who finished fourth at 4-under and Gavin Hall, who was one of the nine who tied for 36th (R.I.'s own Bobby Leopold was among those).

The biggest likely reason for Scheffler's slide at Wannamoisett was what preceded it. Two weeks prior he had competed in the NCAA championships, where he finished tied for third



Scottie Scheffler c. 2017

in the individual tournament (behind Ole Miss sophomore, Braden Thornberry) at Rich Harvest Farms in Illinois (Texas as a team finished a disappointing 12th).

Then it was onto the United States Open at Erin Hills, in Wisconsin. There Scheffler finished as the low amateur, with a score of 2-under par. The previous year he had qualified for the Open at Oakmont but had failed to make the cut.

"It was definitely nice making the cut, but my mindset going in was to compete to win," he said. "I made the cut, but I kind of put myself out of position on the weekend, but I still did alright. Low amateur is pretty good."

He bested Texas A&M's Cameron Champ by a shot, which one would assume would be a very bitter rivalry, but when asked about that, Scheffler chuckled and said, "No, its not an intense rivalry. We're good friends. Its not what people might think. I've known Cameron forever. To tell the truth I didn't even know I had beaten him by one until afterward. It wasn't anything either one of us was thinking about. I know I was just out there playing golf."

The experience factor of having played in a previous Open certainly didn't hurt Scheffler at Erin Hills. "It was a good course," he said. "It was challenging but you can score there in spots.

There are challenges everywhere because it is a U.S. Open. Around the greens were certainly challenging but off the tee, if you got out of position, with the rough as penalizing as it was, it was a problem. The good thing was that the fairways were really wide so if you hit the ball fairly straight you had opportunities. Otherwise, you were in big trouble.

"I think I learned a lot about my game (at the Open) which should help me going forward. I had a pretty decent finish considering it was only my second major. I definitely have a lot to work on."

Growing up Scheffler played a multitude of sports. In addition to playing golf at Highland Park High School in Dallas, he also played on the school's basketball team.

Competing in other sports has helped his golf game. So has his older sister, Callie, who has caddied for him in each of his Open appearances.

"It's pretty cool," he grinned. "She's caddied for me a bunch of times, but it was pretty cool sharing that stage with her again. We had the whole family out for a while. That was nice to be all together again. She keeps me in line. Keeps my focus where it should be, on the next shot."

While the end of the season was not particularly successful at the NAAs Scheffler feels the Longhorns will do much better next year. "It was a decent year, I think we learned a lot," he said. "We had some guys in the lineup this year who were new and hadn't been in that position before. It was good for them to see what its like, what playing a full season is like. I think that will really work out well for us in the future, especially next year."

This summer he plans to play a lot of golf, including (he hopes) as a member of the U.S. Walker Cup team. "I'm playing a bunch of amateur tournaments. Playing here (Northeast), the Trans Miss, the Pac Coast, the Western and the U.S. Amateur and hopefully the Walker Cup."

Last year Scheffler was a second team All American. This year he was named to the first team. He won the East Lake Cup, had six top three finishes, 11 rounds in the 60s and was under par in 24 of the 37 rounds he played for Texas.

He is another in a long line of UT players who are expected to shine someday on the PGA Tour, following in the steps of Ben Crenshaw, Tom Kite, Justin Leonard and most recently Jordan Spieth.

Scheffler said he has played many times with Spieth growing up and while he wants to someday join him on the Tour, he fully intends to play one more year of college golf and graduate with a degree in finance.

"I haven't thought too much about it," he said when asked when he plans to turn pro. "I'll decide that after I graduate next year"

He'll also have to set aside some time in April to make a trip to Augusta, Georgia, to play in a quaint little tournament known as The Masters. ■

Tim Geary is the retired award-winning sportswriter for the Fall River Herald and contributes often to Southern New England Golfer. (Paul Kenyon also contributed to this story).

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Jordan and Justin were competing in a stroke play tournament. Justin had just hit a poor chip on a hole, and decided to practice chipping next to the tee on the next hole while he waited for his turn. Is this a penalty?

Ruling: Yes. Justin would be disqualified. Rule 7-1 says that no practice shots may be made on the course once a round has begun. The exception is putting or chipping near the first teeing ground before a start of the round. The same rule applies in match play except for practice putting or chipping on the hole just played.

Valley Country Club Now Open to the Public Warwick, RI Club is Great Place to Play



We just played a wonderful round of golf at Valley Country Club in Warwick, RI. I had played there a few times for tournaments and outings and with a friend who is a member, but Valley had been a private course since the 1920's, so it was always a special occasion. Now everyone can play at most anytime, because Valley CC has announced that it is now semi-private and open to the public.

The President, Mike Montigny, who has been at Valley CC for over 40 years spoke to snegolfer.com recently about the decision to go semi-private "We wanted this wonderful course to survive and continue to provide excellent golf and service to its members and all public players," he said.

Back in the 1920's the course opened with nine holes. It was designed by W.H. Follett, a friend and disciple of the legendary Donald Ross. It had huge greens and the rolling terrain made for a great course.

In the 1960's the legendary New England golf architect, Geoffrey Cornish was hired to build another nine holes and blend the course into a beautiful 18 hole layout that included both small and large

greens and excellent green surrounds. The results were wonderful, and Valley Country Club continued to hold major events and prosper.

In 2002, Ian Scott Taylor, a golf course architect from Wales, was brought in to blend Follett's and Cornish's original nine holes to look like one design. The results made the course challenging to every type of player and every handicap.

In April of 2011, Valley Country Club embarked on an exciting new future under new ownership, Valley CC Investors, LLC. The group consisted of five major shareholders--Tom Markarian, David Crocker, Dr. David Siwicki, Dr. Frank Fornari and Robert Mantia and 58 member investors purchased Valley CC to make certain of its financial future stability.

Valley C.C. has always been known as a wonderful wedding venue, and that continues. They have won awards each of the last nine years. The expenditures that the members did to rebuild the clubhouse and expand the ballroom have been a huge success.

Valley has built a huge deck that overlooks the tenth tee and a patio with fire pit and bar that

overlooks the seventh fairway. The food and entertainment make for wonderful evenings. The restaurant is open to the public and is a great stop after a round of golf.

Valley has developed a great team consisting of Melodi Caruso, General Manager; Steve Dimeo, Dir. Of Membership and Client Services/Pro Shop; Brian Alberigo, Golf Director; Jay Cabral, Superintendent; Kevin Weyman, Executive Chef and Maria Chianese, Business Manager.

We need to talk about the course. It measures 6,673 from the tips, 6,175 from the white tees, and 5,636 from the red tees. "We will be opening our forward gold tees by the time your readers see this story, and they will measure under 5,200 yards" said Montigny.

The greens are quite quick and undulating. The fairways are wide for the most part and the greens are well protected by bunkers. "The course is out in front of you, and our par 3's are spectacular, especially number 12 over the pond," said DiMeo before we teed off.

Number 11, a par-4, is a bear of a hole. You hit

your tee shot down into a valley, and then the second shot is straight uphill. You then go right to number 12. Our favorite hole was number 8, a long, downhill par 3 that you can see from New London Ave.

"Our superintendent, Jay Cabral has done a wonderful job. You'd never know that our fairways were ruined two years ago due to a severe drought and uncontrollable water issues. He has a wonderful team working with him as well," added Montigny.

The course is using new Yamaha carts with a GPS computer system that lets you order food and drinks as you head to the turn or finish your round. It also helps control the pace of play, so you can finish your round in under four hours.

We can't wait to go back. How great it is to have such an excellent golf course open to everyone just 15 minutes from Providence. This reporter would highly recommend that you give it a try. You can call the course at 401-821-1115. ■

Bruce Vittner is a member of the Golf Writers of America and the Golf Travel Writers of America and can be reached at bruce@snegolfer.com.



