Woodin Named Interim Head Golf Coach at MSU-Billings

MSGA board member and MSU-Billings' women's basketball head coach, Kevin Woodin, is adding another duty this year.

Woodin will serve as the interim men's and women's golf head coach for the spring 2016 season. He is coaching in his 12th season at MSU-B, shepherding the Yellowjackets on the hardwood.

This isn't the first time that Woodin has had double-duty on the coaching end. From 2007-09 he coached the MSU-B women's golf team.

“We are pleased and thankful Coach Woodin has accepted our offer to serve as the interim head men's and women's golf coach through the spring semester,” said MSU-B Director of Athletics, Krista Montague.

Grob Looks Forward To A Promising 2016 Season

Mike Grob has accomplished a great deal in his golf career, probably more than any native Montanan in history.

In 1987, Grob became, at age 23, the youngest member of the MSGA Hall of Fame, thanks to winning three consecutive State Amateur titles from 1983-85. Then, in 2003, Grob became the first Montanan to earn his PGA Tour playing card. And just a month ago, the 51-year-old Billings player became the first Montana native to earn exempt status on the PGA Champions Tour.

The last feat means Grob's legion of Treasure State fans will be following the senior golf tour closer than ever in 2016.

“I'm really excited about this opportunity,” Grob said recently from Billings, where he is trying to stay in golf shape during one of the snowiest winters in years. “I'm obviously not getting outside to practice, but just trying to stay loose and get ready for the biggest year of my life.”

To be sure, Grob has enjoyed many “big years” in a professional career that was launched way back in 1987, following four successful years at the University of Arkansas. He played one full season on the PGA Tour – earning nearly $355,000 in 2003 – but spent most of his career on minor circuits, where he made a good living in relative obscurity. In fact, he's still the all-time leading money-winner on the Canadian Tour, where he won six titles from 2002-12.

Those accomplishments were achieved despite suffering a fractured pelvis in a 1985 auto accident. He eventually got a hip replaced in 2000, and his health is better now... Continued on page 3
“He has proven his successful ability to coach and mentor student-athletes. With his experience coaching golf here in the past, as well as at the high-school level, he will provide important stability and a positive direction as we move into the spring.”

MSU-B assistant coaches Rhett Hightower and Marcus Drange (2015 Montana State Match Play finalist) will remain with the program to assist Woodin throughout the spring. “I am really looking forward to working with our men’s and women’s golf teams during the spring semester,” said Woodin. “I am also excited to work with Coach Drange and Coach Hightower, as they are both quality golf coaches.”

Woodin recently became the winningest women’s basketball coach in MSU-B history, with his all-time record sitting at 194-127. During his time in charge of the women’s golf program, Woodin coached the Yellowjackets to a berth in the west region championships during the 2008-09 season.

“I am very impressed with the quality of golfers we have in place at MSU-B,” Woodin said. “It is my goal for all of our players and both of our teams to improve upon their fall performances on the course while also being successful in the classroom and in the community.”

A national search for a permanent head coach will begin immediately following the conclusion of the spring 2016 season.

Look what the FSGA has encountered here... a group of burrowing owls. These animals nest in open, dry areas throughout North and South America, including this bunker at TPC Eagle Trace in Coral Springs, Florida. Under the Rules of Golf, they are considered to be burrowing animals, and a player who encounters interference from one of their holes can seek relief without penalty under Rule 25-1.

Photo: Florida State Golf Association/Joe Small

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than it was 15 years ago.

Grob knows that it would take only a few good performances this year on the lucrative Champions Tour to make more money, and earn greater recognition, than he's accumulated over the last three decades.

“I'm going to give it my best shot,” said Grob, who hopes to play at least 22 events on the Champions Tour. “I feel like I'm playing as well now as I ever have, and I feel good.”

Grob is acutely aware that success won't come cheap on the Plus-50 circuit that has been dominated by worldwide superstars like Bernhard Langer, Fred Couples, and Colin Montgomerie. “I know it's going to cost me $1,500 to $2,000 a week in expenses out there,” said Grob. “I've been playing one tour or another for 25 years or so. It's not cheap.”

He'll leave soon for Florida, where he hopes to play some mini-tour events in the Sunshine State before his Champions schedule begins February 5-7 in Boca Raton, then moves on the next week to Naples.

