The MSGA has voted to implement a new process in 2016.

This is to qualify amateurs to compete against the professionals at the annual Montana Cup matches.

In past years, the 12-man amateur team was comprised of the top 10 finishers from the most recent State Amateur Tournament, plus the low two scorers at the previous year’s State Mid-Amateur Tournament.

Since the Montana Cup often is played about 10 days after the State Amateur, many of the top players weren’t able to take additional time off work to compete in another major event on the calendar.

Beginning in 2016, the amateur team will be comprised of the top 12 eligible players based on points earned at eight early statewide tournaments, plus the Monday Pro-Am events sanctioned by the two PGA chapters.

Qualifying tournaments for 2016 include the Lake City Open in Polson; Barnett Memorial in Missoula; State Match Play in Helena; Oilfield Invitational in Shelby; Old Works Amateur in Anaconda; Whitefish Lake Fourth of July Tournament in Whitefish; U.S. Amateur Qualifying at The Ranch Club in Missoula; and Montana State Amateur Tournament in Laurel.

The State Amateur and U.S. Amateur Qualifier are Tier I events (150 points for winner); Whitefish Lake is a Tier II event (100 points for winner); and the others are Tier III events (50 points for winner). This is the same points system that has been used the past eight years to qualify players for the USGA Team Championships, which are held every two years.

In addition, players will be able to earn 20 points for finishing first and 10 points for finishing second at each sanctioned Pro-Am event in 2016, through the month of July.

This change was made in order to encourage the top Montana amateurs to enter Pro-Am events and to support their PGA members, who in turn are strong advocates of MSGA programs.

Beginning in 2017, the process used to select the top three Montana amateurs for the USGA Team Championships also will change, but those alterations won’t be finalized until later in the year.

Golfers are urged to check the Pro-Am schedules, which are available on the websites of the Western Montana PGA chapter and the Yellowstone PGA chapter.

This past year, the amateurs defeated the professionals 40.5-31.5.
The USGA, Masters Tournament, and the PGA of America officially launched the 2017 Drive, Chip, and Putt Championship by announcing the local qualifying schedule for the upcoming year.

The schedule includes dates and locations for participants to play in local qualifiers across the country with the opportunity to advance and earn an invitation to next year’s National Finals at Augusta National Golf Club.

Now in its fourth year, the Drive, Chip, and Putt Championship aims to help younger generations begin their lifelong connection with golf by providing a fun, interactive platform for participants of all skill levels. This free youth golf development initiative welcomes boys and girls ages 7-15 to participate in separate divisions in four age categories.

Local qualifying will take place throughout all 50 states during the months of May, June, July, and August. Top performers at the local level will advance through subregional and regional qualifiers in July/August and September, respectively.

The top 80 performers – 40 boys and 40 girls – will earn an invitation to the National Finals at Augusta National on Sunday, April 2, the eve of the 2017 Masters.

Local qualifying will begin Sunday, May 8 at TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, and continue through the summer in all 50 states. The breakdown and schedule of the 2017 Drive, Chip, and Putt Championship qualifying is as follows:

- **Stage 1: Local Qualifying (May-August)**
  - 256 host sites spread throughout all 50 states
  - 3 juniors advance in each age/gender category from every venue

- **Stage 2: Subregional Qualifying (July/August)**
  - 50 host sites spread throughout 31 states
  - 2 juniors advance in each age/gender category from every venue

- **Stage 3: Regional Qualifying (September)**
  - 10 host sites in 10 defined regions
  - 1 junior advances in each age/gender category from every venue

- **Stage 4: Championship Final (April 2, 2017)**
  - 80 total participants at Augusta National Golf Club

Online registration will also be available at [www.DriveChipandPutt.com](http://www.DriveChipandPutt.com).

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GOLF SELFIES!

If you’re traveling this winter to play golf, take a “golf selfie,” and send it to us! We will feature the selfies we receive in our upcoming newsletters over the off-season as well as on our Facebook page and Twitter.

To send us your selfies you can tag us on Facebook or send us a photo on Twitter.