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Travelers Championship to Begin Week of June 20

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Jordan Spieth's historic bunker shot on the first playoff hole in 2017 will perhaps forever be the most memorable stroke since the PGA Tour began playing in Connecticut 70 years ago.

Spieth's 61-foot shot for birdie on the 18th hole to defeat Daniel Berger in the Travelers Championship is the only bunker blast in a playoff to win a PGA Tour event. And Spieth's celebration with caddie Michael Greller is arguably the most enthusiastic, emphatic and emotional in PGA Tour history. The shot and aftermath are often shown during national telecasts, including in the RBC Classic when Spieth came within inches of duplicating the feat against Patrick Cantlay on the first playoff hole.

But Harris English and little-known Kramer Hickok offered a 1A entry last year at TPC River Highlands in Cromwell. While Spieth put a sudden exclamation to the proceedings five years ago, English and Hickok went head-to-head for more than two hours before English sank a 16-foot birdie putt on the eighth extra hole to finally end the longest playoff in tournament history and tie the second longest in PGA Tour history.

So how dramatic, riveting, compelling and heart stopping was the conclusion of Connecticut's biggest sporting event in 2021? Well, after new fan favorite Hickok's 7-foot par-saving putt on the fourth playoff hole disappeared to keep him alive, longtime CBS announcer Jim Nantz offered, "How many times can you hold your breath? Wonder how the viewers are

handling this?' "

Two mighty legitimate questions, but two guys who hardly knew each other before forging a blossoming friendship during their mano-a-mano were only halfway to settling matters in gathering darkness at 8:09 p.m. English's decisive birdie completed a trifecta of special moments that added to a litany of memories on TPC River Highlands' amphitheater 18th green. Nantz and CBS cohort Ian Baker-Finch quipped English and Hickok played the 18th hole so many times in the playoff (six) that PGA Tour officials said they wouldn't have to play it in 2022. And they marveled at the enthusiasm of the fans, who frequently did the wave and chanted "Kramer, Kra-mer, Kra-mer" while sounding as if there were 10 times more than the supposed limit of 10,000 spectators after none a year earlier due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Everyone's wait finally ended when English, known for his usually stoic demeanor, sank his winning putt and offered one final fist pump and walk toward the hole a la Tiger Woods on one of the all-time memorable days in golf history. The two combatants made 15 consecutive pars of countless varieties before English notched his fourth career victory to become the fifth two-time titlist in 2021 after going winless for seven years. He earned \$1,332,000 and was suddenly ranked 12th in the world after being 373rd in early September 2019.

Travelers executive vice president and chief administrative officer Andy Bessette called it "the Cal Ripken Jr. of finishes" and "the most unique win we've ever had" since the insurance giant became the title sponsor in 2007. "Unique" was putting it mildly when fans raced between the 17th and 18th holes in the playoff and cheered the volunteer holding the on-course scoring placard, dubbing him "sign guy." Some fans even yelled at Hickok "to chip it in like your roommate from Texas (Spieth)."

“It was just awesome, and the fans were keeping us in it, got the juices from them as I was getting tired,” said English, who had won the Sentry Tournament of Champions to start the season leading to his first berth on the U.S. Ryder Cup Team that scored a record victory over Europe in September. “It’s what it’s all about, grinding it out trying to win. It wasn’t always pretty, but we both tried our hardest and made some tough par putts. I had had the same (birdie) putt a couple of times in the last two hours, so I knew the line.

“It’s hard to stay mentally into it, but I tried really hard to stay focused and sharp and really be on my toes because in a playoff situation it’s match-play scenarios so you have to be ready for anything. ... The fans are usually really good here, and you have to give them a shoutout. Hats off to Kramer for a good fight, and we were both joking that somebody had to make a birdie at some point. This is a validation win. It took me seven years to win again this year in Maui, and I think this is a validation of where my game is now and that I’m doing the right stuff in Sea Island (Ga.)”

English will defend on June 23-26 against a field that already had 10 of the Top 20 ranked players in the world by late April, led by No. 1 Scottie Scheffler, whose victory in the Masters was his fourth in six starts. Other early commitments included No. 4 Cantlay, No. 7 Rory McIlroy, who finished second in the Masters, No. 8 Justin Thomas, No. 9 Dustin Johnson, the 2020 Travelers champion, No. 12 Xander Schauffele, the Olympic gold medalist, No. 16 Joaquin Niemann, No. 17 Brooks Koepka, No. 18 Abraham Ancer, No. 29 Will Zalatoris, who finished second and fifth in the past two Masters, and fan favorite and major tournament supporter Bubba Watson, who will try to tie Hall of Famer Billy Casper’s tournament record of four victories.

Since its inception, the tournament has raised more than \$45.5 million for hundreds of local charities, including \$22.5 million since Travelers became the title sponsor, capped by a record \$2.2 million in 2021. The primary beneficiary is The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp in Ashford that provides a traditional summer camp experience for children with serious illnesses. On Feb. 12, 2021, the camp lost four buildings during an extensive fire, and Travelers and the tournament matched \$1 million in donations to help rebuild

the campus. Watson donated \$25,000, his third major contribution to a cause related to the tournament.

A prelude to this year’s event will be Bessette being inducted into the Connecticut Golf Hall of Fame on June 20 at the Hartford Downtown Marriott. Bessette’s multitude of duties for the championship include being the only official from a title sponsor to help recruit players, traveling to as many as five or six events a year with tournament director Nathan Grube.

Bessette, 67, will be enshrined with the late Bruce Edwards, the longtime caddie for Tom Watson and 1995 Canon Greater Hartford Open champion Greg Norman who died of ALS in 2004 at 49. Edwards was one of many local youngsters to caddie in the tournament when it was the GHO at Wethersfield Country Club, where the event began as the Insurance City Open in 1952 as a fundraiser for the Greater Hartford Jaycees. For more tournament information, visit TravelersChampionship.com.

PETER BALLO TO DEFEND CONNECTICUT OPEN TITLE

In the state’s second most significant tournament, Peter Ballo will defend in the Connecticut Open at New Haven CC on July 25-27. Ballo, now the assistant pro at Connecticut Golf Club in Easton who has been a standout in the Metropolitan Section PGA for years, is the younger son of Mike Ballo Sr., a two-time Connecticut Open champion who was inducted into the Connecticut Golf Hall of Fame on Dec. 2 and died on April 3. Mike Sr. and Peter are the first father-son duo to win the State Open and Westchester PGA Championship Match Play and to compete in the PGA Championship. Mike, Peter, wife/mother Page and younger son Mike Jr. were honored as the 2021 Family of the Year at the Metropolitan Golf Writers Association National Awards Dinner. ... Melissa Siviter of Georgia won the 2021 Connecticut Women’s Open, which will be played at Hop Meadow CC in Simsbury on June 6-7. ... Amateur Mia Grzywinski of Farmington captured the Hartford Women’s Open, which will be at Keney Park GC in Hartford on July 25-26. ■

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[North Attleboro Pair are Fine Supers]

One got his start in junior high school mowing lawns. The other didn't latch on to his career until entering college.

One works at a busy Cape Cod golf course where getting a tee time in summer can be a challenge. The other works at one of New England's most well-known private clubs.

They are Matt Crowther and Kyle Elliott, course superintendents at Cape Cod Country Club and TPC Boston, respectively. Both, however, want to make the four-plus hours golfers spend on their property an enjoyable experience.

"Cutting grass is almost an afterthought," Crowther said. "It's what we do every day. We're also plumbers, we're electricians, we're babysitters. We're trying to help golfers treat the property well and enjoy their day."

Both refer to their workplaces not as a golf course but as "the property." "I've always preferred the Scottish term, the Irish term for what we do," Elliott said. "We're the keeper of the greens. We manage the property."

Here's a look at both course superintendents' careers and how they view their responsibilities to the game and the environment.

Matt Crowther

Crowther fell in love with landscape architecture through his junior high home economics teacher, who asked a few of the boys in the class if they wanted to make some money over the summer mowing lawns.

