Remembering Sonja Dehn
George Geise, MSGA Board Member

The Montana golf community lost a great friend and supporter last month when Sonja Dehn of Great Falls passed away at the age of 79.

Sonja was active in promoting junior golf in the Treasure State, serving for many years as team captain for the Montana girls’ team at Junior America’s Cup tournaments. She also supervised many MSGA District 2 qualifying tournaments at her home course, Meadow Lark Country Club. Perhaps the crowning achievement in her golf career was serving as general co-chairman of the 1994 USGA Junior Girls’ Championship, which was conducted at Meadow Lark CC. Sonja and co-chair Maggie Boyd were widely praised for their hard work in putting on the first national golf event ever hosted by a Montana club.

Sonja also served as executive secretary of the Montana State Women’s Golf Association from 1983 until 1998. She was inducted into the MSWGA Hall of Fame in 1994.

Bill Seeks To Eliminate Daylight Savings Time in Montana

Daylight Savings Time is coming up this weekend, at 2 a.m. on March 12th, where we once again “spring forward” by moving our clocks ahead one hour.

Many may not know that a bill to eliminate Daylight Savings time in Montana has been introduced. Senate Bill 206 has made it out of the Senate and is on its way to the House. The bill would have the state remain on Mountain Standard Time year-round. This is allowed under federal law. Currently, Arizona and Hawaii are the only two states that do not participate in Daylight Savings Time. If the bill makes it all the way through the legislature, we will still spring forward in March. According to state documents the bill would not go into effect until November, when we fall back to standard time again.

Daylight Savings Time adds one hour to standard time to make better use of daylight and conserving energy, according to the website timeanddate.com. It was used in the United States as early as 1918 during World War I to support the war effort. From 1945-1966 there were no uniform rules for Daylight Savings Time in the United States and it caused confusion, especially for mass transit and the broadcasting industry. The Uniform Time Act of 1966 was established by Congress.

There are mixed feelings about whether to stay in synch with other states, or whether to drop the change. Gaining the extra hour of light in the evening impacts many farmers and businesses, including golfers and golf courses. It could mean losing an hour of business during Montana’s springs and summers.

Any input on this bill can be directed to the State Legislature website.
Last month, eleven longtime USGA volunteers were honored with the Ike Grainger Award at the 2017 USGA Annual Meeting in Washington D.C. Montana’s own Jim Opitz, executive director of the MSGA, received the award, thanks to his 25 years as a USGA Volunteer. Opitz discussed his involvement with golf and what receiving this award meant to him.

MSGA: What was your first volunteer experience with the USGA?

J.O.: In 1992, I volunteered in Ronan for the USGA’s Public Links qualifier. I remember how good the players were. There were players from all over the country and some real standouts that advanced far. Over the years, we had many of our better Montana players compete and advance. The first two I watched advance were Chuck Eble and Joe Cielak. That’s always great to see our fellow Montanans do well. I worked that tournament until 2014, the last year the event existed.

MSGA: What have you learned in your role at the MSGA regarding volunteer involvement?

J.O.: The first national tournament I attended was the next year and that was the actual championship for the Public Links. It was in Brighton, Colorado, and it was amazing how professional everything was, the level of involvement, detail from the starters on up. Also, the exceptional knowledge of the rules volunteers was evident. It was very important to everyone to put on a good tournament and there was a real brotherhood that existed among volunteers. It takes a committed group and great tournaments need great volunteers.

MSGA: Tell our members about your trip to Washington D.C. for the honor and annual meeting.

J.O.: There are so many folks who do so much in their communities for golf. It was an honor to meet them and hear some of their stories. It is an exciting time in golf right now with the evolution of the game and introducing new ideas. The USGA is making strides, and getting to meet so many staff members who had great information was a highlight. We hope to bring these ideas and innovations back to Montana.

MSGA: Along those lines, how do you think modernization of the rules will be met by golfers?

J.O.: This is a topic they [USGA] feels good about... the simplification of the rules, essentially, and taking measures that will allow the rules to be more easily interpreted and applied. They are trying to make the game more fun for more players and are committed to doing so.

MSGA: Any other takeaways from the meeting?

J.O.: I’m thankful that I got to spend time with many members of the USGA staff. Learning from both them and peers around the country is valuable. The advancement in relation to the game, especially with technology, is eye-opening. From score posting online, to the tee-time reservation changes and mobile access data, we were presented with shows that, for many of this generation’s golfers, show it’s important to have fun, play fast, and be able to fit the game into very busy schedules. I was very fortunate to meet Rand Jerris of the USGA. He oversees the museum, among many other things, and was excited to help us as we celebrate our upcoming 100th anniversary of the MSGA. The USGA archives, along with his knowledge and enthusiasm for helping to commemorate and celebrate our centennial, is going to be a great benefit. There are some surprises in store this year, thanks to the USGA. I won’t reveal just what yet, but it’s going to be fun!

