MSGA Members Receive New Benefit – The Grain

Nick Dietzen, MSGA Communications Director

If you’re reading this newsletter, chances are, last week you received an email from the MSGA introducing a new member benefit, The Grain.

The Grain is a golf-focused electronic magazine that is published several times per year. MSGA members who have a registered email address will receive six issues of the e-magazine this year.

Unlike many results-based reviews of tournaments after they are “old news”, in the era of the 24-hour news cycle, this e-magazine focuses on preview editions, with each issue preceding the four major golf championships (Masters, U.S. Open, British Open, PGA Championship), as well as the President’s Cup.

Last week's first edition of the year was focused on a preview to the golf season and, specifically, new equipment. But, each edition will also offer access to deals, discounts, and prizes.

The MSGA values your membership. By obtaining a handicap index, you are an MSGA Member! Membership has its benefits, and the MSGA is committed to increasing these benefits each season.

In addition to the monthly MSGA newsletter, the introduction of the vTour (Virtual Tournament) last year, poker chip ball markers, and access to logoed golf gear and apparel via www.msgagolf.org, The Grain is another member benefit at no cost to you. We hope you enjoy reading this e-magazine and will continue to explore further opportunities to enhance your membership.

Remember, as we swing into spring, renew your MSGA Memberships and get those handicaps active... and encourage your friends to do the same! Your MSGA Membership supports amateur golf in Montana, and funds many important behind-the-scenes activities. We thank you for your continued commitment and look forward to serving you in the coming year!

I Challenge You!

Emily Hulsey, MSGA Handicap and Website

The MSGA needs your help! Golf associations nationwide have seen a decrease in the last 10 years. Montana seemed to be bucking this trend, until recently, when it, too, saw lower numbers.

Many people don’t realize what a golf association does. True, one of the benefits of having an MSGA Membership is receiving an official USGA Handicap. But, what if you don’t care about having a golf handicap? What if you just play for fun and never compete? That’s okay! Golf should be fun and there’s no reason you need to compete. But, that’s even more reason to care about and support your local golf association!

WHY? Golf associations are non-profit advocates of the game you love! They are there to support you and make sure the courses you play are supported. This includes rating each course so that competition in golf is fair. This means funding junior golf programs, memberships, and scholarships to encourage the next generation to join us in this ....Continued on the next page
In a three-week period earlier this year, the national sports community suffered the loss of five of its most prominent and respected figures.

From Jan. 23 through Feb. 11, Chicago Cubs baseball star Ernie Banks, golf legends Billy Casper and Charlie Sifford, and basketball coaching giants Dean Smith and Jerry Tarkanian all passed away. Each man was at least 82 years of age, and each will be difficult to replace in the minds and hearts of fans of a certain age.

During that same time frame, the Montana golf community also lost one of its most beloved members. Longtime Great Falls resident John Skees wasn’t prominent in the sense of being famous, but he was respected for his many behind-the-scenes contributions to the game we love.

Skees, who died January 30 at the age of 80, was a latecomer to golf. He didn’t take up the sport until his 30s, and his name didn’t appear on many championship trophies. But many Montana golfers – young and old – have benefitted greatly from his dedication to the game.

For the past 13 years, Skees served on the Board of the Montana State Golf Association. Among his responsibilities, he served on the competition, ratings, and marketing committees. As a fellow MSGA Board Member, I valued John’s experience and advice, particularly when we developed a tournament-points system to help us select three men to compete at the USGA National Team Tournament every two years.

Closer to home, Skees was always available to help at MSGA-sponsored events in Great Falls. He twice served as local chairman for Montana State Mid-Amateur tournaments at Meadow Lark Country Club, and he helped out at such events as the USGA Junior Girls Tournament back in 1994, as well as the Montana Cup Pros vs. Amateurs matches in 2014.

When the MSGA started its Clubs for Kids Program almost 20 years ago, Skees helped collect hundreds of older, used clubs. Then he personally regripped at least 300 clubs so they could be distributed free to children who couldn’t afford their own equipment.

That was the type of volunteer spirit that Skees demonstrated throughout his life. Before he got involved with golf, John served his state and his community in such endeavors as Montana Special Olympics, Cascade County Fair Board, the University of Great Falls Board of Trustees, and the Great Falls Animal Foundation.

Skees was a proud University of Montana graduate who competed in swimming during his years at the Missoula school. He remained an avid Grizzly fan throughout his life, and some of his favorite times came when he played golf with UM coaches at their annual spring visits to Great Falls.

John and I shared a historic UM sports moment back in 2001 when the Grizzlies were in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to play Furman. 

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for the NCAA Division I-AA football championship. I was there to cover the game for the Great Falls Tribune, and John was there to support the Griz.

The morning of the championship game, John and I played a round of golf at the Country Club of Chattanooga. Since it was late December, that was quite a bonus for a couple of Montana golfers who hadn’t picked up a club in six weeks.