Crowther's teacher put him to work at his grandfather's property in Coventry, R.I., where he learned how grass and trees and all of nature worked together. He found he enjoyed the outdoor labor and just how rewarding it was working with the land.

"It was just a beautiful piece of property," he said.

Since he'd always been better at science than math or reading, he decided to enroll at the University of Rhode Island in landscape architecture. While at



Kyle Elliott

URI, he met another teacher who had a summer lawn mowing business. He urged Crowther to consider turf management for a career. "He kept planting that seed over and over," Crowther remembered.

Crowther accompanied the teacher to a golf tournament, the New England Amateur. Crowther had never spent much time on a golf course, and didn't especially like the game – he preferred hockey and baseball – but he received an epiphany when inspecting the course, particularly the greens. "I was just there marveling at how tight the greens were – but it's still grass," he said. "It's still growing."

Goodbye, landscape architecture. Hello, turf management. "I got hooked," he said.

After college, Crowther landed a job at Mink Meadows Golf Club on Martha's Vineyard. There, he developed the philosophy that has guided his career.

Crowther aims to keep inputs – chemicals like fertilizers and pesticides – at a minimum while still maintaining a healthy playing service. In addition to establishing low maintenance natural areas at Mink Meadows, only 3.5 of the course's 45 acres were conventionally maintained with inputs under his watch.

Crowther has continued that philosophy at Cape Cod CC, an 18-hole semi-private course in North Falmouth. And he has tried to advance his views through leadership roles in his local and regional associations, serving as president of the Golf Course Superintendents of Cape Cod and the New England Regional Turfgrass Foundation during his career.

The industry listened to his message. Crowther, 54, received the 2021 President's Award for Environmental Stewardship by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America, recognizing "an exceptional environmental contribution to the

game of golf – a contribution that further exemplifies the golf course superintendent’s image as a steward of the land.”

“We maintain the property as natural as possible,” he said of Cape Cod CC. “That’s so much better and so much safer.”

Despite the honors, Crowther said he gets feedback, both positive and negative. While he enjoys the praise, he’s more than happy to listen to the complaints. “If you listen, you’re often able to make improvements to the property and that’s always good,” he said.

Crowther has two pieces of advice to golfers:

1. Pay attention – “Be aware of what you’re doing out there. There’s something about this game that makes you forget everything except your score.” Repairing divots and fixing ball marks can go a long way in making your future time on the course more enjoyable, he said.

2. Relax – “Don’t be so fixated on your score that you don’t enjoy your surroundings.”

“Golf courses are usually beautiful pieces of land,” he said, and it’s his job to keep them that way, both for players now and for the future.

Kyle Elliott

Elliott played a lot of golf as a child. “I was probably a better golfer at 10 than I am now,” he said, noting that he only plays at best a handful of times a year. But growing up well over 6 feet tall with a rugged frame, he was also drawn to basketball.

That’s where he spent much of his time, as an all-star at North Attleboro High School and for AAU teams. After graduation, he had an opportunity to play basketball for a New Hampshire college.

But there was something about the other sport he played as a child that he saw as an opportunity to enjoy a rewarding career. At the last minute, he enrolled at SUNY Cobleskill, an upstate New York university with a program in golf course management.

“Once I made that decision, I really started to enjoy it,” he said. “There’s a mental and a physical change to this job, and I sort of embraced that.”

He served internships at Eastward Ho! on Cape Cod, Walpole Country Club and TPC Boston, where he

eventually landed his first job, as a spray applicator. He worked his way up through the ranks until he was assistant course superintendent under Tom Brodeur, who oversaw the PGA Tour-owned course since it opened 20 years ago.

Elliott enjoyed the challenge of preparing TPC Boston for the PGA Tour FedEx Cup events held annually at the course in Norton not far from his hometown. But in the fall of 2017, another opportunity arose: Working at TPC Sawgrass, the famed Pete Dye design and home of the Players Championship.

He again enjoyed quick promotions, climbing to superintendent of the Stadium Course under a director of the entire property. Preparing the Stadium Course for four Players Championships – including one cut short by COVID – was rewarding and greatly advanced his knowledge of the craft, he said.

“If anything is needed to better the property there, it will get done,” he said. “So, in that way, working at Sawgrass was a kind of fantasy land.”

But the tug of home and the lure of overseeing his own property had Elliott moving back to Massachusetts. Brodeur had decided to retire, and his former assistant, now 36, landed the job, officially starting on Jan. 1 of this year. “This is always the job I wanted,” he said. “What Sawgrass did is prepare me for this.”

Many New Englanders have visited TPC Boston, but only to watch the 17 PGA Tour events held there. They haven’t seen the course without the sponsors’ tents, concession stands and the other infrastructure need to host thousands of people a day.

“We’re a normal golf course now and every decision isn’t tied in somehow with the tournament,” Elliott said. “But it’s still an extremely busy place. Membership is up, and the members like to play as much as possible.”

Members give him feedback, both positive and negative, but he calls himself his toughest critic. “I’ll be riding and I’ll see something and think, ‘No, we need to fix that,’” he said.

Elliott said he is often asked what’s involved with his job. “What I do for a living is tough to explain,” he said. “People ask if we just cut the grass. I explain to them that, ‘No, I grow the grass.’ ■

Mike Kirby, a former editor of *The Sun Chronicle of Attleboro, Mass.*, can be reached at mkirbygolf18@gmail.com.

Sqairz Golf Shoes an Engineering Marvel Faldo's Google Search Leads to Big Profits

One of the best part of this job is the people that you meet and the stories you can hear. At this year's PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando I met Bob Winskowicz of New Hampshire who invented and patented (in fact seven patents) the Sqairz Golf Shoe. We've all seen the ads on television about this radically new golf shoe designed by Winskowicz and promoted by Sir Nick Faldo.

How did Faldo come to be involved? Faldo was doing a segment on balance in the golf swing for his television show. He was having trouble with keeping his balance with tennis shoes on, and even with his bare feet. He asked his agent to Google (balance, stable and golf shoes) and up popped Sqairz golf shoes. The agent called and asked to have Faldo be sent a couple of pairs of Sqairz golf shoes, and Nick loved them.

Winskowicz started in the consumer goods industry and became a regional VP for MacGregor Golf. He then worked with Arnold Golf Company as an Executive Vice President. "Those were wonderful years," he remembered.

How did he get the idea for Sqairz? "Having worked in the golf industry for a number of years, I learned a great deal about ground force and the importance of using the ground to create swing speed. The launch of sneaker-like golf shoes for comfort really didn't help golfers play better golf.. Shoes without structure and spikes created a problem for golfers in using ground force and balance

Winskowicz set out to build a better shoe for the golf industry. "There are two connections in golf, your hands to the club and your feet to the ground. I would argue that your connection to the ground and your golf shoes are most important, as they facilitate the key fundamentals of the golf swing. Without balance, stability and ground connection you will never have consistency in accuracy or distance," he said.

The principal advantage of the square toe design allows the toes to sit naturally, proving better balance and stability. As a result of the square toe we were able to widen the base under the ball of your foot, providing added balance and stability. The added width also provides more surface area contact with the ground providing a more efficient energy exchange, resulting in increased distance.

While I was interviewing Winskowicz at the Golf



Show, a famous golfer on the Champions Tour walked in and asked if he could try a couple of pairs. He wanted to remain anonymous, as he is under contract to a different shoe company. "Golfers are really enjoying the shoes," said the founder as he watched the transaction.

Sepp Straka, PGA professional presently ranked #14 in FedEx Cup points, recently won the Honda Classic in Florida wearing the Sqairz shoes. "Sales went up quite a bit after that," said the unassuming Winskowicz who is married to a girl from Cranston, R.I and often travels to Rhode Island for the fine food.

Sqairz are only sold online. "I just didn't want to fight that very competitive golf shoe retail market," he said. Sqairz won the Best Golf Shoe award from Golf Digest in both 2021 and 2022. It was really a treat to speak to Winskowicz and learn about how this entrepreneur has definitely built a better mousetrap. We have something in common. We both love Shark Tank.