Montana’s Official Golf Season:
April 1 to October 31
Off-season scores played in Montana should not be posted. Scores played where it is in-season are valid and should be posted.

Congratulations to our FEBRUARY WINNERS!

Two Airline Tickets (U.S.) - Michele Konzen, Billings
$200 cash - Lakeshore Lodge, McAllister

www.msgagolf.org/raffle-fundraiser

** MARCH’S PRIZE is a trip to Napa Valley, California **
NCAA Golf Spring Seasons Begin

Nick Dietzen, MSGA Communications Director

NCAA Division II

MSU-Billings

The Yellowjackets men's golf team started their spring season in Livermore, California, at the East-West Bay Area Invite. Montana State University Billings freshman Caleb Stetzner garnered a top-10 finish and leading the way for MSU-B. Stetzner was 9-over-par 225 (77-73-75) for the three rounds. He picked up his third top-10 of the season thanks to strong ball striking, hitting 16 of 18 greens in his final round, that was delayed due to frost and subsequent frigid conditions throughout the round.

Another freshman, Garrett Woodin, was the second low finisher for MSU-B with rounds of 80-76-78. His 324 total was good for 30th overall. Also playing in the first spring event of the year was senior Michael Porter who finished T-39 with a three-round score of 239 (81-79-79). Connor Miele finished with 257 (86-82-89) and Scott Larson rounded things out at 266 (86-85-95). The Yellowjackets finished in 9th place as a team (324-310-321, 955).

The Yellowjackets women's team will kick off their spring schedule March 10-11 in Seaside, California, at the Otter Invitational.

NCAA Division I

Montana State University

Montana State freshman Delaney Elliott posted a career-best round at the Red Rocks Invitational, Jaylee Tait notched a top-10, and MSU finished 10th as a team as the Bobcats made their spring debut. Elliott, originally of Superior, Colorado, finished the invitational with a two-under-par 70. It was her first collegiate round under par. By virtue of her strong vanish and 222 (79-73-70) total, Elliott tied for 11th overall. Tait, a junior, was the top finisher for the Bobcats as she tied for eighth overall with a three-round 221 (73-71-77). Senior Janelle Reali finished at 11-over 227 (75-75-77) and tied for 25th.

Rounding out the scoring for MSU: freshman Kelly Hooper finished tied for 40th by shooting a two-day 235 (78-74-83), freshman Coral Schulz tied for 61st with 247 strokes (86-80-81), and sophomore Natassia Meredith totaled 251 (85-86-80) and in 70th to round out MSU’s scoring lineup. Sophomore Clare Dittemore competed individually and wrapped up her appearance by finishing in a tie for 73rd (255). MSU finished 10th out of 13 teams at Oakcreek Country Club with a total of 926 (311-300-315).

The Bobcats will return to action in Arizona for their next tournament at the Grand Canyon Invitational in Phoenix, March 11.

University of Montana

The University of Montana women’s golf team finished their first spring tournament, The Gold Rush Invitational, at the Old Ranch Country Club in Seal Beach, California.

The Grizzlies finished 14th of 14 teams. Kari Opatz was the low finisher for the Griz (75-81-78--234), tying for 54th. Hailey Hoagland (78-75-83--236) tied for 62nd, Teigan Avery (80-80-79--239) tied for 68th, Baylee Barckley (80-77-87--244) finished 79th, and Abby Pfeifer (96-84-84--264) placed 87th. Opatz’s 75 in round one and Hoagland’s 75 in round two were the team’s low rounds of the tournament.

Montana will compete again in two weeks at the Women’s Spring Break Invitational at Dallas, Texas, a tournament co-hosted by Oral Roberts and Stephen F. Austin at the Trophy Club Country Club.
USGA AND THE R&A ANNOUNCE PROPOSED CHANGES TO MODERNIZE GOLF’S RULES

The USGA and The R&A have unveiled a preview of proposed new Rules of Golf, as part of a joint initiative to modernize the Rules and make them easier to understand and apply. The online release of this preview begins a six-month feedback and evaluation period, during which all golfers worldwide can learn about the proposed changes and provide input before they are finalized in 2018 and take effect January 1, 2019.

The announcement follows a comprehensive review process that began in 2012 with a working group of key USGA and R&A Rules administrators, professional tour officials, and other Rules experts. While the Rules are revised every four years, this is the first fundamental review since 1984, and was established to ensure the Rules fit the needs of today’s game and the way it is played around the world.

“We are excited and encouraged by the potential this work brings, both through the proposed new Rules and the opportunities to use technology to deliver them,” said Thomas Pagel, senior director of Rules & Amateur Status for the USGA. “We look forward to an ongoing conversation with golfers during the feedback period in the months ahead.”

David Rickman, executive director–governance at The R&A, said, “Our aim is to make the Rules easier to understand and to apply for all golfers. We have looked at every Rule to try to find ways to make them more intuitive and straightforward, and we believe we have identified many significant improvements. It is important that the Rules continue to evolve and remain in tune with the way the modern game is played, but we have been careful not to change the game’s longstanding principles and character.”