PGA SECTION 2015 AWARDS ANNOUNCED

Western Montana Section
Golf Professional of the Year – Greg Morris, Iron Horse
Player of the Year – Ryan Malby, Iron Horse
* PGA Professional National Championship Qualifier (5 Time)
* PNWPGA Hudson Cup Qualifier (8 Time)
* WMCPGA Montana Cup Qualifier (20 Time)
* PGA National Rental Car Assistants Championship Qualifier (2 Time)
* T11th PNWPGA Pro Assistant
* 3rd WMCPGA Match Play Championship
* T2nd Lake City Open
* T15th PNWPGA Washington Open
* 2nd WMCPGA Pro Assistant
* 5th PNWPGA Oregon Open
* T21st PNWPGA Rosauers Open
* T3rd PNWPGA National Rental Car Assistants Championship
* 1st WMCPGA Assistants Championship
* T27th PNWPGA NW Open
* T8th Montana Open
* 7th PNWPGA Professional Championship
* 5 Wins and 8 top three finishes out of 10 WMCPGA Pro AM’s Played
* 48th PGA National Rental Car Assistants Championship

Teacher of the Year – Dane Thorman, Iron Horse
Youth Player Development – Connor Sproull, Missoula Country Club
Assistant Professional of the Year – Justin Roberts, Canyon River Golf Club
Merchandiser of the Year Public – Scott Longnecker, Bill Roberts Golf Course
Merchandiser of the Year Private – Greg Morris, Iron Horse

Rocky Mountain PGA Section, Yellowstone Chapter:
Professional of the Year – Brandon Kahl, Riverside Country Club

Support Junior Golf!
Proceeds from MSGA Specialty Plates are used to help support Junior Golf Programs in Montana.

Montana’s Official Golf Season: April 1 to October 31
USGA TO HONOR JUDY BELL WITH 2016 BOB JONES AWARD

The USGA will bestow its highest honor, the Bob Jones Award, to Judy Bell, of Colorado Springs, CO, at an award ceremony on June 14, 2016, during the week of the 116th U.S. Open Championship at Oakmont (PA) Country Club. Presented annually since 1955, the Bob Jones Award recognizes an individual who demonstrates the spirit, personal character, and respect for the game exhibited by Jones, winner of nine USGA championships.

Known for her generous spirit and larger-than-life personality, Bell, a native of Wichita, KS, has championed a welcoming and accessible game as one of its most prominent ambassadors for more than six decades. “Judy is a towering presence in golf and her contributions to shaping the USGA can be seen to this day,” said Tom O’Toole Jr., president of the USGA. “Her devotion to the game makes her a worthy recipient of our organization’s most prestigious honor. From her earliest days as an accomplished player through her tenure as USGA president, Judy has been a staunch advocate and diplomat for the game. Those mantles were always delivered with her unique kindness and infectious personality. Judy is a real treasure!”

The youngest of four children and the only girl, Bell largely credits her mother’s tenacious, straightforward, and generous personality, as well as her can-do attitude as her strongest influences. The USGA’s first female president (1996-1997), Bell possesses a passion for women’s and girl’s golf that continues today, particularly through the LPGA-USGA Girls Golf program, which she helped found.

Her two-year USGA presidential tenure was hallmarked by the establishment of the “For the Good of the Game” grants program, which dedicated more than $65 million toward national and local projects devoted to improving the lives of communities through accessible golf. Bell was the program’s director from 1999-2010, and asserted hands-on service focused on providing opportunity to and building character among countless youth, particularly minorities, girls, and those with disabilities. “I grew up around people who volunteered and it was something I felt strongly about, even as a child,” said Bell in her 2002 book, Breaking the Mold. “We all believed that if you’re asked and you have an opportunity to give back, you just step up to the plate and do what you can.”

“Judy has an amazing capacity to connect with people of all walks of life,” said Steve Czarnecki, a fellow member of the USGA Foundation and its assistant director of grants and fellowship for 13 years. “To her, the USGA committee member, golf course superintendent at a host club, USGA staff member, or state and regional golf association representative is every bit as important as anyone else in the sport – herself included. Judy wanted everyone to have an opportunity to experience the game and benefit from the many wonderful lessons it conveys.”

USGA AND DELOITTE ANNOUNCE MULTIYEAR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The USGA and Deloitte today announced a multiyear strategic partnership intended to accelerate the USGA’s impact on the game of golf and foster greater collaboration and innovation around services that benefit golfers and facilities. They first teamed up in 2014 to assess existing programs and explore ways to build and deepen engagement within the golf community, in order to better meet the evolving expectations of the modern golfer, state, and regional golf associations (SRGAs), and clubs/facilities.

Through extensive research and analysis, Deloitte assisted the USGA in creating a strategy to enable the USGA and SRGAs to modernize, streamline, and ultimately increase the value of these services to the game. This vision, which the USGA intends to realize over the coming years, should build stronger relationships with all those who administer and play an integral role in influencing the health of the game.

“We are excited to welcome Deloitte as a strategic partner of the USGA,” said Mike Davis, USGA executive director. “For the last two years they have worked with us to reimagine how we can better serve certain parts of the game. Together, we hope to empower people to connect in new ways with golf by enhancing the ways we interact with all of those who love and play it.”

Do you want to see something in the newsletter? Contact Nick Dietzen at: ndietzen@gmail.com (406) 459-3459