You can get more information about the shoes at www.Sqairz.com—Faldo did! ■

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Central Mass. Senior Tour Tees It Up Again: Hundreds expected to Compete



Templeton GC is one of the sites for the Central Mass Senior Tour

Gardner Municipal, Templewood Golf Course and Westminster Country Club will be among the many golf courses to host tournaments during the 2022 season of the Central Mass. Senior Tour which GOT underway on Thursday, Apr. 14 at East Mountain Country Club in Westfield and will continue every Thursday throughout the spring, summer and fall until mid-October.

Last year the Senior Tour drew 225 players from the area and Director Jim DeCarolis is expecting just as many participants, perhaps more, during the 2022 season. Here's a handy guide to what you should know about the CMass Senior Tour:

April through July Dates: Apr. 14: East Mountain CC, Westfield; Apr. 21: Heritage CC, Charlton; Apr. 28: Tekoa CC, Westfield; May 5: Chicopee CC; May 12: Leicester CC; May 19: Cold Spring CC, Belchertown; May 26: Ellinwood CC in Athol; June 2: Gardner Municipal; June 9: Ledges GC, South Hadley; June 16: Quail Hollow G&C, Oakham, June 23: Templewood GC; June

30: Mill Valley Golf Links, Belchertown; July 7: Westminster CC; July 14: Gardner Municipal; July 21: Leicester CC; July 28: Chicopee CC.

How To Join: You can enter as a group, pair or single. If you are a pair or single, you will be placed in a group to make a foursome. There are no annual dues or membership fees. Each Friday will begin registration for the following Thursday. The preferred method of registration is email. You can also call or text. (see contact numbers below). On Mondays, DeCarolis assigns tee times for the Thursday events, trying as best as possible to accommodate preferred times. When allowed, players will tee off on both the 1st and 10th tees.

What's a Senior?: For the men age 55 and above. For women there is no age restriction.

Women's Division: As instituted last year in its first season, there will be a Women's Division, competing in a separate prize pool.

What's the cost?: This year the weekly cost will be \$28 to walk. Cart riders will pay an additional \$16 to \$20 depending on the course. Out of the \$28, \$8 goes toward prizes, \$1 toward

closest to the pin contests and the balance for greens fees and expenses. There is also an optional team competition for foursomes. Your team score will be the sum of all four players' quota results. Cost is \$20 per foursome.

How is the Scoring Done?: The format is always point quota: 8 points for a double eagle, 5 for eagle, 3 for birdie, 2 for par, 1 for bogey, one-half for double bogey. Quotas are adjusted the following way: For every two full points you exceed your current quota, your new quota will increase by 1 with a maximum of 4. For every three full points you fall short of your current quota, your new quota will decrease by 1 with a maximum of 2.

Tee Selection: The men will choose between using two sets of tees each week--Regular tees and forward tees. Men, regardless of age, may choose to play from the forward tees, but once they have decided to play the forward tees, they cannot go back and forth. Women will all play from the regular women's tees.

Senior Cup: Again this year, for a one-time optional fee of \$20, players may enter the Senior Cup competition. Your 10 best scores out of 20 will be used to determine the winners at the conclusion of the season.

Rules: USGA Rules will govern all play with the following three exceptions: 1. Preferred lies: You may take a preferred lie within one club length everywhere except penalty areas. However, you cannot use the preferred lie to change your situation. If your ball is in the rough, it must stay in the rough. If your ball is on the fringe, you cannot move it onto the green. In all cases, the preferred lie cannot be closer to the hole. 2. Lost ball or ball out of bounds: You may drop a ball anywhere between where the original ball was believed to come to rest or went out of bounds and place it just into the edge of the fairway, but no nearer the hole. Then take a two-stroke penalty. 3. No gimmies: All putts must be holed out unless putting for a triple bogey or greater. ■

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Gardner Municipal in Good Hands



Bill Frank was only 27 years old when he became the head superintendent at Gardner Municipal Golf Course in 2009. Now 40, Frank has been highly praised for his work at Gardner over the years, leading improvements to the overall property from tees to greens and making the par 71 layout one of the most popular public courses in Central Mass.

A native of Belchertown and a graduate of Holyoke Catholic High, where he played golf, cross country and basketball, Frank earned his bachelor's degree in plant and soil science at UMass-Amherst. Before coming to Gardner, Frank worked at Wheatley Hills Golf Club in East Williston, New York and then later as an assistant superintendent at The International in Bolton, MA.

Frank and his wife, Sara, live in nearby Westminster with their children Barrett, 5 and Hadley, 3.

Recently, Frank agreed to a sporting conversation:

Q. What influenced you to become a golf course superintendent?

A. My father was a certified arborist who owned his own company and did high-end landscaping and tree care. My father worked sun up to sun down for 40 years. I knew from day one that I wanted to work outside among the dirt and grass and trees.

Q. What are the positives of being a superintendent?

A. For people who don't like to sit in a cubicle all day doing basically the same thing, this job is the best. Some days it seems as if you have a million different things to do, and it really makes the work hours fly by.

Q. Negatives?

A. Well, it's long hours, seven days a week during the golf season. And you have to expect phone calls at night and even sometimes in the early hours, like 3 in the morning. That's all part of the job. And, like in any job, there are some misconceptions from the outside because people do not see all the behind the scenes work that must get done. Every greens superintendent's job is different too, depending on where you are.

Q. As your course enters the 2022 season, what are your expectations?

A. We had a little bit of winter kill on some greens and collars, but overall we came through very well. Our aeration work last October really helped too.

Q. In 2020 you had the opportunity to volunteer and join the greens crew at Winged Foot in Mamaroneck, N.Y. during the U.S. Open. How did you get that opportunity?

A. My first golf course internship after UMass was working at Hamlet Country Club in Commack, N.Y. with Stephen Rabideau, who is now Winged Foot's Director of Golf Courses. We clicked from the beginning. Same mentality, same work ethic. Steve taught me to take the initiative. If he gave you five jobs to do in the day, he would be disappointed you didn't go look for a sixth. There was no luck at all in why he was running a U.S. Open. It was all from his

consistent, hard work over the years.

Q. What's the nicest golf course you've ever seen?

A. Well, I've seen a lot of great courses, but I have to say, Winged Foot for the U.S. Open in 2020 was the best conditioned golf course I've ever seen up close.

Q. In terms of your job, what are you thankful for?

A. I have a great crew, the best really, with only a few full-timers and part-timers who are all so dedicated. I also had great help from my predecessor as superintendent, Mike Hermanson, who worked here over 35 years, and was and is, still a great help to me.

Q. How often do you get to play golf?

A. I play in about four scrambles a year, that's it. When you're on a golf course all day, seven days a week, that's enough golf for me.

Q. Of all the places on a golf course, what concerns you the most?

A. Greens are the toughest to deal with. You just can't turn your back on them. You have to keep vigilant all the time.

Q. How do you like to keep the greens at Gardner Municipal?

A. We really try to emphasize smoothness over speed. Our greens are not slow, but we want smooth greens. I don't want to see the golf ball bounce on the way to the cup.

Q. At 6,131 yards from the back tees, Gardner is not a long course. Still, it's not considered an easy course. What do you focus on?

A. This place gets crazy busy, and the worst thing you can have is slow play, so we work on things to speed up play like removing some bunkers. Our biggest fear is excessive rain. We have good drainage in normal weather, but if it rains too much, that means trouble for us. We've removed a lot of trees and have really simplified the place from what it used to be.

Q. What does the future hold for Bill Frank?

A. I hope the future keeps me right here at Gardner Municipal. I love this job, and I wouldn't trade it for any other. ■

Jay Gearan writes a Central Mass column in each issue of snegolfer.com.



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Why Guess When You Can Measure?