Grob earned his spot on the Champions Tour by placing fifth out of 80 senior pros at the Champions Qualifying School Tournament in Scottsdale, Arizona, last month. He shot a 16-under-par total for 72 holes, finishing only two strokes behind winner Brandt Jobe, a longtime PGA Tour regular. “I feel like I proved I can play with those guys,” said Grob, who needed two late birdies on his final nine to secure his playing card. “It was fun being back in contention, when every shot counted.”

Mike's wife, Kristi, caddied for him at the Arizona tournament, but probably won't carry the bag much this year. “They don't let caddies ride (motorized carts),” said Grob. “That bag is pretty heavy.”

Outside of the golf business, Mike and Kristi operate two Pita Pit restaurants in Billings. “She's the big boss,” said Mike. Kristi and daughters, Holly and Dana, likely will accompany Mike to several tournaments this year.

The best chances for Montana golf fans to see Grob compete in person won't come until much later in the season. The closest Champions Tour sites to Montana are the Boeing stop near Seattle in late August, and the Shaw Charity Classic in Calgary in early September.

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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 (msgagolf) or send us a photo on Twitter (406golf).

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**Happy New Year!**

**SAVE THE DATES**

2016 MSGA tournament dates and sites have been set!

Mark your calendars for the following events:

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**GROB... from page 1**

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UTAH’S HANSEN HONORED WITH JOE DEY AWARD

The USGA has announced Keith Hansen, of Providence, Utah, a 27-year member of two USGA committees, as the recipient of the 2016 Joe Dey Award.

Hansen has served on the USGAs Regional Affairs Committee and Mid-Amateur Committee since 1989. During that time, he has worked as a Rules official at more than 80 USGA championships, including 10 U.S. Opens. When not working as a Rules official, Hansen has also volunteered his time and energy to numerous state and regional championships and qualifying events. He received the Ike Grainger Award, which honors 25 years of service to the USGA, in 2013. Hansen has been a valuable asset and selfless contributor to golf in his home state. A 2015 inductee into the Utah Golf Hall of Fame, he served nine years on the Utah Golf Association board of directors, including two years as president. He has also served on the board of directors of the Utah Golf Foundation and The First Tee of Utah.

“Keith’s commitment to the USGA serves as an inspiration to the thousands of volunteers who comprise the backbone of our association, and who dedicate countless hours to the game we love,” said Tom O’Toole Jr., USGA president. “We are honored to recognize Keith’s important role in embodying our mission, and promoting a stronger connection to golf through selfless service.”

“I was shocked to get the call from Tom O’Toole,” said Hansen. “I have always believed that individuals should donate their time and volunteer for worthy causes. You receive more than you give when you volunteer. Through the years, I have met many past recipients of the Joe Dey Award, and I am honored to be included in that select group.”

2018 WOMEN’S FOUR-BALL SITE ANNOUNCED

El Caballero Country Club, in Tarzana, California, has been selected by the USGA as the host site for the 2018 U.S. Women’s Amateur Four-Ball Championship. Located less than 25 miles from Los Angeles, El Caballero will host its first USGA championship from April 28-May 2.

“The USGA is excited to add El Caballero Country Club to its distinguished list of championship sites,” said Diana Murphy, USGA vice president and Championship Committee chairman. “We are confident this beautiful Southern California club will be a terrific host for players and supporters, while also providing a comprehensive test that will produce worthy champions and continue to build the legacy of this popular team event.”

Designed in 1957 by Robert Trent Jones Sr. and named for the creek that meanders through the San Fernando Valley property, the course was renovated in 2005 by John Harbottle, who revamped bunkers, water features, and a few greens. It will play host to the fourth U.S. Women’s Amateur Four-Ball, which was contested for the first time in 2015 and won by teenagers Mika Liu and Rinko Mitsunaga, who prevailed at Bandon Dunes Golf Resort in Bandon, Oregon.

El Caballero was a three-time host of the LPGA Tour’s Office Depot Championship, which was played for nine years and won by Se Ri Pak in 2002 and Annika Sorenstam in 2003 and 2004 at El Caballero. The club has also hosted several USGA sectional qualifiers, for the U.S. Open, the U.S. Amateur, and the 2014 U.S. Senior Open.

“On behalf of the membership of El Caballero Country Club, we are honored to host the 2018 U.S. Women’s Amateur Four-Ball Championship,” said Gary Diamond, club president. “We look forward to providing a venue that the competitors will find challenging and where spectators will have a memorable experience.”

Do you want to see something in the newsletter?
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