The MSGA Board will miss John at its twice-annual meetings, and his Great Falls friends will miss him at their twice-weekly rounds at Meadowlark. When the Men’s State Amateur Tournament returns to MLCC this summer, that would be an appropriate time for the Montana golf community to recognize one of the really good guys in our sport.

Highly decorated Montanan and Columbus native, Jasi Acharya, has seen her game turn red-hot to begin the 2015 season, with two victories, both coming in the Valley of the Sun on the Cactus Tour.

Acharya, earned back-to-back victories on the Cactus Tour, a professional women’s golf tour in the Western United States, with the majority of the events being played in Arizona.

With four events having concluded during the 2015 season, Acharya has claimed the two most recent events.

February 9-11, in Scottsdale, competitors alternated between Wildfire Golf Club’s Faldo and Palmer Courses for event number three of the season. Acharya posted three consecutive red numbers with rounds of 69-68-71. Her -8, 208 total bested Margarita Ramos of Mexico City by one shot, to give Acharya the victory in windy southwest conditions.

Two weeks later, the Cactus Tour’s schedule resumed at Tres Rios (Litchfield Park, AZ) and Acharya picked up where she had left off, jumping out to a three-shot lead with an opening round of 68 (-4).

Acharya shot even-par 72 in her second round and finished her tournament with a 75, enough to withstand a hard-charging Courtney Harter of Clearwater, Florida, who fired a final round 66 (-6) to finish two shots behind Jasi.

Acharya’s 215 total stood out as the lone red number on the leaderboard, giving her a second consecutive victory.

With two wins in three starts thus far, Acharya has amassed $7,000 in earnings on The Cactus Tour – leading the tour, which has 20-25 events each season.

The next event is held at Moon Valley in Phoenix, March 3-5. You can follow The Cactus Tour online at www.thecactustour.com and check MSGA Facebook and Twitter for updates as well.

Acharya, who qualified for last year’s United States Women’s Open, plays a calendar of events on the Symmetra Tour as well.
The USGA has announced local qualifying sites for the 2015 U.S. Open Championship. The U.S. Open will be contested June 18-21 at Chambers Bay, in University Place, Washington – the first U.S. Open in the Pacific Northwest. Local qualifying, conducted over 18 holes at 111 sites in 43 states, will take place between May 4-21.

“U.S. Open local qualifying represents the start of an exciting two-tiered process in which thousands of golfers from around the world, both professional and amateur, pursue a place in this year’s field at Chambers Bay and the opportunity to compete for our national championship,” said Diana Murphy, USGA vice president and Championship Committee chairman. “U.S. Open qualifying is conducted with the support and expertise provided by state and regional golf associations, and we appreciate their effort and commitment.”

Those players who advance out of local qualifying will compete in sectional qualifying, which will be conducted over 36 holes at 10 U.S. sites on June 8. For the 11th consecutive year, Japan and England will host international sectional qualifying, both scheduled for May 25.

To be eligible, a player must have a Handicap Index not exceeding 1.4, or be a professional. The qualifier for Montana will be held Tuesday, May 12, at Missoula CC.

Online player registration for the 2015 U.S. Open will begin in the first week of March. (https://champs.usga.org)

The USGA has announced that the Capital City Club, in Atlanta, Georgia, will be the host site for the 2017 U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship. This will be the first USGA championship contested at the Capital City Club. The dates of the championship are October 7-12.

“The USGA is thrilled to bring the U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship to the Capital City Club for the first time,” said Diana Murphy. “The club has hosted many significant amateur events, including Bob Jones’ Georgia State Amateur victory as a teenager. Amateur golf is central to the USGA’s mission and the Capital City Club will be an excellent host for both the players and the championship.”

The Capital City Club’s Crabapple Course will be used for both stroke-play qualifying and the match-play portion of the championship. The course was designed by Tom Fazio and opened for play in 2002. The Crabapple Course also served as the host site for the 2003 WGC-American Express Championship, won by nine-time USGA champion Tiger Woods. The course has hosted U.S. Amateur sectional qualifying four times since 2007.

“Oh on behalf of the membership of Capital City Club, we are honored to host the 37th U.S. Mid-Amateur Championship,” said general chairman Danny Yates, who won the 1992 U.S. Mid-Amateur and was a member of the 1989 and 1993 USA Walker Cup Teams. “It is personally gratifying to see the club’s rich history culminate in hosting a USGA championship. We look forward to giving back to the game of golf, and particularly celebrating career amateur players, by hosting this wonderful event.”

The U.S. Mid-Amateur was first played in 1981. The championship is open to male amateurs age 25 and older with a Handicap Index not exceeding 3.4. In 2015, it will be played October 3-8 at John’s Island Club, in Vero Beach, Florida. In 2016, September 10-15 at Stonewall Links, in Elverson, Pennsylvania.

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

Do you want something in the newsletter?
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