Juniper Hill Thriving



Matt Darling, Dudley Darling and Superintendent Mike Danforth

Mike Danforth has attended the New England Regional Turfgrass Conference and Show every year since 2014. “We need the credits for our pesticide license in Massachusetts,” said the superintendent at Juniper Hill Golf Course in Northborough, “and it’s just good to hear different ideas.”

Danforth enjoyed listening to Dave Johnson, director of grounds at The Country Club in Brookline, who spoke at the 25th anniversary show at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence in March. Johnson talked about the benefits of fairway topdressing and how he was preparing the club to host the U.S. Open June 16-19.

Danforth took the seminar on water movement in the soil, a challenge he must face with the Assabet River sometimes overflowing onto Juniper’s Riverside Course. In addition, he attended seminars on wetting agents and annual bluegrass weevils.

Juniper Hill general manager Dudley Darling didn’t attend the show this year, but he’s gone several times in the past. “You just pick up things that you might have forgotten and you learn new things,” he said. “Some of the things they discuss are very in depth, so maybe not every one of those is useful to everybody, but there’s usually a few good things you can pick up. Plus, you see some of the vendors.”

Danforth had no intention of ever playing golf

or working on a golf course, but winning a sales contest changed his mind. While working for Ford’s Hometown Services in Worcester a dozen years ago, he sold the most aeration projects to customers. The contest’s prize was to play golf with his boss at Juniper Hill.

“I actually kind of joked and said, ‘I’m not golfing because I hate golf,’” Danforth recalled.

Danforth asked to take a day off with pay instead, but the boss said no. The company secretary called him the following day and convinced him to play.

“So I went and had fun,” he said.

He began playing with friends at Juniper Hill and became hooked on the game. When Danforth decided to leave Ford’s to start his own lawn care business, he signed a contract with a two-year, non-compete clause. So he planned to work at a golf course for those two years before opening his business. Juniper Hill hired him, and his first day was April Fool’s Day of 2013.

He ended up staying at Juniper Hill and he was promoted to assistant superintendent in 2016. Before he became the assistant, he commuted each day for seven weeks to the UMass Winter School for Turf Managers in Amherst to earn his certificate.

Danforth, 51, replaced Bob Cullen as superintendent this year.

Danforth admits if he hadn’t won that contest to play golf with his boss, he wouldn’t be where he

is today. "It's funny how things work out like that," he said.

Juniper Hill presents twice the amount of work for a grounds crew because it has two 18-hole courses, Riverside and Lakeside." A lot of people think I'm a little crazy," Danforth said.

Danforth has a large crew of 20 workers to maintain 125 acres of manicured turf.

"I feel as the superintendent, my job is also to be a liaison between ownership and the golfers," Danforth said. "So I try to talk to the golfers as often as I can without bothering them."

Tim O'Brien, superintendent at Green Hill Municipal Golf Course in Worcester, also makes sure to attend the show. "That's where you meet everybody," O'Brien said. "You just pick their brains." This year, O'Brien spoke with new vendors for course, seed and sand supplies and a construction company that renovates bunkers.

O'Brien takes webinars and attends conferences each year to keep his golf course maintenance accreditation with the Golf Course Superintendent Association. He also has a pesticide license with the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. Pesticides consist of herbicides, insecticides and fungicides and he sprays for all three.

O'Brien has been hit by golf balls a few times on the golf course, but he dealt with far worse in the military. In his seven years in the U.S. Marines and five in the U.S. Army, O'Brien didn't see a great deal of combat duty, but bullets did whizz by him one day in Afghanistan.

Golf balls obviously aren't bullets, but O'Brien said he couldn't allow either to distract him from his mission. "It's really not that different," O'Brien insisted. "You really have to keep an open focus with whatever's going on. When I was in the gunner seat, I knew the bullets were hitting the turret, but it's not like I could freak out or panic. You had to stay on course."

O'Brien, 39, said he also remains focused on mowing or fertilizing when golf balls sail by. "Yeah, no guns are flying at you, or bullets, but if you lose focus, you lose control," he said.

O'Brien was never injured in the military, but on the golf course he experienced a brush with death. When he was assistant superintendent at Charter Oak Country Club in Hudson in February of 2020, a brush cutter hit his left calf just below the back of

his knee, severing an artery, chipping a bone and tearing nerves.

Thinking quickly, he took off his belt and used it to tie a tourniquet to stop the bleeding.

"If I didn't have that tourniquet on, I could have bled out on the course," he said. "I think I could have died. That's the artery. I would have bled out. I learned how to tie a tourniquet in 2001 at Marine boot camp and it took me 20 years to finally use one."

O'Brien called for help, moved to where an ambulance could find him and was stitched up at UMass Memorial Medical Center. He still hasn't regained full feeling in his left foot and doesn't expect he will. But he was able to return to work on May 1 of 2020 and that August, he replaced Jason Brostrom as superintendent at Green Hill.

A bad back, caused by carrying heavy equipment and being involved in two car accidents while on leave, forced him to end his military career and look for something else to do in March of 2013. He moved to Worcester to be with girlfriend, Colleen, who he had met through a friend who had attended Clark University with her. They married in 2014.

While he pursued his degree online in project management at the University of Phoenix, he played a lot of golf at Green Hill in 2013 and Brostrom hired him for a job on the grounds crew.

That October, he became assistant superintendent and he earned his turfgrass science degree online from Penn State that winter.

O'Brien left Green Hill in 2017 to become assistant superintendent at Charter Oak before returning late in the 2020 season.

"I had a good job," he said of Charter Oak, "but I love this course. There's something about it. Jason got a great start on it and I want to take it the rest of the way. I get goosebumps just thinking about it."

O'Brien gets up at 3:30 or 4 a.m. to run 15 to 30 minutes four or five days a week before arriving at Green Hill at 5 a.m. He doesn't work Sundays unless tournaments are scheduled.

O'Brien dealt with drought in 2015 and turf disease in 2019, but the boost in play during the pandemic presented a new challenge. "Every day is a Saturday now," he said. ■

Bill Doyle is a retired writer from the Worcester Telegram and writes a Central Mass. column in each issue of snegolfer.com.

Springfield CC in Good Hands



Jedd Newsome

Entering his 13th season as head superintendent at Springfield Country Club, Jedd Newsome enjoys the daily rewards of his profession, yet is always ready for the new challenges that lie ahead each season.

Since working on the grounds crew at The Ranch Golf Club in the early 2000s, Newsome had a hunch of where his career pursuit would lead. "I loved the idea of maintaining grass. Just being able to be outside, you realize it is a career that most people wish they could have, the freedom that comes along with making decisions every day and seeing the tangible results of your hard

work," Newsome said.

Balancing the demands of working full-time and going to school, Newsome graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture in 2005, landing his first head superintendent job at Tekoa Country Club in Westfield that same year. After holding the same position at The Ranch Golf Club (2007-09) Newsome arrived at Springfield Country Club in 2010.

"You see tangible results and I really enjoy working with this membership (Springfield) in particular, walking on the golf course in good conditions, and knowing in the back of your mind that all the hard work pays off," Newsome added.

As for new challenges, the start to the 2022 season has had a similar theme for many courses, dealing with the effects to the course from winter kill. "It has affected a huge number of courses - the worst year since 2014-2015. It is widespread into Vermont all the way down to New York. New York rarely gets ice damage on greens," Newsome noted.

"On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, we had 2 inches of rain and then the temperature went down to 10 degrees at night, so we went under ice on January 17. We had a lot temperature fluctuations and then the ice would start to melt and freeze at night. That is the worst thing for grass in winter because poa wants to get going early. It starts to take up water and gets a hard freeze. It just can't take that over the long term."

Newsome added further explanation to this problem that many courses face this spring. "You start to get crown hydration, basically the crown of the plant is the growing point, and if you keep that alive during the winter, the leaves can die, the roots can die off, but the crown stays alive and it will regenerate. If that takes up water and freezes hard in the winter, you are done. It is a dead plant and there is no recovery. That is what happened here. That goes with the age

of the golf course. We do not have any internal drainage with our greens. So, the weather with the age of the golf course has become a big, big challenge.”