The proposed 24 new Rules, reduced from the current 34, have been written in a user-friendly style with shorter sentences, commonly used phrases, bulleted lists, and explanatory headings. The initiative also focuses on assessing the overall consistency, simplicity, and fairness of the Rules for play.

The Rules are currently delivered in more than 30 languages, and the proposed wording will support easier translation worldwide. When adopted, the Rules will be supported by technology that allows the use of images, videos, and graphics. Highlights of the proposed Rule changes include:

- **Elimination or reduction of “ball moved” penalties**: There will be no penalty for accidentally moving a ball on the putting green or in searching for a ball, and a player is not responsible for causing a ball to move unless it is “virtually certain” that he or she did so.
- **Relaxed putting green rules**: There will be no penalty if a ball played from the putting green hits an unattended flagstick in the hole. Players may putt without having the flagstick attended or removed. Players may repair spike marks and other damage made by shoes, animal damage, and other damage on the putting green and there is no penalty for merely touching the line of putt.
- **Relaxed rules for “penalty areas” (currently called “water hazards”)**: Red and yellow-marked penalty areas may cover areas of desert, jungle, lava rock, etc., in addition to areas of water; expanded use of red penalty areas where lateral relief is allowed; and there will be no penalty for moving loose impediments or touching the ground or water in a penalty area.
- **Relaxed bunker rules**: There will be no penalty for moving loose impediments in a bunker or for generally touching the sand with a hand or club. A limited set of restrictions (such as not grounding the club right next to the ball) is kept to preserve the challenge of playing from the sand; however, an extra relief option is added for an unplayable ball in a bunker, allowing the ball to be played from outside the bunker with a two-stroke penalty.
- **Relying on player integrity**: A player’s “reasonable judgment” when estimating or measuring a spot, point, line, area, or distance will be upheld, even if video evidence later shows it to be wrong; and elimination of announcement procedures when lifting a ball to identify it or to see if it is damaged.
- **Pace-of-play support**: Reduced time for searching for a lost ball (from five minutes to three); ...Cont. on the next page
affirmative encouragement of “ready golf” in stroke play; recommending that players take no more than 40 seconds to play a stroke and other changes intended to help with pace of play.

- **Simplified way of taking relief:** A new procedure for taking relief by dropping a ball in and playing it from a specific relief area; relaxed procedures for dropping a ball, allowing the ball to be dropped from just above the ground or any growing thing or other object on the ground.

A series of materials has also been prepared to explain the proposed Rule changes and provide background on the initiative. Found on usga.org/rules and randa.org, they include:

- Draft Player's Edition of the New Rules of Golf for 2019: Written from the perspective of “you” the golfer, this shorter version covers the most commonly used Rules and is meant to be the rule book golfers will use when finalized and adopted in 2019
- Explanation for Each Major Proposed Change in the New Rules of Golf for 2019: Short summaries of each major proposed change
- Summary chart of major changes

Golfers are encouraged to review the proposed changes and submit feedback online via worldwide survey technology that can be accessed at randa.org or usga.org/rules from now until August 31, 2017.

The feedback will be reviewed by the USGA and The R&A in establishing the approved final version of golf’s new Rules. These are due to be released in mid-2018 ahead of a January 1, 2019, implementation. Social media fans can also follow the discussion using #GolfRules2019.

Players are reminded that the current 2016 Edition of the Rules of Golf remain in force when playing, posting scores, or competing, until the new Rules are officially adopted by the USGA and The R&A in 2019. The Rules of Amateur Status and the Rules of Equipment Standards were not part of this review process.

**USGA ANNOUNCES LOCAL QUALIFYING SITES FOR 117TH U.S. OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP**

The USGA has announced local qualifying sites for the 117th U.S. Open Championship. The U.S. Open will be contested for the first time at Erin Hills, in Erin, Wisconsin, on June 15-18. Local qualifying, conducted over 18 holes at 114 sites in 44 states and Canada, will take place between May 2-18. Canada will host a local qualifier for the first time.

“The support provided by state and regional golf associations, along with Golf Canada, will allow thousands of golfers from around the world, both professional and amateur, to take part in the two-tiered process of U.S. Open qualifying,” said Stuart Francis, USGA Championship Committee chairman. “We are pleased to conduct an international local qualifier for the first time in Canada as we continue to expand qualifying opportunities around the globe for all of our USGA championships.”

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 Monday, June 5. For the 13th consecutive year, Japan and England will host international sectional qualifying, both scheduled in late May.

To be eligible, a player must have a Handicap Index not exceeding 1.4, or be a professional. Online player registration for the 2017 U.S. Open will begin in the first week of March (https://champs.usga.org/index.html). Complete list of qualifiers: http://www.usga.org/articles/2017/02/usga-announces-114-local-qualifying-sites-for-2017-u-s--open.html. Montana's qualifier will be held Tuesday, May 16, at Missoula C.C., in Missoula.