Another concern going forward, according to Newsome, is the supply chain issues brought about since the Covid pandemic.

“Luckily, we ordered our fertilizers and pesticides early in October last year. We got lucky with fertilizer. Moving forward we are anticipating, just getting fertilizer and then the cost could be 30-70 percent higher than what we have seen in the past,” Newsome said.

“Supplies such as flagsticks and cups, just basic supplies that I ordered in January and I still have not seen them, and I have not been told when we will get them.”

A veteran now in the turf management business, Newsome pointed out that one of the biggest changes that he has seen is the way superintendents communicate about course conditions to golfers.

“Fifteen to twenty years ago, golfers were not as educated as they are now because I think the superintendent and club professionals have worked to educate golfers about what goes into course maintenance, and why we have to do certain things. I think it is just better education communication overall. The progression has been tremendous with better and better superintendents, along with web sites, blogs and social media,” Newsome said. “As a whole the superintendent at every club has done a much better job of communicating to the golfers, the day in, day out tasks that need to be done.”

Consider Newsome in the lucky category in the fact that his profession is what he loves doing day in, day out.

“There is just so much good that comes with being a golf course superintendent. You have so much freedom as long as the golf course is in decent condition. Managing personnel, it is fun. I wouldn't change it for anything.” ■

Chris Miracle, the golf pro at Springfield Country Club, writes a Western Mass. column in each issue of snegolfer.com.

Copper Tech Golf Glove



One of the other products that we found at this year's PGA Golf Show was an innovative golf glove called the Copper Tech Plus. As the name suggests, these golf gloves are infused with copper, and most all understand the many benefits of copper infusion to help relieve arthritis, especially in the hands.

The gloves are made of a non-slip, woven silicon material that improves grip control of the golf club. How many times has your hand slipped or moved on the club because of your golf glove not doing its job properly?

Another advantage of the copper infusion is that improves circulation in your hand and enhances oxygenation of working muscles and joints. It also keeps the muscles and joints warm, making your hands less sore. Another feature of the gloves is that the copper helps eliminate odor.

The Copper Tech Plus will wick away sweat from your hand to give you a better feel, and will provide support for your muscles, giving you less stiffness and pain and reduce recovery time of your muscles. The gloves are built to last much longer than normal golf gloves.

The gloves come in many different sizes and styles. There is a Spider Grip that is built to last, an All-Weather Honeycomb, and Lady Classic with many choices of styles and colors.

The Copper Tech's are available at most golf stores, and you can purchase them by calling 772-692-8020. You can also find more information at www.coppertechglove.com. ■

PlayGolfMyrtleBeach.com World Amateur Handicap Championship Now Accepting Entries

Golf's Most Popular Amateur Event Expected to Attract 3,500 Players

MYRTLE BEACH, S.C. -- The 39th annual PlayGolfMyrtleBeach.com World Amateur Handicap Championship began accepting entries March 22. A 72-hole, net stroke play tournament, the World Am will be played Aug. 29 – Sept. 2 on over 50 of Myrtle Beach's best courses, and 3,500 players from across the world are again expected to participate in golf's largest single-site event.

Early entry into the tournament, which includes at least four rounds of golf, nightly admission to the World's Largest 19th Hole and a gift bag, is \$599 through May 18, a \$100 savings off the regular cost.

Nearly 3,500 players from all 50 states flocked to the 2021 World Am, and with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic hopefully waning, tournament officials are optimistic international players will be able to return in significant numbers to the "Every Man's Major."

"We can't wait to open entries and begin welcoming people to the 2022 Play Golf Myrtle Beach World Amateur Handicap Championship," said tournament director Scott Tomasello. "The energy surrounding the game has continued to grow and that's certainly been reflected in the interest the World Am is generating. The return of international players will bring even more excitement to what we believe will be the best World Am yet."

The World Am, which flights players based on age, gender and handicap, is open to all golfers 17 years of age and older wishing to compete in a net division.

The World Am flights players into nine divisions – men 49 and under, senior men (50-59), mid-senior men (60-69), super senior men (70-79), seasoned seniors (80+), women (59 and under), senior women (60+), the gross division, senior (50+) gross division, mid-senior gross division (60+) and women's gross division. There

is also a "Just For Fun" flight, created for players who want to enjoy the World Am experience without the pressure of competition.

After four days of tournament play, all flight winners and ties advance to the World Championship Playoff, an 18-hole shootout that crowns the event's winner.

While the competition is initially what lures players to the tournament, it's only part of what keeps them coming back. At the heart of the World Am's appeal is the camaraderie among its participants and much of that kinship is fostered at the World's Largest 19th Hole.

Each night of the event, the 19th Hole overtakes all 120,000-square feet of the Myrtle Beach Convention Center, providing participants with free food and drinks, live entertainment, celebrity guest appearances, a golf expo and more. Among the big names that have appeared at the 19th Hole in recent years are David Feherty, Brandel Chamblee, Charlie Rymer and John Daly.

Players also receive a gift bag that includes a polo, rain jacket, golf towel, logo'd hat, PGA Tour Superstore gift card and an assortment of other goodies valued cumulatively at \$250. ■

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www.MyrtleBeachWorldAmateur.com.

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Innisbrook, Play Where the Pros Play

I hope you got the chance to watch the Valspar Championship on the PGA Tour last month. It is held at Innisbrook Resort in Palm Harbor, Florida, a half-hour from the Tampa Airport and an hour and one half from Orlando. The best part of watching the Valspar was knowing that everyone can play that great course and the three other fine courses on the property.

My bride (of 52 years) and I stayed there in January after the PGA Merchandise Show

And what a joy and treat to see how many major improvements have taken place over the years. Isn't it great to be able to play where the PGA players play? The Copperhead course is host too the Valspar Championship each March It is so much fun watching it on television and remembering your good (forget the bad) shots on this great course.

When the idea to build Innisbrook, now a Salamander Resort, was conceived, the concept was both exciting and unique: a luxurious Florida golf resort with multiple courses and condominium-style accommodations. After it opened in 1970, the Tampa Bay area property quickly vaulted into the echelons of the country's finest golf resorts, and has remained there ever since thanks to the addition of many more amenities, the staging of a PGA TOUR event for the past 31 years, and an owner dedicated to quality and service. Its popularity has never been greater.

Over the past three years they completely remodel the interiors of all of its 400 suites to feature an appealing and modern look. Each unit was completely refreshed to receive all new furniture, furnishings, flooring, stainless-steel appliances, quartz counters, cabinets, lighting, draperies and other décor.

These enhancements follow many other improvements made by Innisbrook owner Sheila Johnson since she purchased the property and Salamander Hotels & Resorts, the company Johnson founded, began managing it.

The celebrated golf resort's suites are located in low-rise lodge buildings, which were designed to blend into the property's 900 wooded acres through the use of a "back-to-nature" style of architecture. Many of the units look out on the Copperhead course.

Innisbrook's popular South Course was renovated in 2020. All the greens have been planted with TifEagle Bermuda Grass – the same surface

used at the resort's celebrated Copperhead Course, In addition to the replacement of the greens, the project also included the expansion of the greens to their original size, and re-sodding and improvement of all bunker edging.

The suite makeovers and South Course restoration are just the latest in a series of improvements Salamander Hotels & Resorts have made at Innisbrook. Other recent enhancements include: restoration of the famed Copperhead Golf Course, renovations to the Island Golf Course, installation of new greens on the North Golf Course and expansion of the Osprey Clubhouse.

Also the addition of the Market Salamander Grille & Bar, opening of the Salamander Spa and Fitness Center, refurbishing of its 65,000 square feet of Conference Space and revamping of the Loch Ness Pool Complex. This is in addition of spending \$26 million in 2009 to build the world-class spa.

Tram service is available throughout the property and shuttle service is available from the airport, so renting a car is not mandatory. They have a great many golf groups visit, in fact the return rate is about 50 percent. Groups of 12 or larger have a golf concierge assigned to handle all aspects of the visit.

Let's talk about the golf. The Copperhead course is the most famous. It can be a monster, as it plays to over 7,300 yards from the tips. "We have many people who want to play where the pros play, and we let them, but the course is more fun when you play from the tees that best suit your game," said the manager in the pro shop.

One of the unique things about the Copperhead course is the elevation changes. "This is not your typical Florida property, as we have 70-foot elevation changes on some holes," said our starter. The first hole is a good example, a downhill, winding par 5. The par 5's are all very challenging, especially the uphill over water 5th hole that is deserving of it's number one handicap. Davis Riley, who lost in a playoff made an 8 on that hole the final day. One of the most challenging holes is the third, called "narrow neck" that has water on both sides of the fairway. Number 12 is a fun par 4 that requires a lay-up to the pond off the tee, and then a long carry over the pond to a well-bunkered green.

Our favorite course on the property was the Island Course. Set among tall pines, cypress and live oaks with moss draping towards the ground; it is a

scenic wonder with enough wildlife to make a nature walker proud. We saw a bald eagle, all types of birds, and a raccoon during our round.

The front nine plays around Lake Innisbrook. It is narrower than Copperhead, but the shot-making needed on many holes, especially nine and 18 will give you a good test of golf. Number 7 is the signature hole and it is a great par 5. Sixteen might be the toughest.

The North and South courses are both fun, with the North, that is often called Little Copperhead, being a little more difficult with water coming into play on 11 holes. The par 3's are excellent and they play longer than their yardage. The South course is more links-like on the front nine. The houses that frame the par 5 eighth are exquisite.

Larry Packard designed all four courses. He lived on the property and died at the age of 100. He designed parts of Mt. Desert Island in Bar Harbor, Me., did work at O'Hare Airport and worked on over 250 golf courses, although the four at Innisbrook are his only complete designs.

The service at the property is phenomenal. I dropped my clubs off at the course the first day, and they were waiting for me at the first tee for the next two days. There is a great practice area. "We strive to make the stay at Innisbrook as comfortable and fun as possible," said the managing director Mike Williams at our welcoming party. We dined at Packard's, the resorts fine restaurant and the food and service are five-star. It's pretty difficult to make the golfing experience much better with great



courses, excellent accommodations, wonderful staff and great weather. It's as good as a golf vacation can be.

You can get more information about Innisbrook, a Salamander Golf & Spa Resort and their golf packages at www.innisbrookgolfresort.com or call them at 800-492-6899. Southwest Airlines has many direct flights to Tampa from New England airports, and my wife landed in two and one-half hours from Providence. ■

Bruce Vittner is a member of the Golf Writers Assn. of America, the Golf Travel Writers of America and can be reached at bruce@snegolfer.com.

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Golfing at Disney World



Palm's No. 1 (Photo by Nile Young)

We started visiting Walt Disney World as a family in 1983. We'd pile our three kids in the car and drive the 1,200 miles down to Orlando. It was always one of our favorite trips. As we rode the monorail around the park, I would look longingly just outside the park at the beautifully manicured golf courses that were part of the complex. In our many visits I never brought my golf clubs.

All that changed in November when my golfing buddies and I flew down to Orlando to play golf at Disney World. Why not? It was the 50th anniversary of the park, right! Southwest had a direct flight from Providence to Orlando that got us there in less than hours.

As we were flying down, we thought back to the many professional tournaments held at Disney World that we had watched on television. Jack Nicklaus won three Walt Disney World Classic championships in the 1970's. Ryan Palmer won the 2004 event by shooting a final round 62. Davis Love III won the event, but he also raved about staying right there next to the course and going to the park every day with his children.

Arnold Palmer played in the first event at the Resort in 1971. In fact, he took a test ride on the new Disney Monorail. The Arnold Palmer Management Company took over the care and management of the four courses at the facility in 2011. "We want to be accessible to everyone," said Alex Forsyth, Director of Sales and Marketing for Walt Disney World Golf. "Our guests arrive daily from around the world, and we strive to provide them with a magical and memorable experience," he added.

The four courses on the property are the Palm Course, Magnolia, Lake Buena Vista, and Oak Trail. We played the Palm and the Magnolia courses. Pictured above is the first hole of the Palm course. Notice the monorail tracks above.

As you can see from the picture of hole number one on the Palm Course, the green is elevated, as they are on most of the holes. The back tees measure 6,870 yards, but there are many teeing options for you to choose from. There are nine holes with water in play. The greens are quite undulating and you have to remember that is not bentgrass like up north. The Palms served as the host course for the PGA Tour starting in 1971.

The Magnolia Golf Course is adjacent to the Palms Course. It is a little bit wider, but also much longer. It can play over 7,500 yards for the pros. The Magnolia Course was home to the PGA Senior Tour for many years. This course has 97 bunkers and 11 holes with water. Mickey Mouse comes into play on the sixth hole with a bunker in the shape of Mickey's iconic ears. The course was extensively renovated in 2015.

The last of the 18 holes courses is Disney's Lake Buena Vista Course. It is much the easiest, as there are wide-open fairways, but there are still elevated greens and well-guarded. There is an island green on the seventh hole. The LPGA played an event on this course in 1996 and 1007.

With Walt Disney World being such an iconic family destination, it is only natural that one golf course should be well-suited for families. Disney's Oak Trail Course is a nine-hole walking course that is perfect for families and casual golfers. The conditioning is excellent, and it can be played from a junior tee of 1,713 yards to close to 3,000 yards from the back. FootGolf is also played on the Oak Trail Course on certain afternoons.

As always, the Disney property provides excellent customer service. Alex Forsyth added, "We are continually trying to enhance the guest experience and heighten the overall enjoyment of our world-class facilities, not only through better golf course conditioning and renovations, but from an operations perspective.

We at Arnold Palmer Golf Management believe we are at the point of being able to put our best foot forward, and the 50th anniversary of the Walt Disney World Resort is a great time to celebrate that." Millions of dollars have gone into course upgrades and Golf Digest ranks Walt Disney World Golf among its top five destinations for a family golf trip. It's also great for a buddies' getaway as we can attest! ■

Bruce Vittner is a member of the Golf Writers of America and the Golf Travel Writers of America and can be reached at bruce@snegolfer.com.

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YMCA of the North Shore Offering Three Outstanding Golf Fundraisers in 2022

The YMCA of the North Shore, serving 380,000 residents in 25 communities with seven facilities north of Boston, will conduct three major golf fundraisers on five-star courses in 2022.

The first of the three 18-hole tournaments will be held at Turner Hill, the acclaimed Dana Fry design and former venue for the New England PGA championship, in Ipswich on June 6.

The second event will be held September 12 at Essex County Club in Manchester By-The Sea, the famed Donald Ross design ranked among the top 100 courses in America by Golf Digest and Golf magazine. The first private golf club founded North of Boston (1893), Essex has hosted two Curtis Cup Matches, most recently in 2010.

The final tournament is set for October 3 at Bass Rocks Golf Club in Gloucester, site of a U.S. Women's Senior Open qualifier in 2021.

The individual entry fee for each of the three tournaments are: Turner Hill- \$325, Essex County Club \$500 and Bass Rocks \$350.

All entries include: Lunch, Use of practice range, Golf with Cart, Contests, Hors d'oeuvres. Optional raffles and online auctions will be available with many golf specific prizes, including threesomes at many local private golf courses.

A variety of sponsorships are still available as is special pricing for foursomes.

The YMCA of the North Shore provides services for more than 50,000 members, including access and support to children and families in the areas of education, health, wellness, mental health, childrens' care/programming and summer camp.

Over the last couple of years the gaps that existed relative to health, wellness, access and childcare have increased dramatically. The result is that these YMCA's are providing more and more financial support to children, adults and families across all programmatic areas of our facilities. The

rapidly expanding need factor is what spawned the YMCA of the North Shore Golf Series as a means of fundraising to eliminate cost as a barrier to access so that support can be provided where needed in these communities.

The North Shore Y started with one event for its Greater Beverly Y at Essex County Club eight years ago and it has become an annual success. Now, it's been expanded to include an event at Turner Hill and Bass Rocks Golf Club. Each club has a storied history and has opened its course to these events in support of the YMCA of the North Shore.

These three events combined will host more than 400 golfers, as well as other individuals who attend lunch, cocktails and or dinner. There will be online auctions, raffles and other non-golf fundraising activities. The collective 2022 target fundraising goal is \$350,000.

For more information about these YMCA of the North Shore golf tournaments, contact Arthur Athanas at athanasa@northshoreymca.org ■

Warwick Area Career & Technical Center's Golf Tournament

Cranston C.C. is the site of the 24th annual event on June 12 at 1:30 p.m. The cost for the event is \$130 and includes green's fee, cart, dinner, donation and prizes. The purpose of the event, their largest fundraiser, is to raise money to send their SkillsUSA student state winners to the national competition in Atlanta.

There are also sponsorships available. For more information on how to signup or being a sponsor contact Liz Charette at the Center by calling 401-734-3389 or emailing WACTCgolf@gmail.com by May 26. ■

May 1998 Issue

Twenty-four years ago on this date, we were still called Ocean State Golf and Jim Palmer was on our cover. The Hall of Fame pitcher had come to speak at the New England Turfgrass Show at the R.I. Convention Center and was pictured with Kirkbrae's Mark Richard. The Turfgrass Show is still going strong, and Palmer looks almost as young as when he was pitching.

Kyle Gallo of Connecticut was our feature story as he won the three-day Tournament Players Championship sponsored by the U.S. Challenge Cup. He parred the courses at Metacomet, Warwick, and Agawam Hunt to set a scoring record for the event. Charlie Blanchard finished second.

The editorial talked about the new Softspikes that were starting to appear on courses. Ten public courses in Rhode Island beginning in 1998 were banning metal spikes. Now the only time you see metal spikes are worn by some of the Tour professionals.

The late Bob Nolan, who was one of our favorite columnists, had a story about Casey Martin and his battle with the PGA Tour to allow him to take a cart, as he had a debilitating disease that hindered his ability to walk around a golf course. The Tour never backed down, and Martin is now a successful college coach.

George Braman did caricatures in each of our issues for years, and the May 1998 issue featured the late Barry Gately. Gately was a fixture with junior golfers and the former Director of the U.S. Challenge Cup.

The center spread was the Leader Board and featured results of five tournaments. Pictured were Brent Wanner, Jeff Sieber, John Damiano, Ryan Porter, Charlie Blanchard, and MGA Four-Ball champs Jon and Carter Fasick.

The travel page had a story about golfing in Orlando, Florida. Falcon Fire was one of the courses that were highlighted, and it still remains one of the top public courses in the area. Tom Gorman also wrote a story about the World Golf Hall of Fame in St. Augustine, Florida that was opening up on May 19, 1998. It has continued to grow and is a place where every golfer should try to visit. The golf courses and the museum are truly special.

CVS was still hosting the PGA event at Pleasant

Valley C.C. in Sutton, Mass. in 1998 and they took the back page ad. Nineteen-ninety-eight was the last year of that event, but the CVS Charity Classic at Rhode Island C.C. had its inaugural event in 1999.

Looking through the issue, we found some advertisers that are no longer in business. Golf Day, Clone's, Pro Golf Discount, The Club House, Golf Works, Rehoboth CC, and Willowdale are no longer in our area. Hope we didn't have anything to do with their demise.

Much better news is that many of the advertisers in that issue are still supporting us after all these years. Besides Navigant, they include Golfers Warehouse, Laurel Lane, Rehoboth, Blissful Meadows, Midville, Cranston C.C., and Maplegate. Thanks to them and the many other advertisers who have helped to keep this publication going these past 28 years. ■

Bruce Vittner is the publisher/editor of Southern New England Golfer and plans to do a Looking Back column in each issue this year. The June issue will look back 15 years.

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Southern New England Golfer has been a large part of the golf scene in southern New England for 31 years. Some of the advertisers have been with us for all those years, and many have been advertising consistently for over 10 years.

We must be doing something right to have this dedicated following of advertisers. We think, and they must agree, that ads in our well-regarded and award winning publication must be good for business. One of the best features of our advertising is that all that ads are linked right back to the advertiser's website. Anyone who is reading the publication online can just click the ad and it goes right to you. No more putting the magazine down and going to the telephone, or writing it down and forgetting about it.

We would love to spread our wings and find some more businesses that would consider being part of this publication that was founded in 1990. We publish four issues per year. The first is always near the end of April and features the Masters and many local events that are being held or prepared.

The second is always in the beginning of June when

tournaments are just getting underway. Our third issue in at the end of July and again features many major tournaments held on our area as well as many travel and personal stories.

The last issue is always similar to what you are reading now. Ryder Cups and Presidents' Cups always seem to be a staple. We always feature travel stories in every issue. We are looking for places where our readers would enjoy visiting and playing golf. If you have a resort or destination golfing area that you wish to promote, we can do a great job for you.

The medical field, financial industry, travel and so many other industries should certainly see the benefit of reaching this demographic of dedicated golfers who read our publication from cover to cover every issue.

Each issue of the publication is sent to 80,000 emails. Many people forward it to friends and relatives. You are certainly welcome to see our very competitive advertising rates or set up an advertising schedule for 2022 by visiting www.snegolfer.com or calling 401-464-8445.

Regards

Bruce Vittner

Publisher/Editor

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ONLINE ISSUES NOW BEING EMAILED TO 80,000 GOLFERS

We just completed our fourth year of online-only issues after 28 years as a printed newspaper. The benefits have been many. First we cut our advertising prices about in half. I then went to the advertisers with the lower prices and asked their thoughts. How many emails do you have? Where are they located?

We coordinated with a person who had been collecting emails from all the golf shows in southern New England and at different golf events. He had a list of almost 40,000 golfers. "I'll be happy to send out your publication as part of my weekly emails whenever it is completed," he said. "It will help my open rate because it is an excellent publication and my subscribers will enjoy reading it," he added.

The key for us has become the fact that all the ads and map listings are linked to the advertisers' websites. When you are reading the paper online with your computer or tablet and you see an ad that you are interested in, you can just click on the ad and it goes right to the advertiser's website. You can't do that with a paper!

I've found that reading a paper online is quite enjoyable. The white background makes it easier to read. The online paper reads just like a paper. You just scroll down, page after page. The print is bigger on my computer than it was in the physical paper. I've also been reading it on my tablet. It is not quite as large a print as the computer, but is easily readable while sitting in my easy chair watching a game. And just think of all the trees we are saving!

Our publication is now read by so many thousands more golfers than it ever did in print. Our advertisers are thrilled in seeing the clicks to their website, the readers are happy because the print is larger, and the access to the publication is right in their home.

We guarantee that there will never be a charge for the publication online. Some of the websites that I have visited have started for free, but then

a charge was made if you wished to continue to have access.

We would love to have you subscribe to snegolfer.com. Just go to www.snegolfer.com and click the subscribe button. The publication is produced four times a year. After this issue we will have issues in June 6, July 25, and October 3. Thank you for reading our publication. Please feel free to write in with any thoughts, questions or concerns. This vision of an online paper that looks and reads like a paper is something that has become successful. If you are an advertiser and think this might be a good place to run your ads and reach new customers, then we are happy to help. ■

Bruce Vittner is the publisher/editor of snegolfer.com and can be reached at bruce@snegolfer.com.

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MAP KEY

- () = Holes
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- DR = Driving Range
- PS = Pro Shop
- CH = Clubhouse
- O = Outings
- SB = Snack Bar
- CL = Club Rental

